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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching Method in Improving English Speaking Skills Through the Topic of Morning Exercises Among B1-Level Learners

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Abstract. This article explores how Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can help B1-level learners improve their English speaking skills through the familiar topic of morning exercises. The discussion is built around three questions: what to teach, who to teach and how to teach. It identifies the speaking skills, vocabulary and functional expressions the topic offers, such as describing a routine, giving instructions and offering advice, and outlines the abilities and needs of B1 learners, who can talk about familiar subjects but often lack fluency and confidence. It then shows how CLT principles, including information-gap tasks, role-play, discussion and delayed feedback, can be combined in a 45-minute lesson. The article suggests that a personally relevant topic and purposeful interaction can give learners more speaking time and help them speak more fluently and confidently.

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Introduction

Being able to communicate in English is now one of the main goals of language teaching, and many learners feel a clear personal need to speak the language outside the classroom [2]. Even so, speaking is often the skill they find hardest. This is not surprising when lessons are dominated by answering the teacher's questions, doing written exercises or reproducing memorised answers, since such work gives little practice in forming ideas and keeping a conversation going in real time [3]. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) tackles this problem by treating meaningful communication as both the goal and the means of learning [4], although teachers tend to understand the word "communicative" in quite different ways [2], [4].

For this reason, it is helpful to show how CLT works with a specific topic, a specific group of learners and an actual lesson. Morning exercises are a good topic for this purpose. Almost everyone has something to say about it, it is linked to daily routines and health, and it naturally calls for describing actions, giving instructions and sharing opinions. It also meets the CLT recommendation that lesson content should connect to learners' own lives [4]. The article therefore considers who should be taught, what should be taught and how CLT can be applied, and then presents a sample lesson.

Main Body

Who to teach: B1-level learners

The article is aimed at learners at the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR was designed as a common basis for syllabuses, teaching materials and assessment, and it treats the learner as a social agent who uses language to act in real situations [1]. B1 learners are independent users. They can talk about familiar matters such as routines, free time and health, describe their habits and experiences in simple connected sentences, give brief reasons for their opinions and cope with most everyday conversations. Their weaknesses are just as typical: a limited vocabulary, frequent pauses while they search for words, and a drop in accuracy when they speak without preparation. Many have studied grammar for years but have had few real chances to use it in conversation. What these learners need, then, is more speaking time, practice in producing longer turns, a stock of useful phrases and conversation strategies, and feedback that does not keep interrupting them [3], [4]. Tasks should also be based on familiar topics so that the content itself does not stop them from speaking [3], which is one more reason why morning exercises suit this level.

What to teach: speaking skills, vocabulary and expressions

CLT aims at communicative competence rather than knowledge of grammar alone. Learners need to know how to use language for different purposes, how to adjust it to the situation and the listener, how to produce different kinds of spoken text and how to keep communication going when their language runs short [4]. Canale and Swain's model makes a similar point by combining grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence [2]. For the topic of morning exercises, this means organising the content around what learners need to do with the language. The main speaking skills are describing a personal routine, giving and following simple instructions, talking about past experience, expressing and justifying opinions about the benefits of exercise, and giving advice. All of them rest on the ability to interact: asking follow-up questions, checking meaning and taking turns.

The vocabulary follows from these skills. Learners need the names of common exercises (stretching, jogging, squats, push-ups, yoga), verbs of movement (bend, stretch, raise, lower, twist) and parts of the body, expressions of time and frequency (every morning, before breakfast, for ten minutes), words describing benefits (energy, flexibility, concentration, mood) and collocations such as do exercises, warm up, keep fit and stick to a routine. Functional expressions give them ready-made language for each skill: I usually start with... and After that, I... for routines; First... Then... Hold it for five seconds for instructions; In my opinion... because... for opinions; and You should..., Why don't you...? and How about...? for advice. Grammar such as the present simple, imperatives, the past simple and modal verbs is taught through these expressions rather than as separate rules, because in CLT grammar grows out of a communicative need [4].

How to teach: Communicative Language Teaching

CLT is best understood as a set of principles about the goals of teaching, how learners learn, which activities support learning and what roles teachers and learners play [4]. Learning is seen as the result of interaction, negotiation of meaning and attention to feedback [4], so classroom practice should resemble real communication, with a genuine exchange of information and opinions [2]. The information gap is a key tool here: learners have to talk because each of them holds information the other needs [4]. CLT does not, however, ignore accuracy. Its main aim is fluency, the ability to keep communication going naturally despite limited language, but accuracy work can come before a fluency task to prepare learners or after it to deal with problems the teacher noticed [4]. In this sense, accuracy practice serves as a bridge to fluency [2]. A lesson can therefore move from mechanical practice, through meaningful practice in which learners

make real choices, to communicative practice in which real information is exchanged and the language is not fully predictable [4], [2].

