



Improving Students' Vocabulary through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Great Aceh

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose: This study examines the enhancement of vocabulary among third-grade students at one of *SMPN* (Junior High Schools) in Great Aceh by utilizing the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The primary objective of this study is to determine the notable disparity in students' vocabulary when employing the CLT method.

Methods: The target population consists of all third-grade students at *SMPN*, class IX-2 serving as the experimental group and class IX-4 as the control group. Fifty-three students were randomly selected to participate, 26 in the experimental and 27 in the control classes. Data was collected through a pre-test and post-test using two comprehension tests and implementing three techniques: experimental teaching, tests, and a questionnaire. The test comprised 25 questions, including 13 multiple-choice and 12 fill-in-the-blank items, while the questionnaire consisted of 10 *Likert* Scale questions. The data were analyzed using the *t-test* in the SPSS program and a statistical formula.

Results: The findings showed that the utilization of the CLT method led to an improvement in students' vocabulary.

Conclusion: The analysis indicated that when comparing the results of the two tests, the difference between the control class (8.22) and the experimental class (51.23) demonstrated a significant enhancement. Furthermore, the *t-test* analysis revealed that the value of 0.05 ($\alpha = 5\%$) was more significant than the *t*-result (0.000), confirming the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a).

KEYWORDS:

Popular trends, foreign language

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular trends in foreign language teaching is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), introduced in the 1970s. CLT emerged as a response to the need for change in language teaching methods, mainly due to the inadequacies of traditional curricula in enhancing students' communication skills. Linguists have been designing a curriculum that aligns with the communicative objectives of language teaching (Richards, 2006).

The principles of CLT focus on teaching language as a tool for communication, student-centred learning, practical classroom activities, and the roles of teachers and students in the learning process. CLT is an essential method for teaching English, as it enables students to communicate effectively in

everyday situations, especially considering that many Indonesian students struggle to communicate in English even after studying it for years. Increasing vocabulary is crucial in improving communication skills, and CLT is considered one of the best approaches to achieve this (Betaineh *et al*, 2011). Vocabulary encompasses all the words people are familiar with and use in conversations. With vocabulary, it is possible to form sentences or paragraphs. As Wilkins stated, while a limited understanding of grammar hinders expression, a lack of vocabulary ultimately hampers communication. In other words, we must have the right words and a sufficient vocabulary to convey our intended message. Vocabulary is the fundamental building block of any language (Thornbury 2002:13).

The distinctive aspect of the current research is that it utilizes the CLT method to improve students' vocabulary mastery. The CLT method was selected because it actively engages students in language use, leading to increased vocabulary acquisition and mastery.

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II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

A preliminary observation of 3rd-grade students at one of SMPN in Great Aceh in 2022 revealed several difficulties students face in learning vocabulary. Pronunciation, spelling, word formation, and sentence comprehension were among the challenges students encountered. Additionally, students needed help grasping words or expressions' meanings when encountering them. Previous studies have explored using the CLT method to enhance students' English skills, such as Hidayat's research on improving speaking ability through communicative activities. This study employed communicative activities as a teaching technique to overcome students' speaking difficulties and enhance their speaking skills. CLT was chosen for its benefits, including reducing anxiety, fostering motivation, providing language use opportunities, and facilitating topic comprehension.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method is a teaching approach that is considered a new phenomenon in foreign language education. It emphasizes open teaching principles that incorporate various beneficial and effective learning principles. CLT combines the best aspects of previous teaching methods to create authentic language use in the classroom. It is one of the most widely used and effective methods for teaching foreign languages, mainly English, with a focus on creating opportunities for learners to effectively use the target language in everyday communication.

In CLT, teachers aim to create communicative conditions in the classroom that resemble real-life communication situations. This approach emphasizes interaction and meaningful learning experiences for students. The teacher's role is that of a facilitator and mediator, guiding students in their conversations and topics of discussion. The teacher is a resource, organizer, motivator, counselor, guide, and researcher within the learning-teaching groups.

CLT encompasses various techniques, including functional communication and social interaction activities. Functional communication activities involve tasks, problem-solving, and following directions, while social interaction activities include dialogue, role play, simulation, brainstorming, discussion, debate, games, storytelling, and information gap tasks.

When teaching vocabulary using the CLT method, teachers focus on providing students with communicative activities that promote the use of language for meaningful communication. Students' attention is directed towards the situational use of words, and they are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary in different contexts. Through communicative activities, students practice and actively use their acquired vocabulary.

Two specific techniques that can be used in the CLT method for teaching vocabulary are Think-Pair-Share and games. Think-Pair-Share involves students thinking individually,

discussing their ideas with a partner, and then sharing their thoughts with the whole class. This activity promotes conversation, deepens thinking, and improves oral communication skills. On the other hand, games create a cooperative learning environment, motivate students, and allow them to use English flexibly and communicatively.

The CLT method is beneficial for helping students communicate effectively. It is learner-centered, experience-based, and focuses on developing communicative competence. The method emphasizes genuine communication, meaning, relevance to students' needs, task-based teaching, and a functional approach to language learning. By implementing CLT activities in the classroom, teachers can increase students' interest, participation, and overall performance.

