



Effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in Business English

Živorad Ninković¹, Studio stranih jezika BETC - Business English Training Center, Serbia

Abstract:

The aim of this paper, which is part of the author's master thesis, is to analyze and examine the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in business English. One of the goals is to explain how communicative approach can contribute to better performance in real life business context. Beginning with the question of what we generally mean by "CLT", the paper moves on to an overview of the specific roles teachers have within this method. It was important for the topic to explore the complexities related to the implementation of CLT in teaching and acquiring grammar and vocabulary. Initial argument implies that CLT techniques are effective in the classroom teaching practice and will result in higher level of communicative competence. The focus of the paper are business English courses (B1 and B2) organized for 25 students working in Erste Bank in Novi Sad. After finalizing the courses, all students participated in the survey with the goal to grade the effectiveness of the approach from the students' perspective. Evaluation of students' communicative competence before and after the course significantly contributed to making valid conclusions and analyzing achieved progress. Conclusions were carefully drawn and all aspects were taken into consideration in the interest of providing a clear and precise final summation.

Key words: *Communicative Language Teaching, business English, grammar, vocabulary, students, communicative competence, evaluation*

Apstrakt:

Cilj ovog rada, koji je deo autorovog master rada, je da analizira i ispita efikasnost komunikacijskog pristupa u učenju poslovnog engleskog jezika. Jedan od ciljeva je objasniti kako komunikativne tehnike mogu doprineti boljem učinku u stvarnom poslovnom kontekstu. Počevši sa pitanjem šta uopšte znači komunikacijski pristup učenju jezika, rad prelazi na analizu specifičnih uloga koje predavači imaju kada koriste ovaj metod. Bilo je važno istražiti poteškoće koje se odnose na primenu komunikacijskog pristupa u predavanju i usvajanju gramatike i vokabulara. Ovaj rad će početi od pretpostavke da su tehnike komunikacijskog pristupa u učenju jezika efikasne u nastavnoj praksi i da će dovesti do većeg nivoa komunikativne sposobnosti. Rad se fokusira na kurseve poslovnog engleskog jezika (B1 i B2) organizovane za 25 učenika zaposlenih u Erste banci u Novom Sadu. Nakon završetka kurseva,, svi učenici su učestvovali u istraživanju sa ciljem da polaznici sami ocene efikasnost obuke. Procena komunikativne sposobnosti učenika pre i posle kurseva je značajno doprinela donošenju validnih zaključaka i analizi postignutog napretka. Zaključci su pažljivo doneti i svi aspekti su uzeti u obzir u interesu pružanja jasnog i preciznog krajnjeg zaključka.

Ključne reči: *komunikacijski pristup učenju jezika, poslovni engleski, gramatika, vokabular, učenici, komunikativna sposobnost, procena*

¹zivorad.ninkovic@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The way in which second language acquisition is perceived has always been a subject of constant change. Trends in teaching are repeatedly shifting in search of the best method. These shifts have presented different methods and principles such as the Grammar Translation Method, Natural Approach, Audio-Lingual Method, Total Physical Response and many more. As a result of huge international influence and globalization, a need for an entirely communicative way of learning the English language has emerged. This communicative way of teaching a language and using such methodology linguists define as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

This paper has as a primary goal to examine the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in business English. The initial assumption was formed stating that techniques practiced in CLT are efficient and will result in a more advanced level of competence in communication.

The paper focuses on business English courses that were organized for 25 students working in Erste Bank in Novi Sad. Students were divided into four groups. Two groups were attending the Intermediate B1 course where each group had 6 students. The other two groups were attending the Upper Intermediate B2 course where one group had 6 and the other had 7 students. The duration of one course was 45 lessons covering the period from February to June of 2016.

For the purpose of this paper, research was carried out when the courses finished on June 30th, 2016. The main goal of the survey was to gather feedback from students. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire consisting of fifteen questions that represent key indicators of efficiency and validity of the approach.

Evaluation of students' communicative competence at the beginning and at the end of each course is a significant aspect that was also taken into consideration. This evaluation targets four categories: fluency and coherence, grammatical range and accuracy, lexical resource, and pronunciation. After collecting the entire data, conclusions were carefully made by taking into account all aspects which influence the effectiveness of CLT.

2. Defining CLT and Other Related Terms

Klaus Brandl points out that "Communicative Language Teaching is based on the theory that the primary function of language use is communication" (Brandl 2008:5). Hymes (as cited in Brandl 2008:5) explains that "Its primary goal is for learners to develop communicative competence, or simply put, communicative ability. In other words, its goal is to make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication". One of the key characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching is that "it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these two into a more fully communicative view" (Littlewood 1981:1). "In the teaching process student's communicative competence is based on their qualification to communicate with a teacher and other students in an

appropriate way, i.e. to adjust their behaviour and roles to a communicative situation and to realise their goals successfully in cooperation with others.” (Kovačević and Košarac 2018:2).

Brown (2000:266-267) offers four interconnected characteristics as a definition of CLT:

- Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
- Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
- Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
- In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

Brown (2000:267) further points out: “CLT suggests that grammatical structure might better be subsumed under various functional categories”. Far less attention is given to the overt presentation and discussion of grammatical rules. Chambers (1997) adds that in the pursuit to build fluency, CLT implies a great deal of use of authentic language (as used in Brown 2000:267).

Jack C. Richards made his conclusions about the ways in which we learn a language by comparing grammatical competence with communicative competence. The evidence provided by Richards (2006:4) proves that our understanding of the processes of second language acquisition has changed noticeably in the last 30 years and CLT is a response to these changes in understanding. Logic underlying CLT is that all aspects and language skills can be acquired through communicative activities and approach. The focus is on practical communicational implementation of grammar rules and same goes for vocabulary.

