

EXPLORING ENGLISH LEARNING INTEREST AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS AT THE NORTH SUMATRA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

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ABSTRACT

This research is to analyze the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching and its influence on civil servants' interest in learning English in this institutional context. This study aims to provide empirical evidence that can inform the development of more effective and professionally relevant English training programs for government employees. This study is grounded in the framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This study employs a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the relationship between the implementation of CLT and English learning interest among civil servants. The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate a moderate to high level of interest in learning English, as reflected in their responses to items 1–6. Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that: 1) English is important for their professional duties; 2) They are interested in improving their English skills; 3) They are willing to participate actively in learning activities; and 4) They intend to continue learning English in the future. The analysis of items 7–14 shows that CLT principles are partially implemented in the English training program. The findings from items 15–18 show that respondents generally perceive English training as relevant to their professional responsibilities. Participants reported that English training helps them: 1) Support daily work tasks; 2) Participate in meetings; 3) Handle foreign documents; and 4) Communicate with international stakeholders. The qualitative data reveal three major challenges: 1) Limited Vocabulary; 2) Grammar Difficulties; and 3) Lack of Confidence. This study demonstrates that teaching methods significantly influence English learning interest among civil servants at the North Sumatra Governor's Office. The findings reveal that learners generally have a positive interest in learning English, especially when the instruction is relevant to their professional needs.

Keywords: *CLT, English, interest, teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant global language in diplomacy, administration, trade, and digital communication. In public sector institutions, English proficiency is increasingly viewed as a strategic professional competence rather than an optional skill (Ushioda, 2021). Governments worldwide require employees who can engage in international correspondence, collaborative programs, and cross-border communication.

In Indonesia, civil servants (Pegawai Negeri Sipil/PNS) play a central role in implementing policies and delivering public services. At the provincial level, including the North Sumatra Governor's Office, civil servants may encounter situations requiring English communication, such as interacting with foreign investors, participating in international meetings, and managing official documents in English. These professional demands require practical communicative competence rather than mere grammatical knowledge.

However, teaching English to adult professionals presents distinct challenges. Adult learners typically have limited time, clear professional goals, and expectations of practical relevance in learning (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2020). Research indicates that adult learners' motivation increases when instruction is meaningful and directly connected to workplace needs (Tao & Gao, 2022). Conversely, traditional teacher-centered and grammar-oriented methods may reduce engagement because they do not sufficiently develop communicative ability (Littlewood, 2020).

Communicative competence defined as the ability to use language appropriately in real contexts has become the primary goal of modern language teaching (Savignon, 2021). Studies show that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) promotes higher learner

participation, confidence, and intrinsic motivation compared to traditional approaches (Khademi, 2022). When learners actively use English in discussions, simulations, and problem-solving tasks, their interest and engagement tend to increase.

Despite the recognized effectiveness of CLT, limited empirical research has examined how communicative teaching practices influence English learning interest among civil servants in local government institutions, particularly at the North Sumatra Governor's Office. A systematic investigation is therefore necessary to analyze the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching and its influence on civil servants' interest in learning English in this institutional context. This study aims to provide empirical evidence that can inform the development of more effective and professionally relevant English training programs for government employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in the framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT is an approach that emphasizes meaningful communication and the development of communicative competence rather than isolated grammar instruction. According to Littlewood (2020), CLT has evolved into a flexible pedagogical framework that integrates fluency and accuracy while prioritizing authentic language use. The goal is not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to communicate effectively in social and professional contexts.

Savignon (2021) explains that communicative competence includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. These components are particularly relevant for adult professionals who must use English appropriately in formal workplace settings.

The core principles of CLT include:

1. Meaning-focused interaction
2. Learner-centered activities
3. Authentic communication tasks
4. Integration of language skills

Recent empirical studies support the effectiveness of CLT in adult learning environments. Tao and Gao (2022) found that communicative activities significantly increase learner engagement in professional contexts. Similarly, Khademi (2022) demonstrated a positive correlation between communicative tasks and learner motivation in adult EFL settings.

In the context of civil servants, CLT can be implemented through:

1. Simulated official meetings
2. Role-play of public service interactions
3. Presentation and briefing practices
4. Discussion of policy-related topics
5. Collaborative problem-solving tasks

These activities mirror real workplace communication, thereby increasing perceived relevance and potentially enhancing learning interest.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the relationship between the implementation of CLT and English learning interest among civil servants. Quantitative methods are appropriate for measuring perceptions and identifying patterns across a group of respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

2. Participants

The respondents consisted of five civil servants from the North Sumatra Governor's Office with varied demographic backgrounds. The participants ranged in age from 21 to over 50 years and had different lengths of service, from 1–5 years to more than 20 years. Their English proficiency levels varied from beginner to intermediate. All respondents had participated in English training programs, indicating that they had prior exposure to formal English instruction.

This variation in demographic and proficiency background is important, as it influences both learning interest and responses to teaching methods. Adult learners with different levels of experience may perceive instructional effectiveness differently, especially in communicative learning environments.

3. Data Collection Method

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire. Questionnaires are widely used in language education research to measure learner perceptions, motivation, and instructional effectiveness (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2020).

The questionnaire will consist of:

1. Demographic Information
2. English Learning Interest Scale (Likert-scale items)
3. Perceptions of CLT Implementation (interaction, discussion, role-play, task-based activities)
4. Perceived Relevance to Workplace Needs
5. Open-ended Questions

A five-point Likert scale will be used:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

The instrument will be adapted from established motivation and communicative competence measurement frameworks (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2020; Tao & Gao, 2022).

