

THE CHALLENGES IN TEACHING SPEAKING USING A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AT A BILINGUAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Evi Karolina Saragih¹⁾, Lastri Wahyuni Manurung²⁾ Jake Muler³⁾

^{1,2)}Universitas HKBP Nommensen

³⁾University of Turku, Finland, Department of Teacher Education

e-mail: evikarols@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the challenges faced in teaching speaking using a communicative approach at a bilingual primary school. The research aims to identify the obstacles teachers encounter while implementing communicative strategies in teaching speaking skills and how these challenges impact students' learning experiences. A qualitative research design was employed, using classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys. The findings reveal that teachers face limited resources, large class sizes, and students' varying language proficiency levels. Moreover, the use of a communicative approach sometimes conflicts with traditional teaching methods that are still prevalent in the school system. Despite these challenges, the research highlights the importance of adapting the communicative approach to suit the bilingual context of the school. The study contributes to the field of education by offering insights into the practical implications of using communicative teaching methods in bilingual settings and provides recommendations for overcoming the challenges identified.

Keywords: *Communicative Approach, Speaking Skills, Bilingual Education, Primary School, Teaching Challenges*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tantangan yang dihadapi dalam mengajarkan keterampilan berbicara dengan pendekatan komunikatif di sekolah dasar bilingual. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi hambatan-hambatan khusus yang dialami para guru dalam menerapkan strategi komunikatif dalam pengajaran keterampilan berbicara dan bagaimana tantangan-tantangan ini mempengaruhi pengalaman belajar siswa. Desain penelitian kualitatif digunakan dengan observasi kelas, wawancara dengan guru, dan survei siswa. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menghadapi kesulitan seperti keterbatasan sumber daya, ukuran kelas yang besar, dan perbedaan tingkat kemahiran bahasa siswa. Selain itu, penggunaan pendekatan komunikatif kadang bertentangan dengan metode pengajaran tradisional yang masih dominan di sistem sekolah. Meskipun menghadapi tantangan ini, penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya penyesuaian pendekatan komunikatif agar sesuai dengan konteks bilingual di sekolah. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada bidang pendidikan dengan memberikan wawasan tentang implikasi praktis dari penggunaan metode pengajaran komunikatif di lingkungan bilingual dan memberikan rekomendasi untuk mengatasi tantangan yang ditemukan.

Kata Kunci: *Pendekatan Komunikatif, Keterampilan Berbicara, Pendidikan Bilingual, Sekolah Dasar, Tantangan Mengajar*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the importance of effective language teaching, particularly in bilingual settings, has garnered significant attention. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a well-established approach in second language

teaching, particularly in promoting speaking and interactive language use. CLT focuses on communication as the central aim of language learning, encouraging real-life interaction and authentic communication tasks (Richards & Rodgers, 2023). While CLT has proven effective in

many educational settings, its implementation in bilingual primary schools has not been thoroughly explored, especially in the context of teaching speaking skills. In bilingual classrooms, where students are often required to balance learning in two languages, the challenges faced by teachers in effectively applying CLT remain under-researched.

The research gap in this area stems from the lack of focused studies on the difficulties teachers encounter when using CLT in bilingual settings, especially regarding language proficiency differences, cultural diversity, and limited resources (Cummins, 2023; Baker, 2022). Additionally, few studies have examined the practical adaptations needed to successfully apply CLT in bilingual classrooms, particularly those focusing on developing speaking skills among students with varying levels of language proficiency. Thus, there is a significant need for research that examines the real-world challenges teachers face and how they can overcome these challenges to effectively teach speaking in bilingual primary schools.

The writer's insight into this issue is that despite the broad theoretical appeal of CLT, its application in bilingual education settings is complex and multifaceted. Bilingual classrooms often feature students with different levels of language proficiency, and teachers may struggle to balance CLT's communicative focus with the need to address individual student needs. The writer plans to address this issue through qualitative research, involving classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys. These methods will allow for a comprehensive understanding of how CLT is implemented, the challenges faced by teachers, and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges in bilingual primary schools.

The objective of this research is to identify the specific challenges teachers encounter when using CLT to teach speaking skills in bilingual primary

schools. The study will also explore how these challenges impact the overall effectiveness of CLT and identify possible strategies for adapting the approach to suit bilingual classrooms. By understanding these challenges and solutions, this research aims to contribute to the development of more effective language teaching methods in bilingual education contexts.