Great amount of research on SLA focuses on the “learning by doing” principle as being strongly supported by an active approach to using language early on. For instance, Swain (as cited in Brandl 2008:12) explains that “learners need to actively produce language, only in this way can they try out new rules and modify them accordingly”.

In Richards and Rodgers’s (2001:172) point of view CLT “refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures”. Tomović (2003) pointed out that the primary task in the communicative classroom should be “providing a favorable linguistic environment”. Accordingly, instruction in English

is a good foundation. “At the same time, a number of activities which give students enough opportunity to talk should gradually be introduced.” (Tomović 2003:33).

Communicative Language Teaching embraces and reunites many different approaches and attitudes about language teaching and learning. It becomes clear that this “allows it to meet a wide range of proficiency-oriented goals and also accommodate different learner needs and preferences” (Brandl 2008:6).

2.1. The Shift toward Communicative Language Teaching

Previously, various approaches emphasized the importance of communicative activities. To some extent every approach contributed to developing CLT. Interesting to explore is how the shift towards totally communicative view in teaching occurred. Jacobs and Farrell (as cited in Richards 2006:24) “see the shift toward CLT as marking a paradigm shift in our thinking about teachers, learning, and teaching”.

Governed by Jacob and Farrell's idea Richards (2006:24) summarizes key components of this shift. As one of the essential components Jacob and Farrell (as cited in Richards 2006:24) point out placing more attention on the role of learners rather than the external stimuli learners get from their environment. By doing this, it becomes obvious that the center of attention moves from the teacher to the student. “This shift is generally known as the move from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered instruction” (Richards 2006:24). High level of expectations regarding communication is now pushing students further; hence increasing overall language proficiency. The effectiveness of this shift, as indicated by Richards (2006:25), lies in giving “emphasis on the importance of meaning rather than drills and other forms of rote learning”.

2.2. Communicative Language Teaching in Business English

In his work, Evan Frenco (2005) indicated things which make business English distinctive. Clearly noticeable is the variety of things business people need to do with language. Frenco (2005:7) outlines the endless list of activities performed by business presenters, they: socialize, predict, analyze, negotiate, persuade, compete, advertise etc. All these tasks are done in specific business context, and for precise business aims.

In business English and generally in CLT, the student should adjust to the role of a negotiator. Breen and Candlin (as cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001:166) describe the learner's role in the following terms: “The role of learner as negotiator – between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning – emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes”.

For business English learners it is significant to focus on not only what is said but how it is said (Frenco 2005). Using intonation, stress, rhythm can help students to convey meaning in a more efficient way and leave a better impression overall. Frenco (2005:9) also gives attention to chunking which “involves

grouping words together, with a pause, or a change in pitch, or a lengthening of a syllable to signal the end of the chunk". Taking into account all these aspects results in changing and improving the way the listener understands the message. Frendo (2005) centers attention on the spoken discourse which is used to describe how people interact with each other within context. Typical examples of these include negotiations, presentations, service encounters, meetings, and so on. "Spoken discourse is often covered in business English training because it is more immediate; a learner may have time to look something up in written discourse, but the demands of spoken discourse tend to be more urgent, and so it is sometimes seen as more important in the business English classroom." (Frendo 2005: 10). In order for learners to develop such communicative competence in English three main aspects need to be completely covered. Based on Brieger's (1997:39) view these aspects include accuracy, fluency, and effectiveness.

As it was pointed out, the importance of spoken discourse in business English lies in the fact that it is more immediate. CLT stimulates students to establish useful personal methods which will help them to be more efficient in conversations. "Effective communicators will develop their own strategies and techniques - personal styles which transcend the use of a foreign language, but which can enhance the message of many less fluent and less accurate language users" (Brieger 1997:41).

2.3. The role of the Teacher

Littlewood (1981) defines the teacher's role in CLT as a 'facilitator of learning'. One of the main goals of the teacher is to "coordinate the activities so that they form a coherent progression, leading towards greater communicative ability" (Littlewood 1981:92). This implies grouping activities into lessons and making sure these are adequately organized at the practical level (Littlewood 1981).

In the communicative classroom, "teacher will not intervene after initiating the proceedings but will let learning take place through independent activity [...] while such independent activity is in progress, he may act as consultant or adviser, helping where necessary" (Littlewood 1981:92). The teacher can take part in an activity as 'co-communicator'. In this case, the teacher can stimulate and introduce the new language, but the key is to perform this role without taking away the main initiative for learning from the students (Littlewood 1981). The role of the 'co-communicator' places the teacher on an equal basis with the students. This helps to improve the overall atmosphere in the classroom as it breaks down tension and barriers. Breen and Candlin (as cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001:167) put forward the claim that the teacher's role is to "act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group". Breen and Candlin (as cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001:167) also suggest that teacher's role involves being a "researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and organizational capacities".

3. Implementation of CLT

3.1. Specifying the form of CLT

Frendo (2005:13) reminds us that there are two basic forms of CLT, a weak form and a strong one. The weak form of CLT, as pointed out by Frendo, focuses on *what* is to be learned. This is the approach “where language is presented, practiced using a variety of different activities, and finally produced through some sort of communicative activity” (Frendo 2005:13). A variation on this is the approach where “learners are asked to perform a task that makes demands on their competence in using language, and then their performance is diagnosed, leading to a focus on specific language items” (Frendo 2005:13). Frendo (2005:13) suggests that strong form of CLT “focuses on *how* learning takes place, in other words, it argues that language is learned via the negotiation of meaning in real communication”.

It is important to specify the form of CLT that was implemented on the courses that were subject of this paper. In the first half of the course the applied approach can be described as the weak version of CLT. This was done in order to help students to adjust to the communicative approach and to prepare the ground for the strong form of CLT which was implemented in the second half of the course.

