Research Article

ENHANCING POSITIVE EFFECTS FOR THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, most English teachers have widely applied the Communicative Language Teaching activities (the CLT activities) in English classrooms as a foreign language (EFL) because of their outstanding effectiveness. In spite of having many benefits for learning and teaching English, activities in CLT also have problems with mixed-level students, un-motivated students and large class sizes, as well as lack of language environment for foreign language acquisition. This article is about how to enhance the positive effect for the CLT activities by using technology equipment. In this article, the author reviews the crucial theory of the improvement effects for the CLT activities, and therefrom practical activities are designed to teach English speaking skills.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching activities, mixed – level learners, student's learning motivations, technology equipment.*

1.   Introduction

Understandably, most English teachers around the world have applied the CLT activities in EFL classrooms. Many experts, however, have claimed that as mixed – level learners, some of the learners may obtain more benefits from these tasks than others. In addition, other critics have argued that the CLT activities are not enough to acquire a target language (L2) because they are implemented only within a "monolingual community".

As mentioned by Manag (2007), "within that wider community, we would need to create a learning environment in which the classroom was less rigidly defined so that students could reach into the target communities and contribute actively to meaningful exchanges there". Therefore, students should be immersed in target communities and consequently, they would gain communicative competence in real-world situations.

It is obvious that linguistic environment plays an important role in the development of language skills for non-native learners while acquiring foreign languages. According to

Wang (2009), for the children, when exposure to the different languages, they not only acquire their first language but also can acquire the foreign language. For those abroad or mixed with speakers of another language, they have a pressing desire to communicate and to get their meaning across. They have many opportunities to speak and experiment with the language.

In other words, it is important for all learners to immerse in the target language (L2) because non-native learners might have opportunities to practice interactively the target language skills. However, most of the recent EFL classrooms often have poor language environment condition for learners. Perhaps, adopting technology equipment in teaching English is the best solution to these aforementioned problems because of several following arguments.

Min (2013) proposes that the use of multimedia technology motivates students to learn English. Instead of the traditional teaching methods that are unpopular and less effective in the English language classrooms, multimedia technology, with the help of audio, visual and animation effects, motivates students to learn English quickly and effectively. In addition, with such features as abundant-information and crossing time and space, multimedia technology creates a real-life or native speaking country context for English language teaching.

It must be said in conclusion that the development of technology in this era makes positive benefits for teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, it will certainly continue to have more enormous achievements in the future. What follows is a general overview of the approach of enhancing positive effects for an English lesson applied the CLT activities, including some features of the CLT activities, as well as effectively raising student motivations by adopting technology equipment keeping up with the Industry 4.0.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Understanding of the communicative language teaching activity*

A lot of attempts have been made to provide an insight into the definition of the communicative language teaching activity. According to Harmer (2010), "activities in CLT typically involve students in real or realistic communication, where the successful achievement of the communicative tasks they are performing is at least as important as the accuracy of their language use".

In his introduction to classroom activities in the CLT, Richards (2006) shows that the CLT activities in classrooms includes two general types – "activities focusing on fluency" and "activities focusing on accuracy". In detail, activities focusing on fluency which reflect natural use of language, focus on achieving communication, require meaningful use of language, and produce language that may not be predictable. By contrast, activities focusing on accuracy which reflect classroom use of language, focus on the formation of correct examples of language, practice language out of context, or control choice of language.

Furthermore, Richards (2006) also divides activities in CLT into three different kinds of practice – mechanical, meaningful, and communicative. Following this, mechanical practice refers to a controlled practice activity which students can successfully carry out without necessarily understanding the language they are using. Meanwhile, meaningful practice refers to an activity where language control is still provided but where students are required to make meaningful choices when carrying out practice. In addition, communicative practice refers to activities where practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable.

In 2001, Richards & Rodgers mention the major activity types – functional communication activities and social interaction activities in the communicative language teaching. According to these authors, functional communication activities include such tasks as learners comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures; discovering missing features in a map or picture; one learner communicating behind a screen to another learner and giving instructions on how to draw a picture or shape, or how to complete a map; following directions; and solving problems from shared clues. Social interaction activities include conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role plays, simulations, skits, improvisations, and debates.

2.1.1. Advantages of the communicative language teaching activity

As mentioned by Richards (2006), most of the CLT activities involving pair and group work, have many benefits for EFL students. In the grouping activities, students can learn when listening to other students in the group. Students are able to produce more output that they would utter in teacher-centered instruction, they can be engaged in speech because they feel more comfortable speaking to their peers, and they can develop fluency.

In their seminal paper of 2004, Nguyen & Nguyen suggest that the communicative approach has the ability to help learners study and practice not only communicative skills but also grammar patterns. Besides, these authors claimed that communicative lessons are more effective than grammar-translation lessons in helping learners raise their ability to produce statements correctly and appropriately. Learners were more motivated when they experienced more interesting and active communicative grammar lessons than their friends did in the control class.

