An Analysis of Employing Communicative Learning Strategies to Increase Students' HOTS in Speaking Skills

Karina Thohirah*[1], Hanni Yukamana[3], Santi Mayasari[3]
[1,2,3] Universitas PGRI, Palembang, Indonesia
e-mail: **[*1]kthohirah@gmail.com**

Abstract

Students are needed to learn to effectively speak in English, since it is one of the languages to communicate and intereact in most areas. But as it is foreign language, students may depend on direct instruction than being self-directed learners. Many students have yet to develop their higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), they struggle to think critically and relying more on memorization without a deep understanding especially when they need create produced skills. To handle the situation, this study aimed to increase students' HOTS in speaking skills. This study was a Classroom Action Research (CAR) with three cycles within three meetings each cycle. There was a class called pre-intermediate that the researcher found most students have LOTS than HOTS. This study used Communicative Learning Strategies to increase students' HOTS in speaking skills by implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and asking them to work in groups and/or pairs. There were 18 participants with whom the researcher implemented the strategies. Data collection used were speaking assessment, observation, questionnaire, and documentation. The findings showed that CLS can increase students' HOTS. The speaking scores have reached the success criteria which are about 4.1 out of 5.0. The results of observation and questionnaires explained that class activities affected their thinking skills, and so did the documentation.

***Keywords:** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Communicative Learning Strategies, HigherOorder Thinking Skills (HOTS), Speaking Skills*

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, English is one of the languages that is used as the world's lingua franca, and in Indonesia, it is a foreign language that is spoken anywhere. According to Aziza (2020), in the present time, English has a major role in many fields, and Education is one of which uses English. Adding to this, Saukah, A. (2003) in Alrajafi (2021) stated that English has been applied in Indonesia as well to communicate on many occasions. According to Purnama & Nurdianingsih (2019), in the present era of 4.0, many sections are using English in their technologies, then with all things mentioned previously, teachers need to develop students learning English thus they can engage with the era.

To become fluent, there are four language skills students need to master, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Besides those four skills, speaking is one that students focus on because of the purpose learning a language is to communicate and interact based on Bahruddin & Mochammad Sahid (2020). In addition to this, Anggraini (2021) stated that speaking skills are one of the skills that people need to practice without stopping. Also, Purnama &

Nurdianingsih (2019) stated that the more people can speak and communicate, the more successful people learning foreign languages.

In the teaching and learning process, teachers are required to teach students to understand and use the target language. Based on the statement of Bahruddin & Mochammad Sahid (2020), students need to master the skills thus they can use the skills critically and creatively. It means that they need to get lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) as well. According to Anderson et al., (2001) about the revised Taxonomy, there are 6C as cognitive skills that students are better to achieve in the learning process. There are remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. Those skills are needed for the era of 21st-century skills, people need to not only understand but implement them to their life needs, and create any information, ideas, or thoughts with their own needs critically and creatively. Unfortunately, not all students reach the HOTS, they sometimes understand but they cannot go beyond and meet the levels of HOTS.

It happened in the class that the researcher teaches in LB LIA Palembang called General English for the pre-intermediate level with 18 students on the list. After observing, the researcher concluded that most of the students (in between bands 1 and 2 based on the speaking rubric) were in LOTS levels, their speaking scores were about 3.2-3.3 out of 5.0. The students had difficulty connecting their ideas logically, they were overreliance on memorization, and they stuck to the text excessively thus they could not go smoothly in expressing their ideas. It also happened with their way of communicating in discussions that they had difficulty with fluency. Oviedo Guado & Mena Mayorga (2021) stated that fluency can be achieved if there is comprehensible communication without any interruption. The students also had limited ability to express their ideas so they often gave short answers to the questions that needed their explanation of opinion. From the description above, it can be stated that the students used more LOTS than HOTS.

As the problems mentioned previously, the researcher decided to find a way that fix the situation in the class thus the students can reach the level of HOTS. The researcher employed communicative learning strategies that are focused on implementing several methods and activities that are communicative therefore students practiced to interact and built their confidence thus they can get the level of HOTS after. The learning strategies, Communicative Language Teaching is the approach that was used, such as discussions, debates, language games, role-plays and simulations, feedback and reflections, presentations, and more. In this study, the researcher used pair works or group works and set activities that made them into pairs or groups with the levels of HOTS based on the methods chosen.

With regard to the important matters, there are previous studies that focused on the similar way of improving speaking skills that conducted CLT as the approach Ahmed (2022), conducted Action Learning Strategies Kasmaini et

al., (2021), and implemented one media Anggraini (2021), also a way using one method Bahruddin & Mochammad Sahid (2020). In those studies, they did the research to improve their students' HOTS in speaking skills, therefore, the students can communicate critically and creatively.