3.2. Communicative Language Teaching of Vocabulary and Grammar

Vocabulary development in CLT is to some extent based on the idea that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzed wholes, or “chunks,” and that these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language (Lewis 1993:95). When addressing the application of CLT in vocabulary teaching, Wu (2009:129) is advancing the claim that “language is acquired through communication, so these approaches can be described as learning to use or using English to learn it”.

When grammar teaching is concerned, CLT focuses on “communicative proficiency rather than mere mastery of structures” (Richards and Rogers 2001:153). What can be used as a benchmark regarding grammar in CLT is Krashen’s model of second language acquisition in which the processing of grammar input, rather than classical grammar instruction, has the crucial role. His hypothesis focuses around the concept that acquisition occurs when learners process input in a low anxiety context. Terrell (1991:52) recognized Krashen’s theory by suggesting that “learners presumably make use of a mental language acquisition device that allows them to store and produce utterances in the target language”. According to this hypothesis, learners must be relaxed or lower the “affective filter”. In this way, students will be able to focus on meaning rather than form. “An explicit knowledge of grammar by adults is said to be useful in only one way - as a ‘monitor’ for self-correction under certain circumstances” (Terrell 1991:52). Krashen (as cited in Terrell 1991:52) has suggested that “grammar study may lower the affective filter for some adults and indirectly contribute to the acquisition process”. Consequently, the way in which learners process and store grammar input will directly influence their output.

The best way to understand communicative teaching of business English is to provide the insight into the techniques implemented throughout the courses. As this paper is just a part of a wider study, here only some of the most important techniques will be mentioned. Primarily the focus was on describing CLT techniques practiced in teaching grammar and business vocabulary. Targeting grammar and vocabulary was evident choice having in mind that they are essential parts in the process of acquiring a language.

- One of the techniques that is in accordance with CLT is personalization. Personalization is a significant part of the communicative approach, since it involves true communication, as learners communicate real information about themselves.
- Engaging communicative tasks should give students the opportunity to try out the language needed in various real life settings. The aim of these tasks is to practice agreeing, disagreeing and making conjectures.
- Contextualization is a practical and engaging technique for both vocabulary and grammar development.
- Some of the skills that should be developed in the communicative classroom include information processing and problem-solving.
- In order to maximize involvement and learning throughout the course, students are encouraged to use their own experience and opinions. One of the most important and regular features of each unit are role plays and case studies.
- Learners' communicative competence can be upgraded by implementing a variety of improvisation tasks. When participating in these tasks students need to be faster and more decisive when they use the language.
- One of the effective activities in business English classroom is real play. This activity increases engagement of students since it deals with situations and problems they can recognize and identify with. With such activities, learners are facing issues they normally deal with through their work. Therefore, finding a possible solution additionally motivates them. In most cases, it happens that students themselves initiate real play activity in order to get a suitable feedback from other members of the group.
- Narrative tasks are considered useful in CLT since they initiate purposeful communication through storytelling and exchanging information.

By applying these activities, the teacher makes students aware of certain vocabulary and grammatical forms while engaging them in communicative tasks. As Cook (2008:258) perfectly explains, "by letting

language form in through the back door". Involvement of the teacher during the tasks is to some extent unnoticed, but still has a key influence on the whole process.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Purpose

The primary goal of this study was to examine whether it was possible to completely substitute standard methods with CLT and if it implied a higher level of communicative competence as a result. The survey was conducted in the way that it investigated the appropriateness and effectiveness of CLT activities in the classroom teaching practice. The focus of the survey was collecting and analyzing opinions and attitudes of respondents regarding the approach. Certain fragment of the questionnaire was directed towards efficiency of CLT in relation to grammar and vocabulary. The initial assumption was that CLT could efficiently substitute other methods. The courses drew attention to business English which was significant since mastering business communication was the final goal for every student.

4.2. Respondents

After teaching for 5 years I was assigned to teach 4 groups of students working in Erste Bank, Bulevar Oslobođenja 5, Novi Sad. For the purpose of this paper, I decided to implement this approach and conduct the research. Respondents work in different departments and on various positions in the company. The official language of the company is English because Erste Serbia is a part of the global Erste Group. Accordingly, every crucial decision is made on an international level which implies many meetings and conferences are held in English. In addition, Erste Bank Serbia employs international consultants on various projects. This, of course, increases the need for a high level of English of its employees. The total number of respondents who attended were the lessons and who participated in the research is 25. The age span of students ranges from 32 to 47 years of age. Business English courses were organized for students divided into four groups. Two groups attended "Intermediate Business English Course B1" where each group included 6 students. The other two groups attended "Upper Intermediate Business English Course B2" where there were 6 and the other had 7 students. The duration of one course was 45 lessons performed during the period of five months covering the period from February to June of 2016. Every lesson lasted 90 minutes. The survey was carried out when the courses finished, that is, on June 30th, 2016. Number of students on the B1 level was 12 and on the B2 level was 13. This will also be the subject of comparison. The questionnaire was anonymous, therefore, students were not under pressure, but they could openly give whatever grades they thought were suitable. Only required information was the level of the course (B1 or B2). This was done in order to get a more objective point of view from the collected data.

4.3. Construction of the Questionnaire

The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 15 questions that addressed key areas when it came to the effectiveness of CLT. Complete involvement in the process from the position of a teacher helped to observe what the critical points were. The method used for data collection was a Likert scale questionnaire. Every question offered five answers or grades varying from 1 to 5. Each grade represented a certain answer: grade 1 (not at all), grade 2 (incompletely), grade 3 (partially), grade 4 (mainly), grade 5 (entirely). If some specific terminology from the questionnaire was unclear or difficult to understand, students were provided with the additional explanation or translation to Serbian.

