

Using Communicative Language Teaching to Develop the English Speaking Ability of Finance and Banking Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to develop English speaking ability of first-year students by using Communicative Language Teaching. The sample was a group of 23 first-year students majoring in Finance and Banking who were studying the "English for Communication" course in the second semester of the academic year 2017. The sample was selected by simple random sampling. The research instruments used for collecting data were four lesson plans based on four language functions (ordering food, bargaining for a lower price, giving and asking for a recommendation, and giving and asking for a suggesting) and a pre and post-test spoken English test. The duration of implementation was 8 weeks. The data was statistically analyzed by mean scores, percentage, standard deviation and t-test for dependent samples. The results of this study revealed that students' English speaking ability after learning through communicative activities was statistically higher than before being taught by the communicative activities at the .05 level.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, Oral communicative activities, English speaking activity

1. Introduction

English is itself an essential part of a country's socio-cultural and economic life due to extensive use for specific purposes such as financial management, education and training, trade and commerce and international business communication. Consequently, in the Southeast Asian region, the governments have adopted English as a compulsory agenda in their education policies. They have attempted to improve English Language Teaching (ELT) in order to prepare their citizens to be ready for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), a scheme raised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, in order to communicate well in another language, we must make ourselves understood by

the people we are speaking with, and this is not an easy task, especially at the beginning and intermediate levels (Bailey, 2003). Developing learners' oral skills is particularly daunting to English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Asia, where English does not have immediate social and communicative functions within the community where it is learned and speaking is often neglected in EFL classrooms (Lam, 2012). Although, English has been taught as a compulsory subject from primary to higher education level, students' performance in speaking skills is still found to be very poor. For example, there are reports that Thai students spend much more time in speaking classes, but they cannot apply the skills to real life communicative situations

effectively (Kanjunda; 2015, Thunghun; Khamprated, 2012). Consequently, in response to this problem, Communicative Language Teaching used to develop the English speaking ability of first-year Finance and Banking major students to enable them to compete with local and global job market demands.

In fact, the goals of Communicative Language Teaching are focused on all of the components of communicative competence. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes (Brown, 1994). Also, Nanthaboot (2012) and Ahmad and Rao (2013) found that Communicative Language Teaching can develop EFL students' English speaking abilities.

In this study, the researcher has applied Communicative Language Teaching in a classroom. Communicative Language Teaching, according to some theorists and researches mentioned above, should be able to develop English speaking ability with the first-year Finance and Banking major students.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Harmer (2007) explains that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has two main guiding principles - the first is that language is not just patterns of grammar with vocabulary items slotted in, but also involves language functions. The second principle of Communicative Learning Teaching is that students get enough exposure to language and have opportunities for language use. Thus, CLT has a lot in common with the acquisition view of language absorption. As a result, the focus of much of CLT has been on students communicating real messages, and not just grammatically controlled language. The development of many communicative activities, where students use all and any language they know to communicate, shows this aspect of CLT at work.

Bailey (2003) adds to the characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching, claiming that two versions of Communicative Language Teaching emerged. The weak version says teachers should teach the components of language but include communication activities. The strong version says since students learn through interacting, lessons should consist of opportunities to communicate in the target language. In this method, teachers often downplay accuracy and emphasize how students communicate when they speak the target language.

2.2 Oral Communicative Activities

Thornbury (2005) claims that fundamental to the view that speaking is a cognitive skill is the idea that knowledge becomes increasingly automated through successive practice. The communicative demands of the task discourage learners from dwelling on the facts of the language and compel them, instead, to draw on automated routines. Communicative tasks, thus, fulfill two important language learning needs - they prepare learners for real life language use and they encourage of the language knowledge.

Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001) also state that the range of exercise types and activities compatible with a communicative approach is unlimited, provided that exercises enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage learners in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction.

The variety of speaking activities is important for the students to speak and learn how to express their ideas and feelings. Interactive activities foster critical thinking for the students and encourage them to exchange their information in order to enhance knowledge and develop speaking skills.

3. Methodology

Participants

The participants were 23 first- year students majoring in Finance and Banking who signed up for the English for Communication course. The researcher conducted this study during the second semester of the Academic Year 2017 at Rambhai Barni Rajabhat University. Out of three classes of the population, the researcher chose one class for this study. They were selected by simple random sampling. The study was conducted during the period of eight weeks at 1 unit per two weeks, each unit lasted 6 hours.

Instruments

The researcher focused on the effects of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to help develop English speaking abilities of the participants. The detailed information of the research instruments are as follows:

The Pre- and Post-test

A test designed to be a pre-test and post-test was constructed. The guidelines for designing the test were the course syllabus and contents related to the course. The test was adapted from the exercises in Jack C. Richards and David Bohlke's *Four Corners* (2012). The test focused on basic grammar, vocabulary, and functional language. The test consisted of thirty multiple-choice questions. All the participants were given this proficiency test.

English Speaking Test

Both the Pre and Post-test English speaking tests were designed and administered by the researcher. The two tests consisted of ten interview questions. The contents from the book entitled *Four Corners*, the speaking tests were on the topics: Entertainment, Shopping, In a restaurant and Fun in the city.

English Speaking Assessment and Evaluation

The assessment and evaluation in speaking competence was analyzed based on concepts adapted from Brown (1994) to measure a broader range of language abilities including knowledge of cohesion, functions, and sociolinguistic appropriateness, which tended to focus on the formal aspects of language; grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The test consisted of interviews where conversation played important roles. The criteria of speaking assessment were adapted from Chusanachoti, (2012) as follows: fluency, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and communication strategies. The researcher and one rater rated each statement according to the learners' performance.