As a result mentioned where HOTS are mostly needed to students think critically and creatively nowadays in 21st century skills, the researcher considered using Communicative Learning Strategy and Communicative Language Teaching as the approach and Pair/Group works as the method to improve students' HOTS in speaking skills but researcher focused more on using Communicative Learning Strategies then researcher set up three HOTS activities (analyze, evaluate, create) each meeting in classroom to the extent where students can produce their speaking performance such as dialogues, short/long talks, and presentations.

Research Objective

This study aimed to discover that implementing pair and/or group works as communicative learning strategies increases students' HOTS in speaking skills.

Summary of Relevant Studies

Besides the relevant theories mentioned above, there are some previous studies that are also relevant to this study. The first study by Bahruddin & Mochammad Sahid (2020), was focusing on how learning strategies can improve HOTS in speaking skills and it showed that it can improve the way students speak. The second study by Ahmed (2022), focused on how a communicative approach can give positive views to students' speaking skills. The third study by Kasmaini et al., (2021), was focusing on how learning strategies can improve speaking skills and it showed that it worked in improving students' speaking skills. Lastly, the fourth study by Anggraini (2021), was focusing on how one media can be a tool to improve students' speaking skills, and it showed that students felt motivated to study. According to those previous studies, it can be said that learning strategies that are communicative can increase students' HOTS in speaking skills by implementing appropriate activities using tools. Therefore, a researcher did a study to increase students' HOTS in speaking skills by implementing pair and/or group works as communicative learning strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was a Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is a type of study that is for improving one condition in the classroom. This study used Kemmis and McTaggart model where four stages in each cycle will be used. According to Kemmis et al., (2014), there are planning, action, observation and

evaluation, and reflection. The researcher implemented three cycles within three meetings each cycle.

Time and Place

The study was conducted at LB LIA Palembang started from September – October 2023 with the total of the meetings were nine. The meeting was done twice a week in General English for Pre-Intermediate class.

Description of Participants and Materials

There were 18 participants of senior high school students. There were ten male and eight female students. The class is classified based on the proficiency level of pre-Intermediate. This study was conducted to nine meetings with three units of materials focusing on listening-speaking skills, speaking skills, and project-based learning for the speaking outcomes. Unit 1 was about successful people, unit 3 was about money management problems, and unit 3 was about composition in photography.

Process of Study

As mentioned previously, there are nine meetings in total of three cycles. In each meeting, there were three stages of learning that researcher implemented starting from before face-to-face, during face-to-face, and after face-to-face sessions. The class was conducted with the implementation of flipped-learning where students received the materials and safeguard tasks a day before class started. During class time, researcher focused on giving LOTS and HOTS activities to students thus, they can practice more about the target learning.

LOTS activities were implemented to check their understanding about the target learning and their ability to apply the target learning to the lesson. Then, it continued to HOTS activities starting from analyze, evaluate, and create. There were some activities implemented during the study, such as, Eternal Mingle, Stay and Stray, Jumbled Sentences, HOT seat activitiy, Pyramid activity, presentation, short/long talk, and dialogue.

Success Criteria of Study

The success of the study was defined by the extent to which it achieved the increase of students' HOTS in speaking skills. The criteria were based on the speaking scores that students/participants achieved, it is about 3.8 to 4.6 out of 5.0 based on the adapted speaking rubric by LB LIA Palembang. The rating scales used are about 4 (good) to close to 5 (very good). The researcher used the midst of the points to prove that students achieve their HOTS skills in speaking skills. The students are expected to be able to draw connections among ideas, make judgments of the ideas, and validate the conclusion to students can combine the ideas in new ways to form new creations namely, a short/long

talk, dialogue, and more. Also, students are expected to understand the instructions with few or without difficulty, speak effectively with few or without pauses and hesitation, make only a few mistakes in pronouncing, have well-managed of grammatical items, and vocabulary, and use expressions appropriately with few or without errors.

Data Collection

In collecting the data, the researcher needed the methods therefore the data was obtained in systematic order and it obtained accurate and meaningful data that is reliable, precise, and relevant to the study. As its name, techniques, there are some stages to do in collecting the data. It can be in collecting the data from the larger, providing the structured, semi-structured, unstructured questions, providing valuable insights by monitoring. The data sources that were obtained in this study are tests, observations, interviews, and documents.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result
Results of Speaking Assessment

As mentioned previously, there were nine meetings in total that were conducted during this study. Each cycle had three meetings. Below are the following findings of speaking assessment each cycle that were assessed by two raters. They were researcher (R) and collaborator (C).