The questionnaire covered some of the most relevant areas such as the level of competency in business communication that this approach offers to learners. The overall engagement was examined by posing a question regarding reaction and input of students. Adaptability level of the approach to the learners was pointed out following the applicability in real life business context. One of the questions targeted the appropriateness of Market Leader course books in connection to Communicative Language Teaching. One part of the questionnaire focused on questions evaluating the practicality of the method in relation to grammar and vocabulary acquisition. Likewise, learners were asked to contrast between CLT and standard methods. In teaching, indicating errors is considered vital especially when the focus is learning and practicing grammar. Consequently, this topic needed to be included in the survey as well. Providing suitable feedback is always important for learners so that they can be aware of their progress. Accordingly, there was a question dealing with this subject matter. Finally, survey imposed a question checking whether the grading system was reliable.

4.4. Data Analysis

A total of 25 students took part in the study. The survey was organized when all four courses finished. If some questions were unclear additional explanation was provided. As it was mentioned, each question offered five answers representing grades from 1 to 5. Every question presented an important research indicator. Analyzing the average grade or answer in each case helped to determine the result for that indicator. The aspect that was also taken into consideration was the students' level of English (B1 or B2). Summarizing and evaluating results proceeded to the overall outcome of the survey. The outcome with the exact statistics will be presented in the next segment following descriptive analysis.

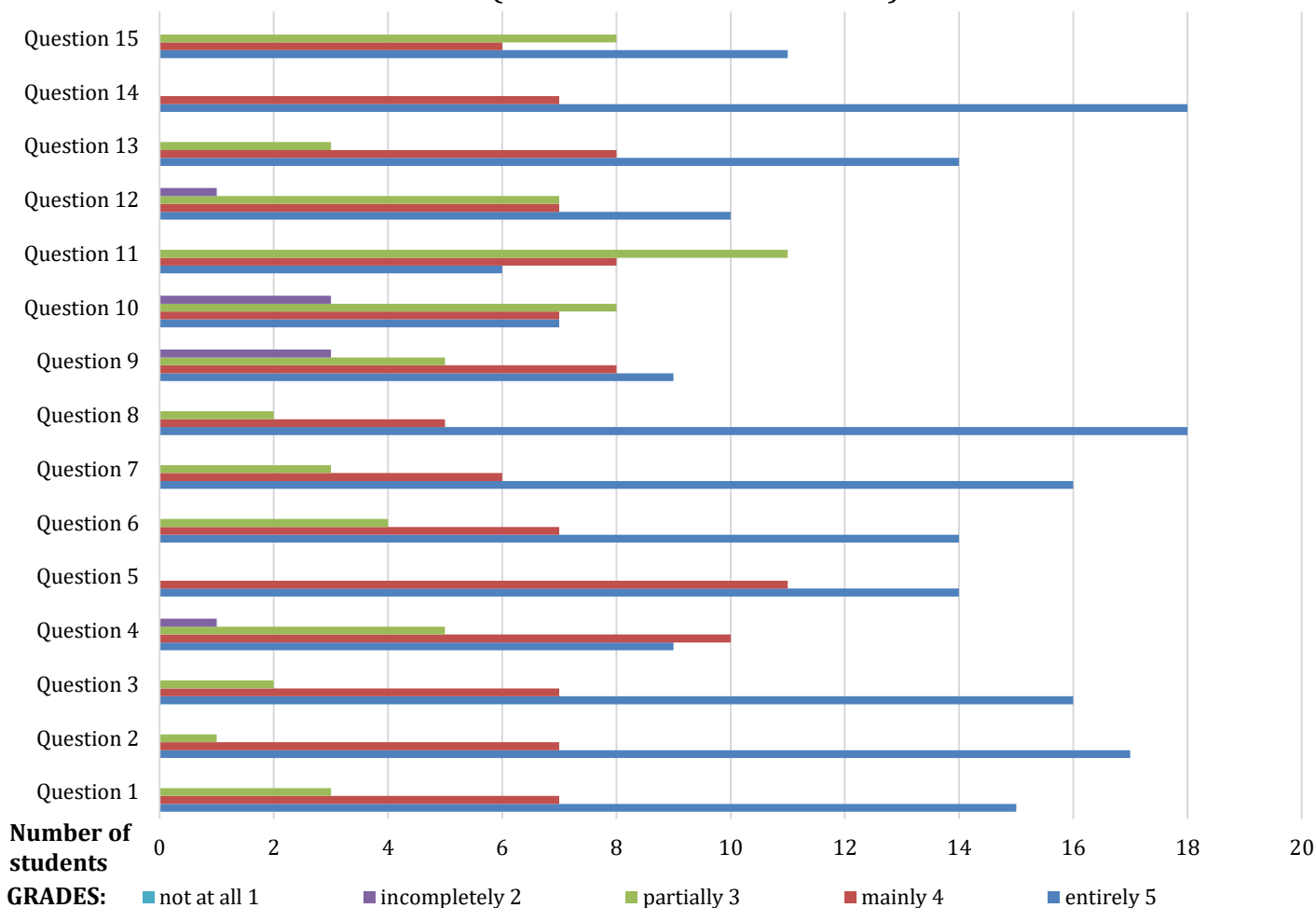
5. Results of the Research

This segment is going to outline and analyze all 15 questions that were incorporated in the survey. Each question has the role of an indicator with the goal to test the effectiveness of CLT. These indicators are treated as topics referring to certain critical points that are essential in grading this method of teaching. Statistical presentation for each question will be included showing the average grade as well as the distribution of the grade in connection to the level of the course students attended. Every question offers

five grades that present five different answers: grade 1 (not at all), grade 2 (incompletely), grade 3 (partially), grade 4 (mainly), grade 5 (entirely).

Directing attention towards the opinion of learners as participants of the course is definitely a reliable feedback. Therefore, such feedback can be used to form conclusions and draw lessons from the entire process.