4. Findings

Regarding the research question which was what effects does CLT have on the English speaking ability of the participants, all the participants were tested by the thirty multiple-choice questions in a pre-test and then in a post-test. This is to observe the effectiveness of this communicative English course and improvement of the use of English language among the participants. The test results were satisfactory. All participants showed an improvement to their English communication skills as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: A comparison of the mean scores on Pre-test and Post-test

Multiple-choice questions	n	Score	M	S.D.	t	p
Pre-test	23	30	13.61	4.65	-	
Post-test	23	30	16.00	3.73	6.034	.000*

***Significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$)**

From Table 1, the results revealed that the English ability of the participants was significantly higher after the communicative activities at the statistically significant level of .05. The participants

had significantly higher mean scores on the post-test ($M=13.61$, $S.D.=4.65$) than the pre-test ($M=16.00$, $S.D.=3.73$).

In order to see all aspects of language learning that were affected by the CLT approach, the score of aspects of assessment included: fluency, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and communication strategies was further analyzed to find the means as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: A comparison of the mean scores on Pre-test and Post-test

spoken						
English	n	Score	M	S.D.	t	p
test						
Pre-test	23	20	5.78	2.32	-	.000*
Post-test	23	20	10.22	2.50	13.138	

***Significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)**

From Table 2, the results revealed that English speaking ability of the participants was significantly higher after communicative activities at the statistically significant level of .05. The participants had significantly higher mean scores on the post-test ($M=5.78$, $S.D.=2.32$) than the pre-test ($M=10.22$, $S.D.=2.50$).

To sum up, the effects that Communicative Language teaching (CLT) had on the participants' English oral performances were positive in that they could enhance their speaking ability in all aspects. The participants were able to use language.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

All participants were given oral communicative activities to accomplish using English language instead of studying the language. The discussions of the findings of this study are presented to clarify the findings. The results indicated a significant difference of the scores obtained by the participants after their pre-test and post-test. In order to answer the

question, the main findings of this study have been divided in to two parts as follows:

Firstly, Communicative Language Teaching supported language learning and speaking in the class. The researcher chose the oral communicative activities to interact in different situations. At the beginning of the task, the researcher provided a friendly environment in order to help students feel safe speaking and more confident by giving them opportunities to try new words even though they made mistakes. They were motivated to practice useful language skills in various situations (e.g. ordering food, bargaining for a lower price, giving and asking for a recommendation, and giving and asking for a suggestion) to see that English was important and could be very beneficial to their English speaking skill related to real life situation. The activities were undertaken on many topics, for example, 'Shopping', in this activity the participants used the technique of mapped dialogue about bargaining. The students are given a chart which placed functions (bargaining for a lower price) in order of occurrence, as indicated by arrows, under the heading showing who says what. Under the topic, 'Ordering food,' the students created the dialogues and role plays on a special event, for example on birthday event. In this activity, students had to order food from a waiter or waitress in a restaurant.

The topic 'Fun in the city' was familiar to the students. The students discussed the items they had to take with them while going on trips, for example a local attraction in Chanthaburi, Thailand. The students tried their best in communicate in English because the topic is familiar to them, so they had ideas to share with the friends.

Therefore, oral commutative activities seemed to be motivating. Communicative activities help the students improve their English speaking ability. The belief that successful language learning depends on

immersing students in tasks that require the students to negotiate meaning and engage in naturalistic and meaningful communication is at the heart of much current thinking (Richards and Renandya, 1999). These provided opportunities for them use the target languages with more confidence to speak English in the classroom. Additionally, Dormsri (2008) found that oral communicative activities, if used in the classroom, can actually help the students enhance their English speaking abilities.

Secondly, the classroom atmosphere should be comfortable for students to use language so the students can relax and interact freely with others. The teacher should advise them to work their peers or groups. The less confident students, who are shy to speak and perform in front of the class, get more confident by taking parts in the activities. The teacher observed that the students having fun and enjoying learning because they practice together in pairs or groups brainstorming and becoming creative thinkers. The teacher also has an important role in building good relationships among the students. This could result in students' growing sense of confidence in speaking, in using some appropriate expressions to communicate with friends and foreign teachers, in understanding useful vocabulary items, and so on (Richards and Bohlke, 2011).

5.2 Conclusion and recommendation

This study was conducted to investigate the proficiency of English speaking ability by focusing on Communicative Language Teaching designed on the oral English performance of undergraduate students. It was found that this approach was suitable for EFL instruction provided that there was a well-prepared or organized lesson plans. The finding from the results of the pre and post-test scores indicated that the participants could speak English more fluently.

In the future, as different activities, context, population, periods of time and other factors can affect students' oral English performance, it may be

beneficial if more studies on the speaking abilities are conducted in relation to those aspects.

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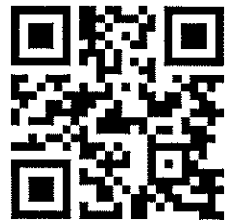
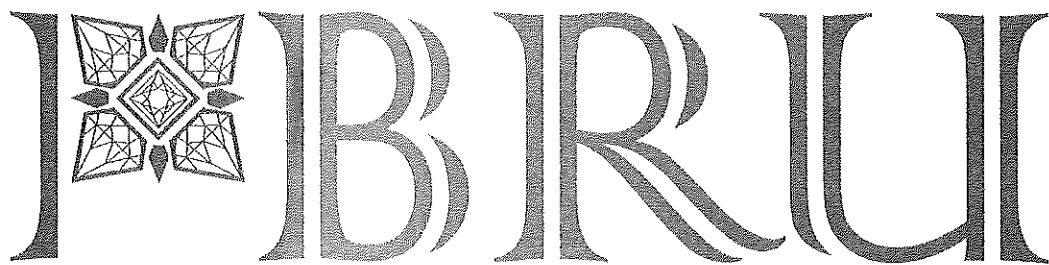


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