The implementation of CLT has brought a lot of advantages for Teaching English as a foreign or a second language. As concluded by Richards (2006), unlike audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods, communicative teaching emphasis on "task-oriented, student-centered" language teaching practice and creates a positive environment for the classroom activities such as group discussion, subject discussion and debates, which can other more opportunities for communication among students and between teachers and students. In

other words, it makes the "linguistic environment" for students to practice the four English skills.

2.1.2. *Disadvantages of the communicative language teaching activity*

When discussing problems of the communicative language teaching activity in English classrooms, Thamarana (2015) have come to the conclusion that activities in the CLT approach are great for intermediate students and advanced students, but for beginners, some controlled practice is needed. According to the author, students with low levels of proficiency in the target language may find it difficult to participate in oral communicative activities and, if the exams used by any institution are grammar based, communicative fluency may not be appropriate.

In addition, Richards (2014) concludes that the unfavorable class-size, especially, classes of 50 or more students are very popular in some countries making opportunities for authentic communication difficult. Large class sizes tend to favor receptive activities involving reading and listening because they are less demanding and time-consuming for the teacher than productive activities involving speaking and writing in pairs or groups.

As a result, the teacher-centered instruction that does not provide students with critical unrehearsed language practice and individual attention. The combination of grammar-based instruction, the limited oral interaction of students in the class, and inadequate opportunities to speak English outside of class with foreigners or to travel abroad does not support the development of communicative competence.

Another problem is the fact that students may feel too shy or embarrassed to speak in class or perform in front of an audience, especially in English. "This type of performance anxiety and other feelings students have in the language learning process have long been an important consideration in ELT" (Harmer, 2010, p. 91).

2.2. *Solutions to the problems of the communicative language teaching activity in English classrooms*

In the following section, some of the solutions to these problems, including raising student motivations and applying the technology equipment in English classrooms, will particularly be provided. This attempt is best wished to enhance the positive effects for the communicative language teaching activities in English classrooms.

2.2.1. *Raising student motivations*

We absolutely know that an effective English lesson depends not only on the teaching approach but also on student learning motivation. A reasonable explanation for this argument may be that when students come to class, they bring with them their own personalities and their own learning expectations. "Their behaviors will also be influenced by their current circumstances and by what happens in the lessons. There is always, as well as, the possibility of interpersonal tensions between students, or between students and their teacher" (Harmer, 2015, p. 93).

Harmer (2015) also mentions that writers on motivation divided the motivations into extrinsic and intrinsic. In particular, extrinsic motivation is from outside the leaners themselves and may, for example, be provoked by the need- or the desire – to pass an exam, or by the fact that the learner has a trip to a foreign country and needs to get their language up to a communicatively efficient level. In addition, intrinsic motivation is described as a "passion for learning" and "a sense of competence while performing challenging tasks". Students who are intrinsically motivated are driven by a desire to succeed in class and by what happens in the lesson.

Therefore, the primary function of teachers' management role is to motivate the learners who are demotivated and to nurture who are already well motivated to the task of learning a foreign language.

2.2.2. Applying the technology equipment in English classrooms

Today, one of the most popular personal devices is the mobile phone which can be used for recording and playing multimedia contents. Students can greatly benefit from having a camera on the cell phones for documenting visual materials and collecting scientific data. Additionally, browsing with cell phones is one convenient way for students to surf online. Most of the modern mobile phones are incorporated with browsing applications such as Opera Mini, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Opera, and Google Chrome. Mobile phones have the downloading feature which can be used by students and tutors to download various kinds of materials through their mobile phones easily. Teachers can download video through their mobile phones and present them to students through a TV set available in the classrooms.

In order to create a linguistic environment for foreign language acquisition, one of the effective solutions is to use English videos available on the Internet in the English lesson. According to Harmer (2015), watching films can help students see how intonation matches facial expression and what gestures accompany certain phrases. Following this way, students can adjust themselves their pronunciation followed the English speakers.

Along with the problems of the CLT activities, including mixed-level students, unmotivated students, and large class sizes, English teachers might use tape recorders or other audio recording devices in helping students overcome their difficulties in the English speaking skills front of the class. According to Armstrong (2000), tape recorders or other audio recording devices, including some software, are among the most valuable learning tools in any classroom. This is because they offer students a medium through which to learn about their linguistic powers and help them employ verbal skills to communicate, solve problems, and express inner feelings.

The most noticeable feature of Industry 4.0 is the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The AI is applied popularly in many fields of modern life, including aspects of the English language because of its special effects. According to Hilfer (2018),

"AI and machine learning have great potential to provide targeted speaking practice for many adult learners. Machine learning has long been the cornerstone of speech recognition for the automation of speaking instruction and targeted pronunciation training."