Chart 1: Statistical Presentation of the Research Results
(B1 and B2 level combined)



Overall result and final grade given to Communicative Language Teaching is **4.30 out of 5**.

Question 1: Does this method develop the level of competency in business communication it aims to develop?

Question 2: Does the enhanced use of communicative activities invite your reaction or input?

Question 3: Does the integration of facts from daily situations into presentations and activities contribute to the effectiveness of lessons?

Question 4: Is the content of the program Market Leader stimulating development of communicative skills?

Question 5: Is the program applicable to real life business contexts?

Question 6: Does this method adapt to the responses given by the learners, branching to more or less complicated questions as appropriate?

Question 7: Does this method clearly present vocabulary in a practical communicative way?

Question 8: Does Communicative Language Teaching result in higher level of lexical resource compared to standard methods?

Question 9: Does this method clearly present grammar in a practical communicative way?

Question 10: Does Communicative Language Teaching result in higher level of grammatical range and accuracy compared to standard methods?

Question 11: Does this method enable learners to fill their gaps in knowledge of grammar?

Question 12: Does it effectively specify different types of errors, such as differences between a grammar error and an incorrect word choice?

Question 13: Does it give learners the chance to correct their errors?

Question 14: Does the program provide nonthreatening feedback?

Question 15: Does CLT in Business English provide reliable grading system?

5.1. Arguments for the Choice of Questions with Comments of the Results

Question 1: Does this method develop the level of competency in business communication it aims to develop?

Competency in communication is the primary goal of this approach, therefore, it was necessary to include this indicator in the survey. Additional importance of this question lies in the expected proficiency in business communication as the main objective for each student. It is crucial to emphasize that students were in the position to test their competency in real life business circumstances so their experience was definitely a valuable benchmark. Focus on the result for this indicator shows that the overall average grade is **4.48** out of 5 which is placing this indicator among the highest ranked. A noticeable distinction can be seen between answers of B1 and B2 students. B1 students graded this indicator with **4.16** compared to the average grade of **4.76** given by the B2 students. In the survey, ten

out of thirteen students from B2 courses answered 'entirely (grade 5)' and in this way boosted the average score for this question.

Question 2: Does the enhanced use of communicative activities invite your reaction or input?

This method uses interaction with students as a leading resource for teaching. Consequently, this indicator was included in order to examine whether suitable reaction and input were achieved. It is a big challenge to set this communicative tone in the classroom and get a positive reaction from learners. Accordingly, this is one of the first things that should be established in order to continue teaching and learning with CLT. In this case, grades were evenly distributed between levels without any major differences. Most grades were positive and overall grade for this indicator was **4.64**.

Question 3: Does the integration of facts from daily situations into presentations and activities contribute to the effectiveness of lessons?

Personalization is a valuable element of the communicative approach since it involves authentic communication and real information about learners. In this way language becomes relevant to learners and memorization is enhanced. In the survey, students were asked for a feedback regarding this indicator and the result was positive. The answers of students of both levels were in accordance in this case so grades are evenly distributed. There is no difference between views of B1 and B2 learners, therefore, the grade for this indicator is quite high **4.56**. In addition, positive response on this type of activities was noticeable during lessons.

Question 4: Is the content of the program Market Leader stimulating development of communicative skills?

The good quality program is one of the things that hugely contributes to every course and makes teacher's job easier. However, in the case of CLT, there is a limited amount of options. Nowadays every business English course book points out communicative competence as a priority. Although this may be the case, still if the goal is to work solely through CLT teachers need to create their own exercises and materials. Preparation of these custom - made exercises takes a lot of time and is considered as one of the disadvantages of CLT. On the other hand, if activities are prepared and performed properly the results can be excellent. Market Leader course books by Longman are to some extent in accordance with CLT method but additional inventiveness and preparation were necessary. Answers centered around the grade 4 leading towards average grade of **4.08** for this indicator. Interestingly, five students answered with grade 3 (partially) and one student gave the grade 2 (incompletely). These lower grades were mainly given by B1 learners. This result is understandable since the course didn't focus solely on the course book.

Question 5: Is the program applicable to real life business contexts?

Applicability of lessons in real life business situations is fundamental for every learner. Students had the opportunity to test their level of knowledge on meetings and presentations that were part of their daily routine. In some cases, they had additional questions or they asked for advice regarding their performance in real life context. This applicability was worked on and discussed throughout the course so this question had the goal to grade this area of effectiveness. Answers were divided between grades 4 and 5 providing high final result for this indicator. The obtained average for this area is **4.56** without any huge differences in answers among B1 and B2 learners.

Question 6: Does this method adapt to the responses given by the learners, branching to more or less complicated questions as appropriate?

Communicative Language Teaching relies heavily on interaction with students. Interaction in this method of teaching represents starting and finishing point of each activity. Therefore, the level of adaptability to students' answers is fundamental.

Smartly adapting to responses of students will certainly lead the conversation in the right direction and will result in successful interaction. The grade that was given for this indicator was **4.4**. Although this result seems high there are differences in answers of B1 and B2 students. Majority of lower grades came from B1 students while B2 students boosted the result again.

Question 7: Does this method clearly present vocabulary in a practical communicative way?

Presenting vocabulary in a clear and transparent way should be imperative for this method. The goal for students is to acquire new business vocabulary somewhat peripherally but also to be able to clearly apply it in real - life situations. After being exposed to CLT, learners were asked to grade the way in which new lexical phrases were presented. Students identified this approach to teaching vocabulary as effective by giving the grade **4.52**. There are no major differences in the answers between B1 and B2 groups except the fact that B1 groups again gave slightly lower grade compared to B2 students.

Question 8: Does Communicative Language Teaching result in higher level of lexical resource compared to standard methods?

