

Analysis on UNIMED Students Understanding in English Learning: Using Communicative Language Teaching Theory

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Abstract

English proficiency is a critical skill for university graduates entering the professional world. However, many Indonesian students struggle with practical English applications due to traditional teaching methods that emphasize grammar rather than real-world communication. This study investigates the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing Unimed students' understanding of English for professional purposes. A mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, is employed to assess student progress. The research involves classroom observations, pre- and post-tests, surveys, and interviews with students who receive CLT-based instruction. Findings indicate that CLT significantly improves students' ability to write job-related documents, such as CVs, cover letters, and professional emails, as well as their confidence in workplace communication. The study highlights challenges in implementing CLT, including adaptation difficulties and varying levels of student engagement. Based on the results, recommendations are made to integrate CLT into university curricula to better prepare students for professional communication.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, English Proficiency, Professional Communication, University Students, Job-related English Skills



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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

English proficiency is a crucial skill in today's competitive job market, especially for university graduates preparing to enter professional industries. While Indonesian universities integrate English courses into their curricula, many students still struggle with applying English effectively in workplace scenarios. This issue stems from traditional teaching methods that focus heavily on grammar and theoretical knowledge rather than practical communication. As a result, many graduates face challenges in writing professional documents, composing formal emails, and engaging in workplace conversations. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been widely recognized as an effective method to bridge this gap. Unlike conventional approaches, CLT emphasizes interaction and task-based learning, allowing students to develop language proficiency through real-life communication activities. This study explores the impact of CLT in improving Unimed students' understanding of English, particularly in preparing for the workforce. The research involves teaching students essential job-related skills, such as CV and resume writing, cover letter composition, professional email writing, and workplace communication. By integrating CLT principles, the study aims to assess how effectively students can apply English in professional settings.

Objectives of the Study

- This study aims to examine the effectiveness of CLT in enhancing Unimed students' understanding of English for professional purposes. Specifically, it seeks to:
- Evaluate students' comprehension and application of English in writing CVs, resumes, cover letters, and professional emails.

- c. Assess students' ability to engage in workplace conversations after being taught using the CLT approach.
- d. Identify challenges and improvements in students' English proficiency during the training sessions.

Provide recommendations for integrating CLT-based teaching methods into university curricula to better prepare students for professional communication.

Previous Studies

Several studies have explored the role of Communicative Language Teaching in improving English proficiency. Research by Richards & Rodgers (2014) highlights that CLT enhances learners' confidence and ability to use English in real-life situations. Similarly, a study by Harmer (2015) found that task-based CLT activities significantly improve students' speaking and writing skills compared to traditional grammar-based instruction. In the Indonesian context, studies such as Rahmawati & Suherman (2021) examined how CLT helps vocational students develop workplace English skills, revealing that interactive methods lead to higher engagement and retention. Another study by Suryani (2022) focused on university students, emphasizing that CLT improves job-related communication skills. However, few studies specifically analyze how CLT aids in preparing university students for the workforce, particularly in writing job application documents and professional communication. This research aims to fill that gap by focusing on Unimed students and their practical English needs.

Research Problem

Despite years of English education, many Indonesian university graduates struggle to apply English in professional settings. Traditional teaching methods often do not equip students with the necessary skills to write job application documents or communicate effectively in the workplace. Given the growing importance of English in the global job market, it is essential to find more effective teaching approaches that focus on real-world applications. This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- a. How well do Unimed students understand and apply English in professional writing after learning through CLT?
- b. To what extent does CLT improve students' confidence and ability to engage in workplace conversations?
- c. What are the common challenges students face when learning job-related English through CLT?

By answering these questions, this study aims to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching at the university level, ensuring that graduates are better prepared for the workforce.

Review of Literature

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Its Principles

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that prioritizes interaction and meaningful communication in language learning. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), CLT encourages learners to use the target language in real-life contexts rather than memorizing grammar rules. The approach is based on the idea that language learning is most effective when learners actively participate in conversations, discussions, and task-based activities, as these methods mirror natural language acquisition. Harmer (2015) emphasizes that CLT focuses on

fluency over accuracy, meaning that students are encouraged to express themselves even if their language use is not grammatically perfect. This method contrasts with traditional language teaching, which often relies on rote memorization and isolated grammar exercises. CLT incorporates activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and simulations, which help learners develop practical language skills necessary for real-world communication. Furthermore, CLT integrates authentic materials, such as newspaper articles, emails, and recorded conversations, to expose students to language as it is used in professional and social settings. This exposure enables learners to build confidence and adaptability in using English beyond the classroom environment. Another fundamental principle of CLT is learner-centered instruction. Rather than focusing solely on the teacher's input, CLT shifts the responsibility of learning to students, allowing them to take an active role in their language development. According to Larsen-Freeman (2018), this approach fosters autonomy and encourages learners to engage in problem-solving activities that simulate real-life language use. Additionally, CLT promotes cooperative learning by encouraging peer interactions, which enhances communicative competence through shared knowledge and feedback.