Table 3.1 Speaking Assessment

No	Participant	Cycle 1			Cycle 2			Cycle 3		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
1	VAB	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.7
2	NS	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.8	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.4
3	MS	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.7	4.0	3.9	4.3
4	AAP	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.7	3.8	4.2	4.1	4.4
5	MNF	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.5	4.0	3.7	4.1
6	MH	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.0	3.3	3.7	3.7	3.9
7	NAP	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.4	4.0	4.0	4.1
8	APR	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.0
9	ASMP	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.9	3.8	3.9
10	SMRP	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.3	4.0	3.8	3.8
11	SARD	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.1	3.4	3.2	3.9	3.9	4.0
12	MRH	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.8	4.0
13	MNA	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.9
14	MR	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.7	4.1	4.1	4.2
15	RARR	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.7	4.0
16	LPS	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.1
17	RA	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.8	3.7	4.0	4.0	3.9

18	TKF	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.4	4.7
Total Ave.		3.4			3.4 – 3.6			3.9 – 4.1		

As can be seen in Table 3.1 above, the total average of speaking scores in cycle 1 did not meet the criteria of study which were about 3.4. In cycle 2, there were few students that the scores had reached the criteria but the total average did not reach yet which were about 3.4 to 3.6. In cycle 3, there were few students that still not reaching the criteria for the scores but at the end of the meeting, all students have reached the criteria for their speaking scores. It is about 3.9 to 4.1, with the highest 4.7 and the lowest 3.8.

Results of Observation

During the cycles implemented in the study, the researcher also observed the class environment. The checklist items of observation that the researcher observed were for three stages of learning, such as, before face-to-face, during face-to-face, and after face-to-face sessions.

With the checkmarks researched observed during the cycles, it can be seen that all the lists were completed with few parts of the lists that had not done in the first cycle and second cycle when students still needed to adapt the flow of the class. They did the flipped materials before coming to the classroom, they enjoyed the class environment where they needed to work in pairs or groups, and they gave feedbacks to their peers.

Results of Questionnaire

In addition to the data findings, researcher also distributed questionnaire to students as participants in the study. This was for finding out the perspectives of participants about their improvement of HOTS in speaking skills and class activities. The details of the statements given to them were answered with a Likert scale of one to five.

With 30 statements given, researcher gained perspectives from the students about the improvement of their HOTS in speaking skills and how class activities helped them to improve. The questionnaire was given to them before and after the process of study using Likert scale 1 to 5. It stated with 1 (very low), 2 (low), 3 (neutral), 4 (high), and 5 (very high).

At the beginning, they chose mostly point 1 and 2 that they felt they had low-confidence in speaking skills and cannot go beyond to HOTS. They struggled to begin conversation to express their ideas, they cannot use target vocabulary and expression appropriately with the context, and they felt difficult to analyze English prompts given to them, evaluate their friends' performance, and create speaking performance. After the process of three cycles, at the end of the study, they chose mostly point 4 and 5 that they felt they improved their HOTS in speaking skills with the implementation of class activities that made them used to work in pairs and groups.

Discussion

Beginning with well-defined plan, the study unfolded through a series of systematic steps, starting with three learning stages that researcher conducted during all meeting each cycle. It stated with before face-to-face session where students received the link for materials and safeguard tasks a day before class starts thus, they need to open, study, and do the materials. It was continued to class activities where they did pair and group activities with the level of LOTS to start with and the level of HOTS until they created the outcomes by their own. Then, there also was after face-to-face session or can be called as extension where students gave feedbacks to their peers.

During the meetings each cycle, there were three lessons learned that focused on listening to speaking skills, speaking skills, and project-based learning that was produced speaking skills as the output. The lessons were about successful people, money management problems, and composition in photography with target vocabulary, target grammar, target expression, model dialogues/talks, model of writing, and more in each unit of lesson.

Evident from Table 1, it can be seen that students did not meet the criteria yet during cycle 1 because they are still in the low level according to Anderson et al., (2001) about revised Bloom taxonomy, where students are able to recall and identify the lesson learned, they comprehended the meaning of the lesson learned but they did not go beyond where they can analyze, evaluate, and create by their own related to the lesson learned. They still needed repetition so they did not really have enough time to reach the level of create. As it is seen in their speaking scores that scored using speaking rubric, it showed that they produced some pauses in their conversation, they made common mistakes in using target grammar, target vocabulary, and in pronouncing words. They also gave short explanation of their opinion. Since the average score was around 3.4 and all of students did not reach yet to the criteria then researcher continued to next cycle.

During cycle 2, with the same learning stages but revised activities with the different lessons, there were few students that started to be well-adapted to the class environment. As observed, few students had done better in doing pair and/or group activities. They expressed their ideas fairly clearly, the speech was understood also they used target vocabulary and grammar. But, the rests of students did not reach yet the criteria during cycle 2. The average score was about 3.4 to 3.6. With the average score, since it was still not reaching out the criteria, researcher continued to the next cycle.