Insufficient business vocabulary will certainly result in communicational barriers or failures. Knowing concrete terminology is of huge importance in business communication. This question targets the level of lexical resource students gained throughout the course. Important to highlight for this indicator is that all students previously attended courses where CLT was not the primary method. Their starting position is such that they can compare methods and state their opinion. When grading the effectiveness of this method in teaching vocabulary, students agreed that it resulted in higher level of lexical knowledge. Students attending B1 course graded this segment with **4.41** while B2 students thought it deserved **4.84**. On these terms, average grade regarding this question is **4.64**.

Question 9: Does this method clearly present grammar in a practical communicative way?

Teaching grammar carries a huge level of responsibility. In the context of CLT additional alertness is necessary. Preparing communicative grammar activities and presenting them to students requires a lot of engagement from the teacher. The objective of this indicator is to test whether CLT clearly presents grammar in a practical communicational form. Gathered results show many opposing views regarding this topic. Students attending B2 course consider that the appropriate grade for this indicator is **4.38** while B1 students graded this with **3.41**. In this case even students on the B2 level, who were usually giving higher grades, now slightly reduced the average. After combining the results, general impression all students have in relation to this indicator resulted in grade **3.92**.

Question 10: Does Communicative Language Teaching result in higher level of grammatical range and accuracy compared to standard methods?

The standard way of presenting grammar normally results in high level of performance on a written grammar test. However, a noticeable difference lies in the performance of learners in communication. CLT focuses on the correct production of language, that is, using grammar only as a tool of control in speech. The end result related to the level of grammatical range and accuracy achieved through CLT course was one of the crucial elements of this research. Another important segment of this indicator is the comparison of CLT of grammar to grammar presented with standard methods. Keeping up with grammar rules and at the same time directing attention towards conversational circumstances is a huge challenge for every student. When analyzing answers of B1 students, a lower average can be noticed **3.33**. Learners who attended B2 courses gave to some degree higher average **4.07** out of 5. It is a priority to address the overall successfulness of this approach in the area of grammar learning. As a result, all learners positioned their answers on a final **3.72** average.

Question 11: Does this method enable learners to fill their gaps in knowledge of grammar?

When addressing gaps in knowledge of grammar it should be noted that this topic certainly affects B1 students more, since in most cases there is space for improvement regarding their grammar knowledge. Gaps in knowledge of grammar exist on the B2 level as well, so they shouldn't be disregarded. Any further development is impossible without previously bridging weak points in grammar. It is essential in one language course to help students overcome these gaps. Additional value is added to this indicator as this issue directly affects the level of grammar proficiency students will have in the end. Logically, this directly influences the communicative performance of learners. By analyzing the results, a slight difference in answers given by B1 and B2 students can be observed. Learners on B1 level consider suitable grade is **3.75** and B2 learners graded this indicator with **3.84**. Combining results of the two groups resulted in solid **3.8** average.

Question 12: Does it effectively specify different types of errors, such as differences between a grammar error and an incorrect word choice?

When using the language, students recognize the significance of errors being clearly identified and highlighted to them. In order for learners to improve their communicative performance throughout the course, the teacher needs to find the best approach of specifying these errors. Key for this topic is the way of distinguishing types of errors and clearly explaining the way in which they should be corrected. Indicating which type of error happened when is a challenging task in CLT course, since the flow of the lesson shouldn't be disrupted by constant interruptions. In business English, specific vocabulary plays an important role so more interruptions and corrections usually occur. When it comes to grammar errors, the method relies heavily on redirecting students towards correct speech. Final average grade for this indicator is solid **4.04**. It is important to point out the difference in answers between two groups of students since B1 learners gave **3.83** grade while B2 learners gave high **4.38**. The explanation for lower average given by the students attending B1 course can be found in the fact that they usually make more errors in speech, therefore, this indicator affects them more.

Question 13: Does it give learners the chance to correct their errors?

Communicative Language Teaching supports open conversation with students on various topics. For this reason, errors are a normal part of the learning process. One of the goals of CLT is to create a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom so this error correction issue is easily handled. When the course is organized in this way, learners are able to freely self-correct their speech, help each other or if necessary get help from the professor. At the beginning of the course, students usually make more errors but as the course progresses they start clearing these out and forming correct style of speaking. Homework plays an important role in CLT since noticed errors in most cases turn into homework tasks where critical points are highlighted. Students answered affirmatively to this indicator by giving a high **4.44** average.

Question 14: Does the program provide nonthreatening feedback?

Effective feedback, both positive and negative, is very helpful. It helps professors and learners in developing and maintaining good communication. Providing reliable feedback is one of the key elements of a successful business English course. Students generally express the need for constant feedback since it helps them to keep track of their performance in communication. Enabling students to have a full insight into their progress is always highly appreciated. When analyzing this segment of the research students reacted affirmatively. Summary of the given grades shows a high **4.72** overall average without any major variations in answers among B1 and B2 learners.

Question 15: Does CLT in Business English provide reliable grading system?

Grading students attending this type of course is a challenge since there is no standard written form but the final test was organized as a face to face interview with the candidate. The test was in the form of a two-way discussion, where students and the teacher discussed different issues and concepts which were thematically linked to their job. Students are tested individually and the test lasts up to 25 minutes.

There were four key indicators that were taken into consideration: fluency and coherence, grammatical range and accuracy, pronunciation, and lexical resource. After analyzing student's speech, points were distributed by giving up to 10 points for each segment. When grading the reliability of this system students gave well-founded **4.12** average. Students on B2 level graded this indicator with 4.30. The average grade was slightly lowered down by the 3.91 grade given by B1 learners.

5.2. Evaluation of Students

This segment will draw conclusions from the results students achieved and the overall impact of CLT on their performance in business English. Before presenting the results we must keep in mind that students were working in small groups, therefore, courses were more intensive so progress could be easily achieved.