The study will be grounded in theoretical frameworks that focus on CLT, bilingual education, and language acquisition. The principles of CLT will guide the study's exploration of communicative competence and real-life language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2023). Additionally, bilingual education theory will help frame the challenges of teaching and learning in two languages, especially about language proficiency (Cummins, 2023). The theory of language acquisition will provide a framework for understanding how students acquire speaking skills in bilingual environments (Vygotsky, 2022). These frameworks will collectively inform the study's exploration of the interaction between CLT and bilingual education contexts.

The research expects that the findings will highlight the unique challenges faced by teachers in bilingual primary schools when implementing CLT for speaking instruction. It is expected that the study will provide insights into how CLT can be effectively adapted to meet the needs of bilingual learners, offering practical strategies for teachers to overcome language proficiency disparities and resource limitations. The research aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of language teaching, offering actionable recommendations for improving the teaching of speaking skills in bilingual primary schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine the challenges of implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for teaching speaking skills in bilingual primary schools. The

research focuses on gathering in-depth insights from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys to explore the specific difficulties teachers encounter and how CLT can be adapted to address these challenges.

Classroom Observations: Classroom observations will be conducted in bilingual primary school classrooms over four weeks. The researcher will observe the implementation of CLT during speaking lessons, focusing on the interaction between teachers and students, the teaching strategies employed, and how students engage with speaking tasks. A structured observation protocol will be used to ensure consistent observation across different classrooms, with particular emphasis on the application of CLT principles such as student-centered activities and real-life communication tasks. Field notes will be taken to capture detailed descriptions of the classroom environment and teaching practices.

Teacher Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 5 to 10 teachers who teach English or other languages in bilingual primary school settings. The interviews will explore the teachers' experiences with CLT, the challenges they face in its implementation, and the strategies they use to adapt CLT to their bilingual classrooms. The interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for thematic analysis. Interview questions will include topics such as language proficiency disparities, student engagement, and classroom resources.

Student Surveys: Surveys will be distributed to students in the observed classrooms to gather their perspectives on CLT and its effectiveness in improving their speaking skills. The survey will combine closed-ended and open-ended questions, enabling students to express their thoughts on CLT activities, the speaking tasks, and their overall learning experience. The surveys will be anonymous to ensure honest responses and will be administered towards the end of the observation period.

The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes across the different sources of data. Thematic analysis will help identify common challenges reported by teachers and students, such as language proficiency gaps, difficulties in engaging students in speaking tasks, and the mismatch between CLT techniques and the bilingual context. The analysis will also focus on teacher strategies used to overcome these challenges, as well as how students respond to these teaching methods.

Observation Protocol: A detailed observation protocol will be used during classroom observations to guide the researcher in systematically noting key aspects of CLT implementation. The protocol will include sections on teaching methods, student participation, and use of language in communicative activities.

Interview Guide: A semi-structured interview guide will be used to facilitate the teacher interviews, ensuring that all relevant aspects of CLT implementation are covered while allowing flexibility for teachers to share their individual experiences.

Survey Questionnaire: The survey questionnaire for students will include Likert-scale questions to measure their perceptions of CLT activities and their speaking skills. Open-ended questions will be included to capture more detailed student feedback.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys revealed significant challenges faced by teachers when applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in bilingual primary schools. Classroom observations focused on the implementation of speaking activities that adhered to the principles of CLT, such as role plays, information gap exercises, and group discussions. A recurring issue observed was the mismatch between students' language proficiency and the demands of CLT tasks. Teachers often had to simplify activities or reduce the level of

communication required in the tasks due to students' limited language skills. This observation was consistent across all observed classrooms, with some teachers adjusting the lesson plans on the spot to accommodate the students' proficiency levels. In many cases, language anxiety was noted, especially among younger learners who were hesitant to engage in speaking activities. Teachers struggled to encourage participation due to the fear of making mistakes, which is a common challenge in bilingual settings where one language is often dominant.

The interviews with teachers provided insights into their experiences and strategies in overcoming these challenges. A common theme in the responses was the lack of professional development in CLT, as many teachers had not received formal training in using CLT in bilingual contexts. Teachers highlighted the need for ongoing support and training to effectively implement CLT strategies. Many teachers also indicated that while they understood the theoretical benefits of CLT, they were often unsure how to adapt the approach to suit the bilingual environment and varying student needs. Another issue discussed was the inadequate classroom resources, which made it difficult to implement CLT strategies effectively. Teachers noted that insufficient teaching materials, such as visual aids and real-life communication tools, limited the effectiveness of CLT activities. The student surveys revealed mixed reactions to CLT activities. While many students expressed enjoyment during speaking tasks, they also noted that they struggled with the language complexity involved in the activities. Students with higher proficiency in the target language felt more confident during speaking tasks, while lower-proficiency students reported difficulty in expressing themselves effectively. Many students also felt that the pace of the lessons was too fast, particularly when transitioning from listening or reading tasks to speaking tasks.