The method also changes classroom roles. The teacher becomes a facilitator and monitor rather than the main speaker [4], and although the lesson is learner-centred, it is not unstructured, because communication only happens when tasks are carefully prepared and set up [2]. Pair and group work gives learners more chances to speak, raises motivation and builds fluency [4], while correction is usually delayed until after the main task so that the flow of speech is not broken [3]. Speaking practice also works best when every task has a real purpose and when learners repeat similar tasks, for example with a new partner, so that they can express the same kind of message with less hesitation [3].

Practical Application / Classroom Activities

The following 45-minute lesson, "My Morning Exercise Routine", shows how these principles can be applied with a B1 class of 12–20 teenagers or adults. It follows a four-stage structure proposed for CLT speaking lessons at this level: a five-minute warm-up, ten minutes of language support, twenty minutes of pair and group tasks, and ten minutes of feedback [3]. By the end of the lesson, learners should be able to describe their own morning routine, give instructions for two or three simple exercises, and recommend a routine to a partner with reasons.

The lesson opens with a "Find someone who..." survey. Learners walk around the room asking questions such as Do you exercise before breakfast? or Have you ever tried yoga?, and add a follow-up question whenever someone answers yes. Because they are collecting real information from their classmates, the activity is communicative from the very start [4]. In the language support stage, learners match picture cards to exercise names and movement verbs, then listen to the teacher describe his or her own morning routine for about a minute and note down useful phrases. After that, they complete sentences such as Every morning I... and The exercise I find hardest is... because... with their own information and compare them with a partner. This short sequence moves from mechanical to meaningful practice [4] and gives learners the vocabulary, structures and functions they will need in the freer tasks [2].

The main stage consists of three tasks. The first is an information gap: Learner A has a card describing the morning routine of a student called Aziz, and Learner B has one about a student called Malika. Without showing their cards, they ask each other about wake-up time, exercises, duration and reasons, fill in the missing details and then decide whose routine is healthier. The second is a role-play in which one learner, as a fitness coach, explains three simple exercises step by step (First, stand with your feet apart. Then slowly raise your arms...). The client follows with small movements, asks for clarification and then describes a problem, such as having no time in the morning, so that the coach has to give advice (Why don't you try a five-minute routine before breakfast?). Pairs then swap roles and partners, which lets them repeat the task with more confidence [3]. In the third task, groups of three or four choose and rank four exercises from a list of eight to design the best ten-minute morning routine for students, and one member presents the group's choice and reasons to the class. Each task represents a different kind of communicative activity, namely exchanging missing information, using language for a practical purpose, and expressing and justifying opinions [3],[4]. Throughout this stage, the teacher listens, steps in only when communication breaks down and quietly notes common errors and good expressions [3], [4].

In the final stage, the teacher writes several anonymous sentences from the tasks on the board, for example She do exercises every morning or You should to try yoga, and the class corrects them together. A few well-used expressions are also highlighted and praised, following the CLT practice of dealing with accuracy after a fluency task [4]. Learners finish by reflecting briefly on what they can now do, and for homework they record a one-minute voice message describing their routine and recommending one exercise to a friend.

Whether this approach actually improves speaking should be judged by learners' real performance rather than by their impressions alone [3]. A teacher can set a similar task, such as describing one's morning routine and giving a friend advice, before and after a series of lessons, record the answers and score them with an analytic rubric covering continuity, coherence, hesitation and the ability to sustain interaction. CEFR descriptors for spoken production and interaction can guide such a rubric, although it should be presented as CEFR-informed rather than as an official CEFR certificate [3].

Conclusion

This article has argued that CLT offers an effective way to develop the speaking skills of B1 learners through the topic of morning exercises. The learners are independent users who can manage familiar topics but need more speaking time, a wider range of phrases and greater confidence. The topic gives them a clear set of skills to practise, from describing routines and giving instructions to expressing opinions and offering advice, together with focused vocabulary and expressions. CLT provides the means: brief language preparation, purposeful pair and group tasks built on information gaps, role-play and discussion, task repetition and delayed feedback. Combined in one lesson, these elements are expected to

increase learner talk time and help learners speak more fluently and confidently, while the feedback stage keeps attention on accuracy.

The framework is methodological, so its effect still needs to be confirmed through classroom research that compares learners' recorded speaking performance before and after a series of lessons [3]. Teachers in contexts where examinations remain mainly grammar-based may also need to adjust the balance between fluency and accuracy work [2]. Even so, the model gives teachers a practical and adaptable way to make speaking lessons on everyday topics more communicative.

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