During the courses, I was keeping track of students' progress and as a result, I was able to test each candidate in a suitable way. Students were tested before and after the course. The results of these two tests were compared in order to confirm the previously presented research findings. The test was in the form of a two-way discussion, where students and the examiner are supposed to discuss issues and concepts which were thematically linked to the topic of the talk. Each candidate got up to 25 minutes with the teacher. The points were given as a result of the analysis of student's speech following four key criteria. The total amount of points that could be achieved for each criterion is 10.

Indicators that were taken into consideration are:

Fluency and coherence - how fluently they speak and how well they link their ideas together.

Pronunciation - how accurate their pronunciation is.

Lexical resource - how accurate and varied their vocabulary is.

Grammatical range and accuracy - how accurate and varied their grammar is.

Before addressing obtained results on these four categories, it is important to highlight the positive feedback related to the competency and performance in business communication. According to students, incorporating facts from daily situations contributes greatly to the effectiveness of this approach. In addition, learners consider that the program is dynamic and the acquired knowledge is applicable in real life business context. Students confirmed that ongoing dialogues and non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom enhanced their socializing and networking skills in English.

When it comes to fluency and coherence interesting results can be noticed. Before the course, the average grade for this criteria was 5.8 for all students (B1 and B2 level combined) and after the course, the average result was 8.2. On the final test majority of learners did not have unnatural hesitation in their speech which was the case prior the course. They were also able to maintain the flow of language without any major interruptions. Some issues with the overuse of fillers and discourse markers could be noticed, in the sense that they excessively used them in order to have more time to organize their speech and remember what they wanted to say. During the initial interviews, most of the learners would

be stuck in a conversation by giving a simple answer without any logical continuation. However, on the final test, they managed to expand their answers and give some additional details.

Fluency is also affected by a wide range of pronunciation features. Working on pronunciation is necessary since it influences many aspects of communication. Accordingly, a lot of attention was given to raising pronunciation on an adequate level. The results of the placement test showed 6.4 average grade and on the final test, this grade was 8. During the initial interview, students would sometimes stress the wrong syllable, so understanding some key business vocabulary was an issue. Throughout the course word stress improved and on the final test pronouncing business English terminology was not an issue. The criterion that was also taken into consideration was sentence stress. Depending on the meaning they wanted to communicate, students were able to change stress accordingly. There was also a noticeable difference in articulation, especially progress with students who had a strong accent. The general impression is that learners gained more confidence in their ability to speak English on a high level.

One of the fundamental parts of testing was to examine whether CLT results in higher level of lexical resource. Based on an indicator dealing with this issue, a lot of high grades can be detected (some above 9.4 average). Students confirmed positive impact of CLT techniques on expanding and learning the specific business terminology. The average grade on the initial test was 7.3 and on the final evaluation, this grade was 9.2. Initial testing showed the tendency of students to be repetitive with their vocabulary. They would choose few key words without incorporating any synonyms. This problem was solved and on the final examination, students showed various options for crucial business vocabulary. For example, previously they would repeatedly use the word “goals” in their speech, now they expanded this by using synonyms such as targets, aims, objectives, etc. It should be pointed out that learners increased their awareness of collocations compared to the first test. One of the challenges was also to use business English terminology precisely. In some cases, learners tried to sound more professional so they tended to exaggerate and misuse some words. In spite of these few setbacks, high results and achieved progress support the claim that this method is effective in vocabulary development.

One significant part of the test was evaluating grammatical range and accuracy of learners. On the basis of results gathered from the initial tests, the average grade was 6.6 out of 10. Scores of the final test showed a solid 8.7 average. Throughout the course, students worked on combining simple and complex sentence forms as this was a slight problem at the beginning. This issue was solved and they learned how to successfully combine simple sentences with an appropriate conjunction. Correspondingly, noticeable progress was made in creating complex compound sentences. It is significant to point out that students expanded the range of tenses they use in their speech. On the other hand, learners sometimes made mistakes because they didn't take the timeframe into consideration. One of the challenges learners were facing prior the course was asking questions politely and professionally. This segment was covered and practiced intensively throughout the course. Therefore, an evident upgrade was achieved regarding this criterion. The course was also focusing on

expanding the scope of modal verbs that were used. Valuable progress was made with modal verbs, but there is room for improvement. Negotiation role plays contributed to practicing and mastering conditionals. Especially useful grammar unit in business settings is passive voice. The passive voice can play the key role in adjusting the tone of the conversation and leaving a better impression overall. The focus of the business meetings is usually on what is being done instead of who is doing something. For these reasons, the passive was targeted in many activities. On the final test, students showed a wider range of passive forms compared to the initial evaluation. Nevertheless, additional practice is recommended.

Final grades of all students were summarized in order to get one average grade for each criterion. When comparing these results with the initial evaluation, we can confirm an upgrade in every category. However, the calculation showed that students on the B1 level had slightly lower progress compared to learners on the B2 level. Categories where these lower scores can be noticed include fluency and grammatical range and accuracy. Nevertheless, obtained results support the initial assumption and together with the conducted research give validity to the effectiveness of CLT. This proves that Communicative Language Teaching is an excellent choice for business English development since the after effect of purposeful interaction through language is considerably improved performance.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Lessons Learned about the Approach

The central objective of Communicative Language Teaching is creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language. As previously stated, production of language should result in higher level of communicative competence acquired through “learning by doing” principle. Understanding and implementing this method led to incorporating many different approaches and attitudes about language teaching and learning. By analyzing the whole process, we can conclude that these various approaches are reunited in CLT in order to expand communicational competence and all other language skills of students. As has been noted, an influential shift in the concept of teaching is assigned to CLT. This shift moved the focus from teacher-centered instruction to entirely learner-centered instruction.

