

IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING(CLT)

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Abstract

The research aims to find out whether the students reading comprehension can be improved through the use of the Communicative Language Teaching(CLT) method. In order to achieve the objectives, the researcher held action research at SMA N 5 Lhokseumawe, from 16- 19th March 2021. There were 2 cycles in which 2 meetings were held for each cycle. The subject of the study is the second year with the numbers of population 32 students. The instruments used were observation sheets, questionnaires, and tests. The result of the study is the problem of motivating students to read. This can be solved by using Communicative Language Teaching(CLT). Based on the questionnaire, all of the students said that the use of the Communicative Language Teaching(CLT) method was interesting. In line with the questionnaire result, the observation sheet also showed excellent results on students' study habits. There was an improvement in students' comprehension, it can be seen in cycle 1 which was 89.06 points, and cycle II which was 95.6 points. In this study, I suggest that the teachers should be able to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an alternative to motivating students learning.

Keywords— Reading Comprehension, reading, CLT.

INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language, reading is one of the most important factors in determining a learner's linguistic competence. Reading is a receptive language process. It is the process of recognition, interpretation, and perception of written or printed materials. Reading proficiency plays a great role in understanding a written statement accurately and efficiently. Reading serves as an important tool in every field of professional service and it contributes to the successful learning of a language. Hence it usually receives more emphasis in education than the other skills. In fact, the results for students' reading skills is still unsatisfactory. An improvement by the students is needed to achieve success in mastering reading. There are five aspects in reading that must be known by teachers and students. They are phonic, phonemic, awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These five aspects of reading work together to create the reading experience. Without considering these aspects, teacher and students will face difficulties in teaching reading process. Because the five aspects are important in reading to help them in understanding a text, there are four areas of the teaching reading objective. They are knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis. Process of gaining knowledge helps students to increase vocabulary, language, communication, and recollection skill. Comprehension helps students to increase their ability to take large amount of information and condense into a key points and ideas by doing a concise and succinct manner. The ability and analysis information that was read is another objective of teaching reading. In the same case there are some factors that hampering students' achievements in reading, specifically in reading comprehension. Mariam S (2016) explains that the students reading comprehension improvement can be seen when they read the text in reading activities in the cycle one which also can be drawn up by the noticeable score of the first summary writing in the cycle one. Nowadays, the students may not have such motivation to read because the text is not interesting and sometime the text is too long. The students are also unfamiliar with the

word used in the text or they lacking of vocabularies. But the main factor that caused students' bored in reading is the strategy of teaching reading that is used to teach them is not appropriate to their need. Sometimes teachers assume that the students' reading comprehension will develop naturally without any teaching strategies. But in fact, based on my experience during conducting practice teaching in teaching internship difficulty, it was found that many students will find reading difficult although they have done it for several years. They do not know how to comprehend an English text and get the message from it. Consequently, the students become bored and lazy. Nafi Annury (2016) says, learning is a process undertaken by teacher who has been programmed in order learning students to achieve the purpose of learning as specified in accordance with instructions the curriculum prevailing. Furthermore, there is a composite skill in improving students' reading, consisting of several skills: the skill to relate words with previous experiences, the skill to understand the grammatical relationship amongst the words in syntactical construction, the skill to refer to some other sources of information for the meaning of words that the reader has not encountered before and the skill to communicate what has been read and such like. In this case, a good reader is supposed to have all these skills in order to benefit from reading. From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the aim of teaching reading skills is to train the students to be able to comprehend a variety of texts in the target language. The researcher took a sample of the second year students in SMA N 5 Lhokseumawe. About many students still had a low level of achievement in reading skills. Some problems might have occurred to influence these students and their teachers. These problems must be overcome to improve the students' reading skills in order to gradually reach the target language requirements in the curriculum. Based on situation above, the writer was interested in trying the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in an action research study to overcome the problems faced by students with poor reading skills especially using narrative texts. With the assumption that implementing the CLT approach could give a positive result in improving students' reading comprehension, the writer thought that it was necessary to conduct this research.