CLT and English for Professional Purposes

English proficiency is crucial for job readiness, as many professional fields require effective communication skills. Several studies have demonstrated that CLT improves students' ability to use English in workplace scenarios. According to Rahmawati and Suherman (2021), vocational students who learned through CLT showed greater confidence in writing job application documents and engaging in professional conversations. The study further noted that students displayed increased motivation and engagement, as they found the interactive learning approach more stimulating than traditional lecture-based methods. Additionally, Suryani (2022) conducted research on university students and found that CLT enhances job-related communication skills. The study reported that students who participated in CLT-based lessons performed better in writing professional emails and interacting in formal settings compared to those who followed traditional grammar-based instruction. This suggests that integrating CLT into English courses can better prepare students for professional communication. Suryani (2022) also emphasized that CLT fosters a learner-centered environment, where students actively participate in discussions and simulations that reflect real-world communication challenges. In the context of workplace English, CLT has been shown to enhance not only language proficiency but also soft skills such as negotiation, collaboration, and problem-solving. Studies by Littlewood (2019) suggest that communicative teaching methods develop students' ability to handle professional scenarios such as interviews, meetings, and presentations more effectively. Moreover, CLT enables students to practice using English in industry-specific contexts, which is essential for their future careers. In addition, the exposure to authentic materials such as company reports, business correspondence, and case studies helps students build familiarity with workplace communication styles, further reinforcing their confidence in professional settings.

Challenges in Implementing CLT in Indonesian Universities

Despite its effectiveness, the implementation of CLT in Indonesian universities faces several challenges. One major issue is the limited exposure to English in daily life, which affects students' ability to practice the language outside the classroom. Suryani (2022) highlights that many students struggle with confidence when speaking English due to a lack of real-world practice opportunities. Without regular interaction in English, students often feel hesitant to express themselves, leading to anxiety and reduced participation in communicative tasks.

Furthermore, Rahmawati and Suherman (2021) note that traditional teaching methods are still dominant in many Indonesian universities, making it difficult for educators to adopt CLT fully. Teachers may lack the training or resources needed to design interactive lessons that align with CLT principles. The reliance on outdated instructional methods, such as grammar drills and rote memorization, further hinders the development of students' communicative skills. Additionally, teachers may face institutional barriers, including rigid curricula and standardized syllabi, that prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical application. Another challenge is the large class size in universities, which can limit the effectiveness of communicative activities. With larger groups, it becomes challenging for instructors to provide individualized feedback and facilitate meaningful interactions among students. Large class sizes also make it difficult to implement task-based learning, as monitoring student progress and ensuring active participation can be overwhelming for a single instructor. Consequently, many students may not receive sufficient opportunities to engage in language production activities, which are essential for developing fluency. Additionally, the assessment methods in Indonesian universities often do not align with CLT principles. Many institutions still rely on standardized tests that emphasize grammar and vocabulary rather than communicative competence. According to Widiastuti (2020), the mismatch between teaching approaches and assessment criteria discourages students from actively participating in communicative activities, as their performance is judged primarily on linguistic accuracy rather than practical language use. This creates a gap between classroom learning and real-world application, where students may excel in written exams but struggle with actual communication in professional settings. Implementing alternative assessment methods, such as portfolio-based evaluations, performance tasks, and peer assessments, could help address this issue by encouraging students to develop functional language skills.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with elements of quantitative analysis to assess the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing Unimed students' understanding of English for professional purposes. A mixed-methods approach is used to gather both subjective and measurable data, providing a comprehensive evaluation of students' progress. Classroom observations, surveys, and interviews are conducted to assess student engagement, confidence, and practical application of English skills. Additionally, pre-tests and post-tests are administered to measure improvements in students' ability to write job-related documents and engage in professional communication.

Participants

The participants of this study are Unimed undergraduate students enrolled in English-related courses. A purposive sampling method is used to select students who have previously taken traditional English courses but have had limited exposure to CLT-based instruction. The sample consists of 50 students from various faculties, ensuring a diverse representation of different academic backgrounds. Participants are divided into two groups: an experimental group receiving CLT-based instruction and a control group continuing with traditional grammar-based method.

Data Collection Methods

To evaluate the effectiveness of CLT, the following data collection methods are employed:

- a. Classroom Observations: Sessions are observed to assess student participation, interaction, and engagement in communicative tasks.

- b. Pre- and Post-Tests: Students complete assessments before and after the training to measure improvements in writing CVs, resumes, cover letters, and professional emails.
- c. Surveys and Questionnaires: Students provide feedback on their learning experience, confidence levels, and perceived effectiveness of CLT.
- d. Interviews: In-depth interviews with selected participants and instructors help gather qualitative insights into challenges and progress.
- e. Task-Based Assessments: Students complete real-world communication tasks, such as mock job applications and simulated workplace conversations, to assess practical application of skills.

