

# A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF CLT METHODS TO DEVELOP GRAMMAR COMPETENCY FOR ACADEMIC WRITING PURPOSES AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the research project is to find out how effective grammar teaching and learning using the Principled CLT method can improve the ability of freshman Binus University students to understand and use grammar knowledge for academic writing purposes. The research project is expected to result in computer-animating format which can be used as one of the main tools in teaching and learning grammar at tertiary level. The research project applies the descriptive quantitative approach, and thus uses numeric data. The research project involves two subject groups, which are experimental and control. The two groups are pre-tested so as to find out their level of grammar competency by their academic writing works. The experimental group receives the treatment of grammar learning by using the Principled CLT approach, while the control group receives the standard CLT approach. Then, the two groups have the post-test, and the results are compared. Through statistics, the numerical data show that there is no significant difference between the two methods' results, and as a result, either method has its own strength and weaknesses. If one is to be implemented, it must be linked to the specific goals and purposes that each entails.*

**Keywords:** CLT Methods, grammar competency, academic writing

## ABSTRAK

*Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan seberapa efektif pengajaran dan pembelajaran grammar menggunakan metode CLT prinsipil dapat meningkatkan kemampuan mahasiswa baru Binus untuk memahami dan menggunakan pengetahuan grammar dalam penulisan akademis. Proyek penelitian diharapkan dapat menghasilkan format animasi komputer yang dapat digunakan sebagai perangkat utama dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran grammar pada tingkatan tersier. Penelitian menggunakan metode pendekatan deskriptif-kuantitatif, dan lebih lanjut memakai data numerik. Penelitian melibatkan dua kelompok subjek: eksperimental dan kontrol. Kedua kelompok mendapat pra-tes untuk mencari tingkat kompetensi grammar berdasarkan tulisan akademis mereka. Kelompok eksperimental memperoleh pola pembelajaran grammar dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode CLT prinsipil, sementara kelompok kontrol menggunakan pendekatan CLT baku. Kemudian, kedua kelompok mendapat pasca-tes, dan hasilnya dibandingkan. Melalui statistik, data numerik menunjukkan tidak ada perbedaan signifikan antara hasil kedua metode tersebut. Sebagai hasil, kedua metode memiliki kelebihan dan kekurangan. Jika salah satu metode diterapkan, metode tersebut harus dihubungkan dengan tujuan dan sasaran spesifik yang saling berkaitan.*

**Kata kunci:** Metode CLT, kompetensi grammar, tulisan akademis

## INTRODUCTION

The question of whether grammar should be integrated in the English language teaching or not have been perplexing many English teachers for a long time, especially in Indonesia, where grammar instruction method has been the prominent feature in many textbooks, teaching methods and exams. “Should I teach English language without teaching grammar? How much knowledge about grammar does a language teacher need? Should grammar be taught separately or integrated with other tasks? What can I do to help my students with grammar? How do I introduce grammar to learners with limited language ability? Can teaching and learning grammar be fun?” are some of the important questions that many teachers raise. The issue cannot just be undermined as this has resulted in theoretical debates around which teaching methodology should be best applied, such as Communicative Language Teaching, known as CLT approach, or to a more classic method of Grammar Translation.

EFL country like Indonesia has long undergone the grammar translation method integrated in the national curriculum, especially for the secondary level. Recently, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach has been introduced into the curriculum, and as a result, the teaching of grammar is de-emphasized in fear that teaching grammar may become the hindrance to the students’ progress. On the other hand, this CLT approach has given too much emphasis on ‘focus on function’ principle, without balancing with the ‘focus on form’ principle. Many teaching and learning experiences have shown that the standard CLT approach is not entirely problem-free. Indonesian students generally could not fully conform to the communicative approach and nature, as they might have different ways of thinking, cultural values, and learning styles towards a foreign language, especially English. Furthermore, the deviation from the standard grammar among Indonesian users has been noticed as hindering the meaning they are making in communication. It may well serve the daily communication functions at local and national level, but they surely will get difficulty in communication at international level, where standard grammar are generally used and preferred to avoid misunderstanding.

The research project tries to look at grammar in a balanced perspective in a way that it should not always be delivered in traditional teaching methods like what has been given in schools for many years, but through a kind of visual media communication, for example, it could be delivered in some other alternatives, and thus reducing the possibility of boring and tedious way of classic grammar teaching. The research project then tries to put grammar in its proper balance, in which students can analytically learn the underlying system of a language in a more fun and engaging way, while inductively they can still learn them by using the language communicatively, and find out by themselves how grammatical structure they learned may work in the practice. This method is known as the Principled CLT approach.

Therefore, the problem formulation that the research project aims to address is: (1) whether the Principled CLT approach has been effective to develop grammar competency of freshman Binus University students for academic writing purposes; (2) whether the standard communicative language teaching (CLT) approach has been effective to develop grammar competency of freshman Binus University students for academic writing purposes.