Literature Review

Definition of Reading

Reading comprehension refers to one's ability to process written text, get meaning out of it, and relate such text with the knowledge already inherent in the reader. A student with high reading comprehension prowess reflects several fundamental skills (Hiep, 2017). First, such students know the meaning of words found in the text and understand it based on the writing context. Secondly, students with good reading comprehension skills can easily follow through the organization of a passage and point out references and antecedents across the passage (Hiep, 2017), draw inferences, point out thought emanating from the passage, and answer any questions posed from the passage read. More complex reading comprehension skills are reflected in the learner's ability to appreciate the use of literary devices in written text and the situational mood of text. Such skills enable the learner to get more out of the text, including tone of writing, reference points, assertions, and inflections. The most significant aspect of reading comprehension is the reader's ability to interrogate text and establish its purpose for writing such text (Belchamber, 2017). A student who can point out the intention that the writer had while coming up with a piece of text and gauge the writer's point of view on a matter has demonstrated high levels of communication comprehension skills (Belchamber, 2017). Additionally, the ability to draw inferences about the author is reflective of high reading comprehension skills. Reading is important to everyday life and for access to world literature. It is a powerful tool for developing speech and language. Since the teaching of reading is a major objective of schools, the focus of most learning disability programs has ultimately been reading. Even in business world, reading in English plays a significant role in the lives of professional especially professionals in the field of English for communication. Reading comprehension is reading with complete understanding of text. It involves knowledge of vocabulary, understanding of sentences structure or syntax, and interpretation of the intention of the writer. The teaching of reading comprehension begins with the correct usage of grammar because it is an essential factor for understanding the context of a passage. Once the student becomes proficient decoders, they begin to focus on assessing what they say and so they construct meaning by reading for facts and identifying main ideas. According to Siah and Kwok

(2018), one of the key elements in a quality education is reading, which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has claimed to be one of the most important foundations of a basic education.

Reading sets the early foundation of education and is likely predictor of future academic success. Children who do not read well are in grave danger of doing poorly in school and are at risk of dropping out. Because success in reading is so important, principals and teachers face unrelenting pressure to produce high test scores. The stakes involved in seeing that the children become readers has produced an ongoing controversy over the merits of the entire language and phonics. According to Wilson (2016), effective teaching is a continual work in progress. As educators, adapting the practice each year to a new group of students, each of whom brings a unique blend of strengths, challenges, and experiences to learning are very essential. Adopting new curricula and apply new standards and mandates are also important. Teachers are always on lookout for new approaches and strategies demonstrated by educational research to work in the classroom.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

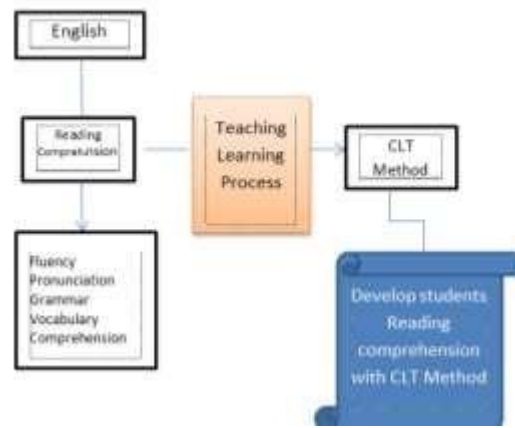
Communicative language teaching has gained worldwide acclamation concerning its effectiveness in language learning and critical language skills (Galloway, 1993). The paper aims to contribute to the improvement of reading comprehension rates in Ecuador. With communicative language teaching being recognized and appreciated as a significant contributor towards effective language learning (Galloway, 1993), constructive criticism of the approach is necessary to establish whether it can effectively impart reading comprehension skills in students. Communicative language learning is appreciated for its practical approach towards language learning. Interaction between learners and teachers and learners and fellow learners is highly encouraged (Revell, & Flavell, 1979). Teachers of language within communicative language-based curricula have a practical understanding of language learning and approach it in the same manner. However, linguists have developed many theories on language learning and how students are likely to acquire relevant language skills (Revell, & Flavell, 1979). The theoretical understanding of language learning differs significantly from the practical understanding of language that teachers in communicative language teaching have. Among the weaknesses that such theories point out in communicative language teaching is the approach assumes knowledge that is non-language specific, which could impact the learner's ability to gain practice Reading comprehension skills. The theoretical criticisms of communicative language teaching are inaccurate. In as much as the method focus on the practical understanding of the language, it does not prevent the mastery of knowledge that is language non-specific (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). As pointed out earlier in the discussion of communicative language teaching, the approach towards language teaching does not have a fixed system of instruction with defined material; students are guided by way of interaction; allowing them to explore various aspect of language in their learning environment (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). The ability to make educated guesses increases with heightened interactions between learners and teachers in the context of language learning (Dörnyei, 2009). Reading comprehension among students will improve drastically in such circumstances, making communicative language teaching remains the most effective approach towards developing reading comprehension skills. The function of language comes as the number one concern of communicative language teaching. The primary purpose of any language is communication. Communication is effected through written text or speech. To communicate effectively, one needs to have the ability to read and comprehend text. Communication cannot be complete unless one deciphers the message passed across in whatever form. The concentration on language use through interaction within the environment results in students' improved ability to communicate effectively using a particular language; therefore, communicative language teaching is the most effective tool for language teaching. The focus on the use of language in communication has been criticized due to the ease with which formal gaps in language learning can be left out, such as the integral aspect of grammar of a specific language that students use quite often in their communication. The criticism assumes that teachers ignore aspects of grammar in their teaching practices whenever they adopt communicative language teaching (Holliday, 1997). The assumption is entirely inaccurate. Even though the focus does not tend to focus on the intricate aspects of drama, the interaction with