As mentioned above, students may feel embarrassed to speak or perform in front of the class, especially in English classrooms. Fortunately, Artificial intelligence might be the best solution in this situation. McClure (2018) points out that the AI enables the digital courseware to address the individual needs of learners at a level that is difficult to achieve in a classroom. In particular, the AI allows students to choose appropriately English courses for their individual needs, as well as identifies students' weaknesses so that they receive extra presentation and practice of those concepts and content.

From some above illustrations, engaging the technology equipment in English classrooms is the effective solution to the problems of the CLT activities. In addition, we can conclude that a noticeable challenge for English teachers is to use effectively advantages of technology equipment in teaching English keeping up with the Industry 4.0.

3.   Procedure

The following is to describe a particular lesson using mobile phones and social networks to support the implementation of the CLT activities in English classrooms. In this situation, students will work in groups and complete a learning project (making a video about their family).

3.1. *Background information*

Learning objectives: The purpose of the lesson is for students to

- Improve the four English skills, but speaking skills is in priority
- Work in groups of five or seven students
- Make a speech in about 10 – 15 minutes

Student level: The lesson should take place after students had exposure to the basic structure of the English language, including the descriptive adjectives, and simple sentence structures. The lesson is best used in the context of pre-intermediate English language learners

Class size: The lesson can be implemented in large sized classes from 30 to 40 students

Organization: individual, groups, and the whole class

Language focus: Descriptive adjectives, Simple sentence structures

Alternatives: Review on the English tenses, including the present tenses and past simple tense

Teaching method: Communicative language teaching (CLT), including main activities such as Task-completion activities, Opinion-sharing activities, Information-transfer activities, Roleplays, or Project-based activities

Technology equipment: Mobile phones, social networks, and apps for teaching and learning English

3.2. *The implementation of the lesson in English classrooms*

Particularly, the lesson might be implemented following steps

Step 1: Teachers divide the class into groups. In each group includes from 5 to 7 students

Directions to Students: Work in groups of five to seven students

1 The topic for this lesson is **Talking about your family**

2 Each person in the group must have a job to do. Using Table 1, write the names of everyone in the group and what each person will do

***Table 1.** The task template of each student in groups*

Name:	What this person will do:
A	
B	
C	

Step 2: In the class, teachers show video models of native speakers about this topic. Similar videos are available on the Internet, retrieved from some websites (http://movies.go.com, or www.youtube.com). Teachers can choose some of them that are suitable for the learning content of the lesson. Based on what students saw in the video, they can outline something necessary to complete in this project, as well as practice their listening skills

Step 3: In the class, teachers ask students to practice in pairs. In this way, students create dialogues following some available questions provided by the teacher

- Where are you from?
- How many people are there in your family?
- What does your father/mother/sister look like?
- What is your father/mother/sister like?
- What activities do you often do with your family?

This activity enables students to practice interactively their speaking skills in pairs before they work in groups to complete their projects (making a video about their family at home).

Step 4: Individually, teachers let students make a small talk about their family. In this step, students will make an outline of the speech using linguistic materials in the last lessons. Teachers call some of the students to speak in front of the class. At the same time, others must listen to their friends carefully and give feedbacks

Step 5: In the out of class learning, teachers ask students to work in groups and make a video recording about the topic "**Talking about your family**"

Directions to Students:

1.   Each group will make a video with the length from 10 to 15 minutes;

2.   All students in the group will have participated in this video;

3.   Students must apply something learned in the lesson to their speaking, including descriptive adjectives, and simple sentence structures;

4.   Ideas for mobile phone video projects: Students can consider ideas to make a video about the family topic with their mobile phones. To begin, they can get ideas from many popular programs on television, including talk shows, game shows, news specials, and parodies.

To support the process of making videos, students can use some special functions at websites namely movie/TV scripts creations (www.script-o-rama.com, www.simplyscripts.com), or text-to-speech programs creations (www.research.ibm.com/tts/coredemo.shtml).

Step 6: After completing their projects, each of the groups will have uploaded their video projects on the website https://classroom.google.com.[1]

Step 7: Each of the groups will have evaluated videos, uploaded on the website: https://classroom.google.com, following the video assessing rating (see Appendix A)

Based on what evaluated from the groups, teachers can choose the most interesting videos to show in front of the class in the next lessons, and ask the chosen groups to make a presentation about their videos.

4.   Discussion

Through an analysis of implementation the aforementioned example, we found that there are many positive effects for English classrooms applied activities in CLT. One of the most outstanding effects is that this example can be applied in an unfavorable class-size. It might encourage all students to participate in group projects. All students in the class have opportunities to practice their speaking skills. Furthermore, the activities in this example can engage students in an in-depth inquiry. This means that students are engaged in a rigorous, extended process of asking questions, using resources, and developing their ideas when working in groups.