Cohen and Nation in Vogelin (2018) elaborately discussed various strategies about vocabulary teaching, which include phonetics method, lexical approach, visual sense method, associative memory approach, contextual approach, inductive method and cultural meaning method. The research in this article is based on this vocabulary teaching strategies.p.399 Vocabulary plays a crucial role in language learning and facilitates effective communication. It is essential to language proficiency and continuously grows as learners expand their knowledge (Pikulski, 2004).

3.1 The Significance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary holds great importance in the process of learning, comprehension, and effective communication, particularly when acquiring a foreign language like English. According to Ur (2012), vocabulary acquisition is crucial because it determines the meaning conveyed by words. Kufaisi (1988) further emphasizes the significance of vocabulary, asserting that it is essential for success in various aspects of life, including social, professional, and intellectual spheres. Vocabulary serves as a means of thinking, self-expression, and communication. When learning a foreign language, forming students' English vocabulary is assumed to be a critical factor for achieving success. Neuman and Dwyer (2009, p.385) also highlight the importance of vocabulary in language learning, stating that effective communication necessitates a command of both expressive vocabularies (words used in speaking) and receptive vocabulary (words understood in listening).

Based on the perspectives of the experts mentioned above, numerous studies on vocabulary instruction and learning emphasize the enduring significance of vocabulary expansion as a fundamental objective in literacy and education (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 2004). Therefore, teachers must have a comprehensive understanding of what should be taught in the classroom because, as Richard and Renandya (2010, p. 255) explain, "Without a wide-ranging vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new words, students often fall short of their

potential and may be discouraged from taking full advantage of language learning opportunities."

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study aims to determine the level of improvement in vocabulary among third-grade students at SMPN 1 Great Aceh after receiving instruction using the CLT method. Additionally, it aims to assess the students' perception of the effectiveness of the CLT method in enhancing their vocabulary skills.

3.2 Previous studies

In 2019, Al-Garni and Almuhammadi conducted a study at the English Language Institute (ELI) of the University of Jeddah (UJ) to investigate the impact of using communicative language teaching (CLT) activities on the speaking skills of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. The study involved two classes of 21 female EFL students, with one class assigned as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The experimental group received instruction through three CLT activities: interviewing, problem-solving, and role-playing, while the control group was taught using traditional methods. The study employed a quasi-experimental design, including pre-test and post-test assessments, to determine if there was a significant difference in scores between the experimental and control groups. The findings indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group, suggesting the positive implications of implementing CLT teaching practices at the ELI of UJI.

In another study conducted by Rahayu (2010), the objective was to examine the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving students' vocabulary mastery and the quality of vocabulary teaching. Collaborative classroom action research was employed as the research method, conducted in two cycles. The first cycle consisted of three meetings, while the second cycle had two meetings. Each cycle involved four steps: planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. In the first cycle, vocabulary teaching utilized game techniques, while role-play was employed in the second cycle, both of which were part of CLT. Data collection involved observation, interviews, field notes, photographs, and tests, with pre-tests and post-tests administered to measure improvement in vocabulary mastery. Quantitative analysis of test scores was conducted, while qualitative analysis was performed on observations, interviews, and photographs. The results indicated that students demonstrated a better understanding of vocabulary meaning, improved pronunciation and spelling, and increased engagement in meaningful and contextual activities. The classroom environment became more enjoyable, active, and conducive to promoting students' learning process, leading to increased motivation and cooperation among students.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design and was conducted as experimental research. The main objective was to determine whether using the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method would enhance students' vocabulary skills. To achieve this, we implemented experimental teaching methods. Experimental research, as defined by Cresswell (2012), involves using quantitative methods to test the effects of an independent variable on the outcome. In this study, we applied this method to examine whether the CLT method impacted the student's vocabulary improvement. We chose a procedure that created a variable learning experience and then assessed whether those who experienced the procedure performed better on the outcome. Additionally, according to Cramer *et al*, (2004), other measured factors influence independent variables, and they are expected to exhibit changes due to experimental research. In this study, the independent variable was the CLT method, which aimed to enhance students' vocabulary skills, while the dependent variable was the students' vocabulary improvement.

The research design involved conducting a pre-test and post-test, which is a suitable approach for experimental research. Two classes were selected for the study: Class 21 and Class 22. Both classes underwent a pre-test at the beginning and a post-test at the end of the research. The experimental class received the treatment, which involved implementing the CLT method, while the control class did not receive any treatment. The results showed an increase in students' achievement in the post-test scores due to the use of the CLT method. The entire research process consisted of five meetings, with a pre-test conducted in the first meeting, followed by three meetings involving the implementation of the CLT method, and a post-test administered in the final meeting, using the same content as the pre-test.