The significance of the research project is that it can provide an alternative framework of English Language Teaching at the tertiary level in the EFL background, so as to determine which teaching methodology and what tool that best fit in with the nature and setting of EFL learning background, like in Indonesia, that produces best performance of using grammar in its proper social contexts and balance.

## Literature Review

In her journal, **Celce-Murcia et al. (1997)** discusses about some problems found in the CLT approach, which are centered around two main issues: (a) the linguistic content base of CLT and (b) the pedagogical treatment of linguistic forms in CLT. One area in particular about the first issue is about its evaluation methods. As **Savignon (1990:211)** observes, *“Many a curricular innovation has been undone by failure to make corresponding changes in evaluation... Some teachers understandably are frustrated... by the seeming ambiguity in discussions of communicative competence. Negotiation of meaning is well and good, but this view of language behavior lacks precision, does not provide a universal scale for assessment of individual learners.”*

Concerning the changing climate in the language teaching profession, **Fotos (1994:343)** describes, *“Grammar consciousness-raising tasks can therefore be recommended to the field of language teaching as useful pedagogy at a time when many teachers are seeking acceptable ways to bring formal instruction on grammar back into their communicative classrooms, and other teachers are searching for communicative activities which harmonize with the goals of more traditional educational curricula emphasizing the formal study of language properties.”*

Hence, In **McKay’s** point of view (2003:3), English learning no longer needs to focus heavily on the concerns and cultures of inner circle countries, and as a result, learners do not need to ‘internalize the cultural norms of the target language’. She challenges some of the assumptions of typical ELT pedagogy, namely: interest in learning English is largely the result of linguistic imperialism, ELT research and pedagogy should be informed by native speaker models, the cultural content for ELT should be derived from the cultures of native English speakers, and the culture of learning that informs communicative language teaching (CLT) provides the most productive method for ELT.

Moreover, **Morrow (1981:61)** also recognized the possibility of a more direct approach to CLT approach by arguing:

*“The crucial feature of a communicative method will be that it operates with stretches of language above the sentence level, and operates with real language in real situations. Interestingly, this principle may lead to procedures which are themselves either synthetic or analytic. A synthetic procedure would involve students in learning forms individually and then practicing how to combine them; an analytic procedure would introduce complete interactions of texts and focus for learning purposes on the way these are constructed.... A communicative method is likely to make use of both.”*

In terms of grammar types, **Joyce and Burns (1999)** categorize it into three types, which are traditional grammar, formal grammar, and functional grammar. They note: *“Traditional grammar focuses on the rules of language and is concerned with whether an instance of language is grammatical or ungrammatical (Joyce and Burns, 1999:8)”*. It is also concerned with labeling language items at the clause level and the word level.

This research project tries to put the traditional grammar competence development into its proper place in the contemporary classroom setting, and see how it turns out and offer in the language-learning process of Indonesian EFL contexts.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research focuses on the test results of the Binus University freshmen before and after the treatments. After that, it compares and contrasts between the two methods’ results so as to find the

advantages and disadvantages for each. In the end, this research tries to link the research findings with relevant approaches of ELT pedagogy. Thus, it tries to find out the effectiveness of each method to develop grammar competency among freshmen Binus University students through the pre- and post-test.

Based on the nature of this research methodology, the writer position in this research project is more in the positivist/empiricist epistemology. This is more concerned with generalization, prediction and control (Usher, 1996). Based on the brief overview presented, this research applies the descriptive quantitative approach of data gathering and analysis. By using a mainly quantitative methodology in the project, it focuses on more context-free generalizations of the observed social phenomenon by examining the relationship of the variables, which are pre-test and post-test results of each group, as well as post-test results of both groups. Here, the research relies on statistical results represented with numbers.

The research project divides the subjects randomly into two groups, which are experimental group and control group. The experimental group receives the principled communicative approach by using computer-animated format in the teaching methodology, while the control group receives the standard CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) approach. The research project conducts pre-tests and post-tests for both experimental and control group before and after the teaching treatment. Our target population will be freshman Binus University students who have English Entrant subject during the academic semester of 2012-2013.

The participants are divided into two groups of freshman Binus University students who have English Entrant subject during the academic semester of 2012-2013. All groups are at their first year of study. The two groups are: Experimental group which consists of 20-30 freshman students in the odd semester of 2012-2013 and Control group which consists of 20-30 freshmen students in the odd semester of 2012-2013. These students are chosen as the participants in the research project due to some reasons. First, all students of first year study are assumed to have some basic knowledge of grammar from their previous primary, middle, and senior high education, and thus expected to have relatively 'fresh memory' on basic grammar. Secondly, all students of first year study are not under pressure to work on more academic loads in the next semesters, so that they are in a better position to have some alternative learning experiences, which might be different from the university curriculum standard.

Since there is only one tertiary school to be sampled from a number of other universities available in the district of Jakarta Barat, the approach of simple random sampling is used, where "*all members of the population have an equal and independent chance of being included in the random sample* (Ary, 2006:169)".