When addressing CLT in business English, we have seen that communicative competence relies on covering three key aspects: fluency, accuracy, and effectiveness. Additional stress is given to these aspects having in mind that in acquiring business English students almost instantly have the opportunity to test their knowledge in their daily routine. It was indicated that what makes business English distinctive is the variety of things business people need to do with the language.

It was pointed out that influential aspects of CLT in business English are the specific roles of the teacher. The way of performing these roles will definitely determine the quality of the course. One of the crucial tasks in this process was modifying the program to fit Communicative Language Teaching principles. In order to efficiently implement this method in business English, the teacher needs to acquire brief knowledge about the most important areas of finance, management, and economics. Accordingly, it

was proven the response of students would be better if the teacher is aware of business challenges they are facing. For this reason, discussing current economic problems and business issues became a standard and essential activity of every lesson.

Implementation of CLT techniques puts attention at the idea of 'using English to learn it'. As it was presented, the concept is to create low anxiety context in the classroom and to help students activate their natural strategies for language acquisition. The topic of implementation focused on examples of teaching vocabulary and grammar as two most important segments in the language learning process. Vocabulary acquisition directly influences the effectiveness in business English terminology. In the same manner, grammar acquisition influences accuracy and fluency in business communication.

6.2. Conclusions made through Research Analysis

The significance of exploring CLT in business English can be found in the fact that mastering business communication was the primary goal for all students. The research was constructed based on fifteen key indicators that had the role to analyze and test the effectiveness of CLT in business English teaching practice. Involving 25 students in the survey, namely, two groups on the B1 and two groups on the B2 level was a vital decision, since it helped to get a better insight, contrast the levels, and form right conclusions.

During analysis of the research one interesting trend appeared that initiated separating the grades of B1 and B2 students. This trend started appearing with some key indicators of the survey and started reflecting constantly lower grades that were being given by B1 learners. For example, in the analysis of question 9 that addresses the practicality of the method in teaching grammar, most of the lower grades were from students on the B1 level with the average grade **3.41** for this indicator. When comparing CLT with standard methods in gained grammatical proficiency (question 10) B1 students answered by giving **3.33** average while B2 students gave **4.07**. The similar situation can be detected in the question 11 referring to the gaps in knowledge of grammar. In this case, the average grade given by B1 learners is **3.71**. The first thing that must be noticed is that each of these questions relates to acquiring grammar through this method. Generally, teaching grammar in CLT is considered to be a complicated issue. We can say that this lower result was expected having in mind that grammar acquisition has a tradition of structural learning and CLT presents somewhat "undetermined" learning by using principle. The fact that B2 learners gave higher average grades can also be attributed to their already high level of language proficiency. On the other hand, B1 learners from the start have lower grammatical and language competence, which directly affects their performance on CLT courses. In addition, including the aspect of business English probably made the entire course slightly more challenging for B1 learners.

Even though the trend of B1 grades being lower is present, for most indicators the difference in answers between levels is negligible and final average grades are quite high. In addition, the majority of students had the opportunity to use the language through their work and in this way test the practicality of the

implemented approach. By reviewing collected data we cannot disregard the positive feedback related to proficiency in business communication. On the basis of the evidence currently available, it seems fair to suggest that the implemented approach is efficient in increasing communicative competence.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire: Effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in Business English

The following is a questionnaire aimed at grading the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in acquiring business English. If some specific terminology from the questionnaire is unclear or difficult to understand, you will be provided with the additional explanation or translation to Serbian.

Please read the questions carefully and circle the grade you think is suitable for the given question/criterion. For example, circle:

grade 1 - not at all

grade 2 – incompletely

grade 3 - partially

grade 4 - mainly

grade 5 – entirely

Before starting, it is important to specify which type of course you have attended: **B1 B2**

Question 1: Does this method develop the level of competency in business communication it aims to develop?

grade 1 - not at all grade 2 - incompletely grade 3 - partially grade 4 - mainly grade 5 - entirely

Question 2: Does the enhanced use of communicative activities invite your reaction or input?

grade 1 - not at all grade 2 - incompletely grade 3 - partially grade 4 - mainly grade 5 - entirely

Question 3: Does the integration of facts from daily situations into presentations and activities contribute to the effectiveness of lessons?

grade 1 - not at all grade 2 - incompletely grade 3 - partially grade 4 - mainly grade 5 - entirely

Question 4: Is the content of the program Market Leader stimulating development of communicative skills?

grade 1 - not at all grade 2 - incompletely grade 3 - partially grade 4 - mainly grade 5 - entirely

Question 5: Is the program applicable to real life business contexts?

grade 1 - not at all grade 2 - incompletely grade 3 - partially grade 4 - mainly grade 5 - entirely

Question 6: Does this method adapt to the responses given by the learners, branching to more or less complicated questions as appropriate?

grade 1 - not at all grade 2 - incompletely grade 3 - partially grade 4 - mainly grade 5 - entirely

Question 7: Does this method clearly present vocabulary in a practical communicative way?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 8: Does Communicative Language Teaching result in higher level of lexical resource compared to standard methods?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 9: Does this method clearly present grammar in a practical communicative way?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 10: Does Communicative Language Teaching result in higher level of grammatical range and accuracy compared to standard methods?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 11: Does this method enable learners to fill their gaps in knowledge of grammar?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 12: Does it effectively specify different types of errors, such as differences between a grammar error and an incorrect word choice?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 13: Does it give learners the chance to correct their errors?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 14: Does the program provide nonthreatening feedback?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely

Question 15: Does CLT in Business English provide reliable grading system?

■grade 1 - not at all ■grade 2 - incompletely ■grade 3 - partially ■grade 4 - mainly ■grade 5 - entirely