During cycle 3, most of students reached the criteria with several meetings they had done. The scores were about 3.8 to 4.7 with the average score was 4.1. The students understood the instructions given without/very few difficulties, they understood the target learning very well, they expressed their ideas effectively, they used the appropriate target vocabulary and target grammar, they had well-managed in pronouncing words. In the process of

cycle 3, they improved their HOTS by producing ideas and arguments well, doing pair and group works at normal pace, offering perspectives confidently, also giving feedbacks to their peers well. In line with the checklist of observation, it can support the statement that in cycle 3, the students have HOTS than LOTS because of the ability of them adapting with class environment, thinking critically and creatively, until the phase of them designing and performing their project.

To sum up, since the average score was around 4.1 and all of the students have reached the criteria, it can be concluded that they have reached their HOTS in speaking skills. In line with Rasyid et al., (2021), students who reached HOTS will emphasize how rather than what. With all the points mentioned above, researcher finished the study.

4. CONCLUSION

Considering all the interventions in the study, starting from the meetings that had conducted, the observation, the results of questionnaires and other supporting date, it can be stated that the impact of using Communicative Learning Strategies in increasing students' HOTS in speaking skills has been thoroughly examined. Returning to the question posed about how could Communicative Learning Strategies improve students' HOTS in speaking skills, it is evident that by implementing CLT approach and activities where students can be in groups or pairs can increase the way they thinking about the target learning.

The findings that obtained since the first meeting to the last meeting showed that there is significant improvement of their HOTS in speaking skills. It can be seen from the speaking scores they reached that began with the lowest score of 3.4 where students were lack of confidence speaking, needed several times repetition for understanding instructions, used very limited vocabulary and expressions, made grammatical errors consistently, and made common mistakes in pronunciation, incorrect stress, and intonation patterns. To the extend where students expressed their ideas and perspective clearly and effectively, understood the instruction without/very few difficult, used vocabulary and expressions appropriately in given context, were well-managed in using grammar, and maintained a smooth flow of speech which amount about 4.1 as the average speaking scores.

As we reflect on the findings, the study finished nine meetings since the average score is around 3.9 to 4.1 and all of students met set of criteria by getting 3.8 to 4.7. Hence, it can be concluded that implementing pair and group works as communicative learning strategies can increase students' HOTS in speaking skills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to the advisors and Universitas PGRI Palembang for the valuable guidance and support throughout the study. Researcher also would like to extend appreciation to LB LIA Palembang and collaborator for their assistance in data analysis, and General English for pre-Intermediate class for their time and insights as participants to make this study possible.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

This study involved a team of authors that has contribution. In the paragraph that follow, we will outline each person did to make this study comprehensive and thorough. The first author is credited with the primary research work that implementing the study, collecting the data, also analyzing and interpreting the collected data. The second author is as the primary advisor who contributed guiadance and oversight. The third author is as the secondary advisor who provided additional insights and feedback.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, A. (2022). *The Effect of Using Communicative language Teaching on EFL Learner's Speaking skill Developing Pragmatics Competence in Sudanese EFL Learners at Tertiary Level View project*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359134271

Alrajafi, G. (2021). *The Use of English in Indonesia: Status and Influence*.

Anderson, L. W., Krathwohl, D. R., Airasian, P. W., Cruikshank, K. A., Mayer, R. E., Pintrich, P. R., Raths, J., & Wittrock, M. C. (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing*.

Anggraini, A. (2021). Improving Student's Speaking Skill Using Youtube Video as Media: An Action Research. *Scope : Journal of English Language Teaching*, *5*(2), 57. https://doi.org/10.30998/scope.v5i2.8406

Aziza, N. (2020). *The Importance of English Language*. www.researchparks.org

Bahruddin, U., & Mochammad Sahid, M. (2020). *Implementation of HOTS in Debate Strategy to Improve the Ability of Speaking Arabic among Students*. www.solidstatetechnology.us

Kasmaini, Afrilia Wulandari, D., & Damayanti, I. (2021). Improving Students' Speaking Skills with Action Learning Strategy at Eight Grade of Junior High School. *Sastra & Pengajaran*, *xx No. xx*(1). https://doi.org/10.33369/jwacana

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2014). The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research. In *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research*. Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2

Oviedo Guado, N. G., & Mena Mayorga, J. I. (2021). Communicative language teaching approach in the development of speaking skill. *Ciencia Digital*, *5*(4), 6–26. https://doi.org/10.33262/cienciadigital.v5i4.1865

Purnama, Y. I., & Nurdianingsih, F. (2019). The Impact of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Instructions in Teaching EFL Speaking Skill from the Perspective of Students' Motivation. *Lingua Cultura*, *13*(4), 313. https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v13i4.6105

Rasyid, N. I., Atmowardoyo, H., Makassar, U. N., & Rahman, Q. (2021). Teacher's Understanding and Practice on Implementing Higher Oder Thinking Skills (HOTS) in EFL Classroom. *Celebes Journal of Language Studies*, *1*(1).