teachers and learners present the opportunity for the guidance of students in their studies, with the teachers aware of formal aspects of a language, and therefore integrating them as part of the interaction that occurs in the context of learning (Holliday, 1997). Therefore, it is not to assume that a practical approach to language learning that focuses on such language's function ignores the structural aspects of a language. Understanding the function of a language and using such language in any context is vital towards being able to read the text and deduce meaning and relate such meaning to the pool of knowledge already at an individual's disposal. Communicative language teaching is appreciated for its focus on the realization of communicative competence among learners. They encourage interaction among students and between students and teachers set the stage for communication in a language and subsequent perfection of communication skills in a specific language. Communicative competence and reading comprehension are directly related. Being able to communicate competently indicates high abilities concerning reading, understanding, and relating to the text. Proficiency in communication has been criticized for not being a direct reflection of mastery and understanding of a language. Such criticism tends to ignore the purpose of language, with the language being preferred as a communication tool over any other secondary purpose or objective. Communication language teaching is, therefore, the best approach towards improving reading comprehension skills among learners. The discussion on communicative language teaching highlighted the lack of defined structures for teaching language and requirements for teachers in the model of language teaching. There are no prescribed syllabus versions for communicative language teaching; or guides for both students and teachers to be used in the context of such learning engagements (Holliday, 1997). On the contrary, teachers are given the leeway as facilitators to create an environment where learners will engage teachers and their fellow students in the learning of language. An integral part of language has been seemingly ignored by this aspect of communicative language teaching, grammar. Grammatical rules are different between languages and require well-defined structures and requirements and syllabus to teach effectively (Jacobs & Farrell, 2013). Communicative language teaching is criticized for possibly leading students away from an integral part of the language; grammar. Teachers are viewed as allowing any form of communication in the context of instruction, as long as there is the ability to derive meaning in such communication. Written communication tends to adhere to the rules of grammar. Reading comprehension relates to the reader's ability to understand what is written, make meaning out of it, and relate it to the world around them. Communicative language teaching seems to aid different aspects of reading comprehension (Dörnyei, 2009). The ability to communicate helps in understanding the meaning of words that one comes across. It is, therefore, easy to read and understand what a written text talks about. The ability to get meaning and relate the text to one's circumstances is boosted further by the interactive nature of communicative language teaching (Dörnyei, 2009). As learners interact with each other, they get to appreciate their circumstances and other people's circumstances. Therefore, relating any piece of information they come across to contemporary living becomes easy, which is an essential aspect of reading comprehension. Weatherman (2018) explained Communicative Language Teaching as an approach to second language teaching which seeks to facilitate meaningful communication among students and instructor primarily in the target language through task-based activities which encourage language learners to negotiate using whatever resources they have at any given level of language competency. Likewise, Thamarana (2017) discussed in his study that CLT is one of the latest humanistic approaches to teaching which centered on language and provides more opportunity to learner to practice the target language in spite of its limitation. Basically, the usual worry of most ESL learners is how they can use the language alone and can communicate using English in different real communicative situations like when someone is on a trip, in a meeting or in a restaurant. Since language is a means of communication and CLT may enable the learners to effectively communicate in real life situation, it is inferred that CLT may fulfill the actual goal of teaching a language which is to improve learners' communicative competence. This was supported by Munera (2014) as he mentioned in his study that the primary focus of CLT is to help the learners create meaning rather than help them develop perfect grammar or acquire native-like pronunciation. This means that successfully learning a foreign language is assessed in terms of how learners have developed their communicative competence. Some speaking activities allow students to parrot

dialogue from textbooks or are designed for pattern practice. While these passive speaking activities have their place, active speaking should be encouraged. Active speaking involves getting the students to think while they are formulating responses.

Conceptual Framework

Siti Mariam (2016) states that reading is one of the main four language skills that a learner needs to master in order to ensure success in learning English. The researcher concludes that the reader should be able constructing the meaning internally from interacting with the material that is read. So for students, they are expected not only be able to read the text but rather than Reading with comprehension. Then, CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method will help students to be active in reading comprehension. There are reading aspects that must be mastered by students, they are fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. With using this method, students are able to reach these aspects, therefore the researcher observed the learning process in teaching reading by using CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method.