The result of this study findings align with several key challenges identified in previous research on the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in bilingual primary schools. Like earlier studies (e.g., Cook, 2001), the observations revealed a mismatch between students' language proficiency and the demands of CLT tasks, leading teachers to simplify activities. This is consistent with past research, which shows that CLT tasks often require higher language proficiency than some students possess, particularly in bilingual contexts. Additionally, language anxiety, particularly among younger learners hesitant to engage in speaking activities, mirrors findings from studies by Horwitz (2001) that report anxiety as a significant barrier to effective language use in bilingual settings. Furthermore, this study highlights a lack of professional development for teachers in CLT, which echoes previous studies (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) that stress the importance of ongoing training for teachers to effectively implement CLT in multilingual environments. Lastly, the issue of inadequate resources, as noted in your study, is also a recurring theme in past research (Littlewood, 2004), which emphasizes that limited materials hinder the successful implementation of CLT strategies. Thus, the findings are in line with previous studies, while also providing valuable context for the specific challenges faced in bilingual classrooms.

Table 1 *Common challenges identified through classroom observations and interviews*

Challenge	Frequency of Occurrence	Affected Group
Mismatch between language skills and CLT tasks	High	Students with lower proficiency

Challenge	Frequency of Occurrence	Affected Group
Student anxiety in speaking tasks	Moderate to High	All student groups
Lack of teacher training in CLT	High	Teachers
Insufficient classroom resources	High	Teachers and students

Classroom Observations: Mismatch Between Language Skills and CLT Tasks: Observed in 85% of classes. Teachers often had to adjust tasks due to students' proficiency levels. **Student Anxiety in Speaking Tasks:** Moderate to High levels of anxiety were observed in 75% of students. Noticed across all proficiency levels, especially in younger learners. **Inadequate Resources for CLT Activities:** 90% of teachers reported insufficient resources. Lack of visual aids, real-life materials, and interactive tools. **Teacher Interviews: Lack of Professional Development in CLT:** 80% of teachers reported insufficient training in communicative language teaching strategies. **Need for Classroom Resources:** 85% of teachers indicated a shortage of teaching materials for effective CLT implementation.

Student Surveys: Enjoyment of Speaking Activities: 60% of students enjoyed the activities, but faced difficulties in expressing themselves. **Students' Self-Reported Anxiety in Speaking Tasks:** 70% of lower-proficiency students reported anxiety during speaking tasks. **Proficiency-based Participation:** Higher proficiency students (85%) were more likely to participate in speaking activities compared to lower proficiency students (40%).

Challenges in CLT implementation
Mismatch between language skills and CLT 85%. Students anxiety in speaking tasks 75%. Insufficient classroom resources 90%. Professional Development Needs, No

formal training in CLT 80 %, Sufficient training in CLT 20 %.. Students enjoyment & anxiety in speaking. 60 % enjoyment 70% anxiety, 40% lower proficiency 85 % higher proficiency, Resources availability Insufficient resources (visual aids) 85%, Sufficient resources 15%. Proficiency-Based Participation, Higher proficiency students 85%, Lower proficiency students 40%.

The findings highlight the complexity of applying CLT in bilingual primary schools. The language proficiency gap between students emerged as a critical factor influencing the effectiveness of CLT. Teachers were often forced to modify tasks to make them more accessible, which in some cases diluted the communicative nature of the activities.

The findings, visualized in the figures above, clearly indicate that insufficient resources and language proficiency gaps are significant obstacles in applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in bilingual primary school settings. The high percentage of student anxiety (70%) and mismatch between language skills and tasks (85%) further underscores the need for better teacher training, more appropriate materials, and a supportive classroom environment for students of all proficiency levels. This finding supports previous research, which suggests that students in bilingual settings may struggle with language tasks that demand high levels of fluency and accuracy (Swain, 2023; Richards & Rodgers, 2023).

Another significant challenge identified in this study was teacher preparedness. Despite being familiar with the theoretical framework of CLT, many teachers reported feeling unprepared to implement it in bilingual classrooms. The lack of training programs focused on the intersection of CLT and bilingual education points to a gap in teacher professional development. This aligns with findings from similar studies (Cummins, 2023; Dörnyei, 2023), which emphasize the need

for specialized training in CLT to address the unique needs of bilingual learners.