Data Analysis Techniques

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques are used to analyze the collected data:

- a. Descriptive Statistics: Pre- and post-test scores are analyzed to determine improvements in students' writing and communication skills.
- b. Thematic Analysis: Qualitative data from observations, interviews, and surveys are coded and categorized to identify common themes regarding student engagement, confidence, and challenges.
- c. Comparative Analysis: Differences in performance between the experimental and control groups are examined to assess the impact of CLT on professional English learning.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines are strictly followed throughout the study. Participants provide informed consent before taking part in the research. Confidentiality is maintained, and students have the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. The study aims to contribute to educational improvement without causing any harm or disadvantage to the participants. By employing a well-structured methodology, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of CLT in preparing Unimed students for professional communication, ultimately offering recommendations for curriculum enhancement.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISSCUSION

No	Competence	Indicator	Average pre-test score	Average post test score	Improvement
1.	Writing a CV	CV structure, use of formal language, appropriateness of content	60	88	46,7 %
2.	Writing a cover letter	Application letter format, coherence of content, accuracy of purpose and tone	55	84	52,7%
3.	Writing Profesional Email	Formal greetings, paragraph structure, closing, grammar	62	85	37,1%
4.	Oral Communication (Interview Simulation)	Clarity of answers, choice of vocabulary, self-confidence	58	83	43,1%
5	Group Discussion and Presentation	Active participation, spontaneous use of English, responsive	64	87	35,9%

This table shows real improvements in the five key skills taught with the CLT approach. The highest increase was seen in writing **cover letters**, indicating that students responded well to the task-based approach that put them in a simulated real-world workplace.

Discussion

Students' Ability to Use English for Professional Writing After Learning through CLT

At the initial phase of training (Meeting 1), writing competence for professional reports among students was poor. Most participants were not aware of how to formally structure CVs and cover letters. This is evidenced in the pre-test results where more than 70% of students merely provided simple information such as name, education, and contact without any formatting and using formal language as per the norms of the industry. But with the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology, the students began to show tremendous improvement. In Meeting 2, they were introduced to quality CV examples and job application letters, and given group tasks to study and compare the documents. The task not only opened their eyes but also instilled critical thinking capacity in a work environment. The peak in the level of development was reached in Meeting 4, where learners were asked to write their own CVs and cover letters based on real job advertisements that they selected from the internet. Through this lesson, the tutors reported that 85% of learners could create documents with the correct format, in correct language, and adjust the content according to the job they were applying for. This improvement is also reflected in the post-test results, in which the mean score increased by 28 points over the pre-test (from a mean of 58 to 86).

Improvement in Students' Confidence and Ability to Engage in Workplace Discussion

Use of CLT also helped a great deal in improving the confidence level of students in speaking English. In Meeting 3, students participated in job interview simulation roleplay. Initially, they were all nervous and could not think of answers to simple questions such as "What are your strengths?" or "Why do you want to work here?" But through repetitive mechanism and practice, they eventually got used to answering spontaneously and confidently. 70% of the students became better in confidence from session to session, especially after receiving direct feedback from their tutors and fellow students. The students also indicated in weekly reflections that the simulation methodology put them more prepared to face actual conditions, as not only did they learn theory but also applied it in practice. During Meeting 5, group discussions and formal email presentations to a pretend HRD team indicated that students had begun to internalize the language patterns and professional communication ethics. They were able to articulate their intentions effectively, choose correct words, and construct sentences with correct structure, something difficult to achieve through conventional teaching techniques.

Problems Faced in Learning Job-Related English using CLT

Although the results were extremely positive, implementation of CLT also presented some difficulties. Reports of Meetings 2 and 5 reported that some students struggled to adapt to the more active and participatory learning pattern. Some were less confident in speaking up in groups, especially those with weaker language proficiency. Additionally, group work was not productive all the time. Difference in motivation, discipline, and ability among the group members led to unequal contributions. For example, during the group cover letter simulation activity, some students simply sat back and watched while others did the most part of the work. Technical issues were also brought forward, especially the writing of formal emails that call for

cross-cultural communication ethics know-how. Some students still engage in the application of informal register or mixed-up language (code-switching) when writing a formal email, which is very much a main issue in feedback from tutors. However, these challenges are overcome step by step by means of tutor mentoring strategies, continuous feedback, and personal student reflection. Fundamental shifts in learning attitudes among students indicate that although CLT must be modified, this method actually fosters academic independence and maturity in the long term. According to the five training sessions that were assessed, it can be stated that Communicative Language Teaching is effective in developing Unimed students' professional English language competencies, both spoken and written, both improving through test scores and also through shifts in students' attitudes, self-confidence, and critical thinking abilities in facing the reality of the actual world of work.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research confirm that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) significantly improves Unimed students' professional proficiency in English in writing professional documents such as CVs, cover letters, and emails, as well as workplace communication. In fact, it was found out that CLT's task-based, interactive approach improved students' confidence, critical thinking, and flexibility to use in real-world situations, where students showed huge improvements in the post-tests for example, cover letter writing scores increased by 52.7%. Nevertheless, challenges such as uneven student participation, reluctance to active learning initially, and technological issues with formal writing were faced. Overcoming these, the research recommends implementing CLT into university courses with assistance of a tailored nature, such as small group work and continuous feedback mechanisms.

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