Research Method

The research was designed to seek the answer of the questions namely how the Communicative language teaching can improve the students ability in reading comprehension. Action research based on Kemmis and Mc. Taggart on Burns (2010:7) is to plan, act, observe and reflect carefully, more systematically and more rigorously than one usually does in everyday teaching learning process. The research start by doing preliminary study or observing to know the class condition and to find the problems in teaching learning process. It was followed by a spiracle cycles that contain four steps; planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

The data got from observation in class were analyzed by several steps, it as follows:

1. Made a table of the data from observation sheet
2. Analyzed the data using descriptive percentage (DP)

$$DP = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

Notes:

DP = Descriptive percentage

N = Empiric score (gotten score)

N = Ideal score (sum of total score)

3. Made a reference of descriptive analysis

- a. Decided the highest score = $\frac{\text{maximal score on scale}}{\text{ideal score on scale}} \times 100\%$
- b. Decided the lowest score = $\frac{\text{minimal score on scale}}{\text{ideal score on scale}} \times 100\%$
- c. Decided the distance of percentage = highest score – lowest score
- d. Decided the interval class = $\frac{\text{distance of the percentage}}{\text{the number of criteria}}$

Results and Discussion

A classroom action research of improving the students in reading comprehension by using Communicative language teaching (CLT) were conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of two meetings. The data were analyzed by the criteria which were stated on table 1.

Table 1 Reference of descriptive analysis

No.	Interval	Criteria
1	Score 90% - 100%	Excellent
2	Score 70% - 89%	Good
3	Score 52% - 67%	Average
4	Score 36% - 51%	Poor
5	Score 20% - 35%	Unacceptable

(Modified from Sudjana, 2009:78)

By the criteria which were stated on Table 1, the data were analyzed into the form of descriptive explanation in the result of study.

Cycle 1

The cycle 1 test was held on March 16th, 2021 for second grade of SMA N 5 Lhokseumawe. first meeting explained about the general knowledge of narrative text, such as the social function, generic structures, and the language features of narrative text. On the second meeting the students given a test to measure their ability in reading comprehension. The result of the test in cycle 1 as follow:

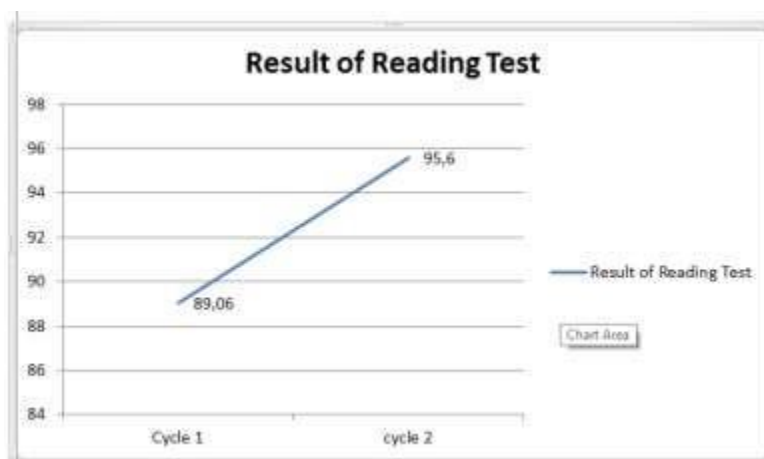
No.	Category	Score	Frequency
1	The lowest score	50	3
2	The highest score	100	14
3	Mean	89.06	

Cycle 2

The cycle 2 test was held in the end of the second meeting which was integrated with the lesson activity. The result of the test was as follows:

No.	Category	Score	Frequency
1	The lowest score	80	1
2	The highest score	100	21
3	Mean	95.6	

As the table reveals. The students showed the improvement on every indicator of their skill in reading comprehension.



Based on the result of the study, there is a significant difference between the students' reading comprehension skills in cycle 1 and cycle 2 before and after subjecting them with the use of Communicative Language Teaching Strategies.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the research can conclude that, CLT is an effective way to improve students' reading skills. Students' performances improved very much during the learning process in the reading class and were able to improve their own weaknesses. The CLT method has changed the reading class atmosphere to be better than before, students felt very happy, comfortable and enthusiastic during the teaching learning process for reading. Using the CLT activities, helped the students to understand the text and answer the questions with better understanding of the vocabulary. (Pre, while, post) Reading activities support students as readers that are meant to increase communicative competence should be success oriented and build up student's confidence in their reading ability.

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