Most of the CLT activities involving pair and group work, as it can be seen in the above example, have many benefits for EFL students. In the grouping activities, students

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[1] This website allows teachers to make connecting classrooms by email addresses that can help managing student tasks effectively. When using this website, teachers can establish deadlines for each particular task, as well as handle the task completion of students. In addition, this makes an interactive learning environment because students can comment something about their tasks or others. In conclusion, these network tools can help English teachers carry out this activity conveniently. Teachers can evaluate the task effectiveness of students and encourage the active participating from students in the class.

can learn when listening to other students in the group. Additionally, students can develop 21st-century skills, students build skills valuable for today's world, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication, which are taught and assessed.

In addition, with the support of mobile phones and social networks, students have more opportunities to practice their speaking skills out of the class by recording their voices. Moreover, they can be more interactive with others when uploading their records on the social network as the example above. In particular, students can give their feedback in a comfortable way, as well as receive some comments for their speaking from others in the class. This is the best solution to barriers of the CLT activities that unmotivated students who are too embarrassed or refuse to participate in class activities. As reported by Harmer (2010), uncooperative and unmotivated students are a serious problem and can easily disrupt the instructional process in this way.

However, depending on detailed features of each English class, teachers can use other social networks to support the English teaching (see Appendix B). We need more studies about the effects of the social networks on learning and teaching English in the future.

5. Conclusions

This article discusses how to enhance the positive effect of the communicative language teaching activity in English classrooms, including raising student motivations, as well as adopting technology equipment. In order to improve the effects of activities in CLT, English teachers need to keep up with the development of technology equipment to design more effective and creative English lessons. This is increasingly becoming a vital factor in helping students to develop the four– English skills and more ready to face the changes from Industry 4.0.

❖ ***Conflict of Interest:*** *Author have no conflict of interest to declare.*

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A
VIDEO RATING RUBRIC

Topic:_____**Group's name:** _____

Examiner's name: _____**Leader's name:** _____

Instructions: *Evaluate each criterion below by sticking (✓) the corresponding number using the following five-point scale:*

EVALUATION CRITERION	Needs improvement (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Very good (4)	Excellent (5)
Quality of video script					
Acting					
Video content					
Video organization					
Video pacing					
Overall effectiveness					

Additional comments:

_____

_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX B
SOCIAL NETWORKS, APPS, WEBSITES SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN
LEARNING ENGLISH

Social networks & Supporting websites	Language Apps for students to use on smartphones
1. Facebook, Zalo	1. **Duolingo** – language courses
2. http://movies.go.com;	2. **HelloTalk** – chat and Q&A
3. www.youtube.com;	3. **HiNative** – chat and Q&A
4. https://classroom.google.com;	4. **Mindsnacks** – language games
5. www.script-o-rama.com;	5. **Memrise** – flashcards and SRS
6. www.simplyscripts.com;	6. **Leaf** – context and idioms
7.www.research.ibm.com/tts/coredemo.shtml	7. **Lingua.ly** – native reading and materials
	8. **Busuu** – language courses

NÂNG CAO HIỆU QUẢ CỦA CÁC HOẠT ĐỘNG DẠY HỌC THEO PHƯƠNG PHÁP
GIAO TIẾP TRONG CÁC LỚP HỌC TIẾNG ANH NHƯ MỘT NGOẠI NGỮ

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TÓM TẮT

Ngày nay, phần đông các giáo viên tiếng Anh vận dụng phương pháp giao tiếp vào các giờ học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ vì những ưu điểm nổi bật của phương pháp này. Tuy nhiên, bên cạnh những ưu điểm, phương pháp giao tiếp cũng tồn tại những bất cập nhất định liên quan đến sự đa dạng trình độ và động cơ học tập của học sinh, lớp có sĩ số đông, và cả việc thiếu môi trường thực hành ngoại ngữ thường xuyên. Trong bài viết này, tác giả đi sâu phân tích một số quan điểm lí thuyết về những ưu điểm và nhược điểm, cũng như một số giải pháp khắc phục nhược điểm khi áp dụng phương pháp giao tiếp, thông qua việc sử dụng các thiết bị công nghệ và nâng cao động cơ học tập của học sinh. Dựa trên nền tảng lí thuyết này, tác giả minh họa cụ thể các hoạt động thực hành dùng để giảng dạy kĩ năng Nói tiếng Anh cho đối tượng học sinh có trình độ tiếng Anh cơ bản.

Từ khóa: *đa dạng trình độ người học, động lực học tập, hoạt động dạy học tiếng Anh giao tiếp, thiết bị công nghệ.*