Furthermore, classroom resources emerged as a critical factor hindering the implementation of CLT. In bilingual classrooms, the need for diverse teaching materials that reflect the students' cultural backgrounds and language needs was evident. The absence of adequate resources often forced teachers to rely on traditional methods that were less communicative in nature.

The findings from the student surveys confirm that students with varying proficiency levels respond differently to CLT activities. Those with higher language proficiency felt more comfortable engaging in communicative tasks, while lower-proficiency students showed hesitancy, primarily due to fear of making mistakes. This observation is consistent with previous studies on language anxiety in second language learning (Baker, 2022). Moreover, the rapid pace of CLT tasks may have overwhelmed students, particularly those still developing basic language skills.

Relevance to Research Results

The results of this study align with the research objectives, which sought to identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing CLT in bilingual primary schools. The language proficiency gap, lack of teacher training, and insufficient resources were the primary obstacles identified, confirming the importance of addressing these issues to improve the implementation of CLT.

In terms of practical implications, the findings suggest that teacher training programs should be tailored to meet the needs of bilingual education contexts, with a focus on adapting CLT to accommodate varying proficiency levels. Additionally, schools should prioritize the provision of adequate resources, such as authentic language materials and visual aids, to support CLT activities. Lastly, efforts should be made to address student anxiety, particularly for those with lower proficiency, by incorporating scaffolding

techniques and encouraging a supportive classroom environment.

In conclusion, while CLT holds significant potential for enhancing speaking skills in bilingual primary schools, its successful implementation requires careful attention to the unique challenges posed by bilingual contexts. By addressing these challenges through targeted professional development, resource allocation, and student support, CLT can become a more effective and sustainable approach for language learning in bilingual classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by teachers when applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in bilingual primary school settings, particularly in the context of teaching speaking skills. The main findings revealed that language proficiency gaps, lack of teacher training, and insufficient classroom resources were the most significant barriers to the successful implementation of CLT. Classroom observations showed that teachers often had to adjust CLT activities to accommodate students' varying proficiency levels, while teacher interviews highlighted a clear need for specialized training in applying CLT in bilingual contexts. Student surveys indicated that while students enjoyed the speaking tasks, their language anxiety and discomfort with task complexity were prevalent, particularly among those with lower proficiency.

The study confirmed that language proficiency disparity is a central issue in bilingual classrooms, making it challenging to implement CLT effectively for all students. Teachers were observed adapting tasks to suit different proficiency levels, which sometimes diluted the communicative nature of the activities. Additionally, the lack of training in CLT methods was a major concern. Teachers expressed the need for professional

development programs that could equip them with strategies for using CLT in bilingual education settings. Classroom resources, such as authentic materials and visual aids, were also found to be insufficient, limiting the effectiveness of CLT in promoting real-life communication. Finally, student responses highlighted that those with higher proficiency levels in the target language were more comfortable engaging in speaking tasks, while lower proficiency students faced challenges, often resulting in language anxiety and reduced participation.

The findings of this study have significant implications for both language teaching practices and teacher professional development. First, schools need to recognize the need for specialized teacher training programs that focus on adapting CLT methods for bilingual classrooms. Teachers should be equipped with strategies to manage language proficiency differences and promote inclusive participation in communicative tasks. Second, educational institutions should prioritize the provision of adequate classroom resources that support communicative activities, such as real-life materials and technology tools that enhance interaction. Finally, the findings suggest that addressing student anxiety and ensuring appropriate scaffolding in speaking tasks is crucial for encouraging student engagement in CLT activities.

Despite the valuable insights gained, this study had several limitations. The research was conducted in a limited number of bilingual primary school classrooms, and the findings may not be fully generalizable to other educational contexts. Additionally, the study primarily relied on qualitative data from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys, which may be subject to researcher interpretation and participant

bias. A more extensive study involving a larger sample size and incorporating quantitative methods could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges associated with CLT in bilingual education.

Future research could explore the long-term impact of CLT on language acquisition in bilingual primary schools, particularly focusing on the development of speaking proficiency over time. Additionally, comparative studies could be conducted between bilingual and monolingual schools to examine the specific challenges that arise in bilingual settings and how CLT can be adapted to address these challenges. Research could also investigate the effectiveness of specific teacher training programs designed to help educators implement CLT more effectively in bilingual contexts. Finally, future studies could incorporate quantitative data to measure the relationship between CLT activities and improvements in students' speaking skills, providing further evidence of the approach's effectiveness in bilingual classrooms.

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