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, frequency distribution, and percentage analysis. These analyses will determine:

1. The overall level of English learning interest
2. Participants' perceptions of communicative teaching practices
3. The relationship between CLT activities and learner interest

Open-ended responses will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and suggestions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. English Learning Interest

The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate a moderate to high level of interest in learning English, as reflected in their responses to items 1–6. Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that:

- a. English is important for their professional duties
- b. They are interested in improving their English skills

- c. They are willing to participate actively in learning activities
- d. They intend to continue learning English in the future

These findings suggest that English is perceived as a valuable professional asset, supporting Ushioda's (2021) argument that motivation in professional contexts is strongly linked to practical relevance.

However, some respondents selected neutral responses, particularly in items related to motivation during class and active participation. This indicates that while the overall interest exists, it is not consistently translated into strong engagement during learning activities. This gap may be influenced by teaching methods, learning environment, or individual confidence levels.

Additionally, responses show that learners tend to enjoy English learning more when it is directly connected to their job tasks. This confirms that contextual relevance enhances intrinsic motivation, especially among adult learners (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2020).

2. Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The analysis of items 7–14 shows that CLT principles are partially implemented in the English training program.

a) Interactive and Learner-Centered Activities

Most respondents agreed that:

- Classes include interactive discussions
- Group work activities are conducted
- Speaking practice is emphasized

These elements reflect key CLT principles such as learner-centered interaction and active participation (Littlewood, 2020). The presence of these activities indicates that the training program has moved beyond traditional teacher-centered approaches.

b) Speaking Practice as a Dominant Activity

From the open-ended responses, speaking practice emerged as the most valued component of the training. Respondents mentioned:

- “Keep speaking is the most helpful”
- “Conversation”
- “Speaking practice”

This finding strongly supports CLT theory, which emphasizes that language acquisition occurs through meaningful communication (Savignon, 2021). It also aligns with Tao and Gao (2022), who found that communicative activities significantly improve learner engagement.

c) Limited Implementation of Role-Play and Simulation

Despite the presence of interactive elements, some respondents reported limited exposure to role-play or simulation activities. These activities are essential in CLT because they simulate real-life communication contexts, particularly in professional settings.

The lack of consistent implementation suggests that CLT is not yet fully optimized. This gap may reduce the effectiveness of the program in developing communicative competence, especially for workplace communication.

d) Focus on Practical Communication

Most respondents agreed that English lessons focus on practical communication skills and reflect real workplace situations. This indicates that the training program attempts to align with learners' professional needs, which is a core principle of CLT.

3. Relevance to Workplace Needs

The findings from items 15–18 show that respondents generally perceive English training as relevant to their professional responsibilities.

Participants reported that English training helps them:

- Support daily work tasks
- Participate in meetings
- Handle foreign documents
- Communicate with international stakeholders

This confirms that authentic and workplace-based learning contexts enhance perceived usefulness, which in turn strengthens motivation. According to Savignon (2021), communicative competence is best developed when learners engage in tasks that mirror real-life situations.

However, some neutral responses indicate that not all participants fully experience this relevance. This may be due to differences in job roles or limited exposure to English in their daily work.

4. Challenges in Learning English

The qualitative data reveal three major challenges:

a) Limited Vocabulary

Respondents frequently mentioned difficulty in expressing ideas due to lack of vocabulary. This limitation directly affects their ability to participate in communicative activities.

b) Grammar Difficulties

Some participants reported challenges in understanding complex grammatical structures, especially tenses. While CLT prioritizes communication, insufficient grammatical knowledge may hinder accuracy and confidence.

c) Lack of Confidence

A significant barrier identified is low confidence in speaking English. Fear of making mistakes reduces participation, which is problematic in a communicative learning environment that requires active interaction.

These findings indicate that while CLT promotes communication, supporting components such as vocabulary development and confidence-building strategies are still necessary.

5. Suggestions for Improving Teaching Methods

Respondents provided valuable suggestions for improving the English training program:

- Increasing speaking and conversation practice
- Using more interactive and engaging activities
- Integrating technology (e.g., digital tools, online platforms)
- Providing personalized and practical learning materials
- Offering opportunities to interact with fluent or native speakers

These suggestions reflect a strong demand for full implementation of CLT principles, particularly in terms of authenticity, interaction, and learner engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that teaching methods significantly influence English learning interest among civil servants at the North Sumatra Governor's Office. The findings reveal that learners generally have a positive interest in learning English, especially when the instruction

is relevant to their professional needs.

The implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) contributes positively to learner engagement. Interactive activities such as discussions, group work, and especially speaking practice play a crucial role in increasing motivation and participation. However, the implementation of CLT is not yet fully consistent, particularly in the use of role-play and simulation activities that are essential for developing communicative competence in workplace contexts.

In addition, several challenges remain, including limited vocabulary, grammatical difficulties, and lack of confidence. These challenges hinder learners' ability to fully engage in communicative activities and must be addressed to optimize learning outcomes.

Therefore, it is recommended that future English training programs:

1. Strengthen the consistent implementation of CLT principles
2. Increase the use of role-play and real-life simulation activities
3. Provide structured support for vocabulary and grammar development
4. Incorporate confidence-building strategies in speaking activities
5. Integrate technology to enhance flexibility and engagement
6. Align learning materials more closely with workplace communication needs

In conclusion, effective English training for civil servants should not only focus on language knowledge but also prioritize meaningful communication and practical application. By aligning teaching methods with learners' professional contexts, training programs can significantly enhance both learning interest and communicative competence.

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