3.3 Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of third-grade students from one of the SMPNs in Great Aceh. The school had four third-grade classes, each consisting of 25-30 students. From this population, we selected two classes as the sample for the study.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Sampling techniques can be divided into two types: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is a random selection method, while non-probability sampling involves non-random selection. In this study, we used probability sampling to obtain representative data from the population and draw reliable conclusions. Specifically, simple random sampling was employed, wherein small pieces of paper with numbers were placed in a container and randomly drawn to select two classes for the sample.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection instrument used in this study was a vocabulary test. The test was administered to students to

assess their scores before and after the treatment. The research employed pre-tests and post-tests as instruments. The pre-test aimed to evaluate students' prior knowledge before receiving the treatment, while the post-test was administered after the treatment. The study utilized two classes, with one class receiving the treatment (experimental class) and the other as a control group, receiving the same test without any treatment. This approach is used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, a questionnaire is utilized to gather students' perceptions of the CLT method in enhancing their vocabulary skills.

3.6 Technique of Data Collection

The data collection process involved several stages: pre-test, treatment, post-test, and questionnaire. These stages are briefly explained below:

3.6.1 Pre-test: In the first meeting, the experimental and control classes took the pre-test. This test aimed to assess students' vocabulary mastery before the treatment. It consisted of multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions, with 25 questions. Each question carried a maximum score of 4

VI. RESULTS

The outcome of the students' pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental class was analyzed in this study. Two tests were administered to collect the data for the pre-test, conducted in the first meeting before implementing the CLT method, and the post-test, conducted after three treatment sessions using the CLT method. Then, the data presented indicates a significant increase in post-test scores compared to the pre-test. This is evident from the table, where the mean score on the pre-test was 35.08, while on the post-test, it rose to 86.31. By comparing these two means, we observe a difference of 51.23 between the two tests.

The *t*-test was conducted using the SPSS program to determine if there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in both the control and experimental classes. The results of the *t*-test for the pre-test and post-test in both classes are compared. The value in the "Sig. (2-tailed)" column is 0.660, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05 (5%). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. It indicates no significant difference in the students' understanding of vocabulary between the control and experimental classes. In other words, both classes demonstrate similar levels of vocabulary mastery.

The value in the "Sig. (2-tailed)" column is 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05 (5%). As a result, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. It indicates a significant difference in the student's vocabulary mastery between the control and experimental classes. Specifically, one of the classes exhibits an improvement in vocabulary mastery. In

this case, the experimental class, which was taught using the CLT method, demonstrates the improvement. These findings showed that the CLT treatment can effectively enhance students' vocabulary skills.

Questionnaires also administered to the students to obtain insights into students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the CLT method in improving their vocabulary skills in the experimental class. The questionnaire comprised 10 questions that were directly linked to the implementation of the CLT method, as discussed previously.

VII. DISCUSSION

This study conducted at one of *SMPN* (Junior High School) in Great Aceh, with the participants being all the students from classes IX-2 (experimental class) and IX-4 (control class). The experimental class comprised 26 students, while the control class had 27 students. The study conducted in November 2022, for the control class, and in December 2022, for the experimental class. The research involved five sessions, including two sessions for the pre-test and post-test assessments.

The pre-test for the control class was completed in November, 2022, followed by the post-test in December, 2022. As for the experimental class, the pre-test took place also on November 2022, and the teaching process began in November, 2022 as well. Finally, the post-test was administered on December, 2022.

To ensure systematic data organization and analysis, we utilized the SPSS program. The subsequent section presents the research results, focusing on the pre-test, post-test, and mean scores of the control class.

The data presented indicates that the average score on the pre-test was 36.74, whereas, on the post-test, it increased to 44.96. By comparing these two means, we can observe a difference of 8.22 between the tests. So, it is evident that the majority of students perceive learning English as enjoyable. Only a tiny percentage of students (1.92%) disagree, and a smaller percentage (0.76%) strongly disagree with this notion. Based on this data, we conclude that although most students find learning English fun, there are still a few students who hold the opinion that learning English could be more enjoyable.

VIII. CONCLUSION

After conducting this study, we discovered that the students in the experimental class showed better results in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores after receiving the treatment. It showed evidence that the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method has an impact on student's vocabulary. Various statistical tests were performed to reach this conclusion.

Initially, we calculated the mean scores of the two-test for both classes. In the control class, the mean score for the pre-test was 36.74, while the post-test score was 44.96, showing

Muhammad Nasir et al, Improving Students' Vocabulary through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Great Aceh

a difference of 8.22 between the two scores. For the experimental class, the pre-test score was 35.08, and the post-test score was 86.31, showing a difference of 51.23 between the two scores.

Following the collection of pre-test and post-test results from both classes, we implemented a t-test using the SPSS program to determine if there was a significant difference between the two-test scores. The results revealed that the significance score (2-tailed) for the pre-test was 0.660, which is greater than 0.05 (with a significance level of 5%). This indicates that there was no significant difference in vocabulary proficiency between the control and experimental classes before the treatment. However, in the post-test, the significance score (2-tailed) was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means there was a significant difference in students' vocabulary proficiency between both classes after the treatment.

These findings demonstrate that implementing the CLT method of teaching resulted in improvement in the experimental class and contributed to increased vocabulary mastery among students.

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