The pre-tests are given to both groups so as to find out the level of grammar competency of each group. The pre-tests are in the form of academic writing tasks with some alternative topics to choose from. Then, the two groups will receive different teaching methods. After the treatment, the two groups have post-tests of the same academic writing task format with different alternative topics to choose from. The results of the tests are to find out whether there is an increase or decrease in their scores.

Both tests use the range scores from 0 (the lowest) to 4 (the highest) with 0.5 interval scores. The scores are given and mainly focus more on the accuracy aspect of English grammar, such as subject-verb agreements, complex and compound sentence structures, reduced sub clauses, verbs, gerund/gerund phrases, infinitive/infinitive phrases, noun/noun phrases, prepositional phrases, adjectives, adverbs, passive voice, tenses, etc. The score rubric for the writing tests is attached in the appendix.

The t-test statistical analysis is used to test the hypotheses as follows. (1) Null Hypothesis 1: the Pretest and Posttest score means for freshman Binus University students receiving Principled CLT are equal. (2) Alternate Hypothesis 1: the Pretest and Posttest score means for freshman Binus University students receiving Principled CLT are not equal. (3). Null hypothesis 2: the Pretest and Posttest score means for freshman Binus University students receiving Standard CLT are equal. (4) Alternate hypothesis 2: the Pretest and Posttest score means for freshman Binus University students receiving Standard CLT are not equal. The independent variables are the teaching methods (Principled CLT vs. Standard CLT) and the dependent variables are the students' writing scores (Pretest and Posttest).

The t-test statistical analysis is used due to several reasons. First, it is compared two dependent samples of each group, which are Pretest scores and Posttest scores, and t-test is best used to measure and analyze the mean difference of the paired scores of the same individuals of each group. Secondly, it is tested the significance of the difference between the Posttest score means of two independent samples, which are Principled CLT's and Standard CLT's, and the t-test statistical analysis best applies in this measurement.

All data collected are presented in tables to find out the significance of the mean differences. Thus, it is analyzed: (1) whether there is a significant difference of the students' score means between Pretest and Posttest scores of experimental group receiving Principled CLT method; (2) whether there is a significant difference of the students' score means between Pretest and Posttest scores of control group receiving Standard CLT method. If there is a significant difference in the points above, it is described how different the students' scores are distributed under the experimental/control group, and the findings are interpreted so as to find out why they are different. If there is no significant difference in the points above, it is described how similar the students' scores are distributed under the group, and the findings are interpreted so as to find out why they are similar.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis includes data presentation, data summary, and data interpretation of each group. The data of the experimental group receiving Principled CLT method treatment is as follows.

Table 1 Before-and-After Writing Scores of 24 Freshmen Binus University Students of Experimental Group receiving Principled CLT method in English Entrant Subject during Odd Semester 2012/2013

Subject Number (01PCM)	Pretest (0 – 4)	Posttest (0 – 4)	D	D <sup>2</sup>
1	2.0	2.0	0	0
2	2.5	2.5	0	0
3	2.0	2.0	0	0
4	2.0	2.0	0	0
5	2.0	2.0	0	0
6	2.0	2.0	0	0
7	2.5	3.0	+0.5	+0.25
8	2.0	2.5	+0.5	+0.25
9	2.5	2.5	0	0
10	2.5	2.5	0	0
11	2.5	2.5	0	0
12	2.0	2.0	0	0
13	2.5	3.5	+1	+1
14	2.0	2.0	0	0

15	2.5	3.0	+0.5	+0.25
16	2.0	2.0	0	0
17	2.0	3.0	+1	+1
18	2.0	2.0	0	0
19	2.5	2.0	-0.5	+0.25
20	2.0	2.0	0	0
21	2.0	2.5	+0.5	+0.25
22	2.5	2.5	0	0
23	2.5	2.0	-0.5	+0.25
24	2.5	3.5	+1	+1
			<b><math>\Sigma D = +4</math></b>	<b><math>\Sigma D^2 = 4.5</math></b>

The data presentation of the control group receiving Standard CLT method treatment is as follows.

Table 2 Before-and-After Writing Scores of 24 Freshman Binus University Students of Control Group receiving Standard CLT method in English Entrant Subject during Odd Semester 2012/2013

Subject Number (01 PA1)	Pretest (0 – 4)	Posttest (0 – 4)	D	D <sup>2</sup>
1	3.0	2.5	-0.5	+0.25
2	2.0	1.5	-0.5	+0.25
3	2.0	1.5	-0.5	+0.25
4	2.5	2.5	0	0
5	2.5	2.5	0	0
6	2.5	2.5	0	0
7	2.5	2.0	-0.5	+0.25
8	2.5	2.5	0	0
9	2.5	2.5	0	0
10	3.0	2.5	-0.5	+0.25
11	2.5	2.5	0	0
12	2.0	2.0	0	0
13	3.0	3.0	0	0
14	2.0	2.0	0	0
15	2.0	2.0	0	0
16	2.5	2.5	0	0
17	2.0	2.0	0	0
18	1.5	1.5	0	0
19	2.0	1.5	-0.5	+0.25
20	2.0	2.0	0	0
21	2.0	2.0	0	0
22	2.0	2.0	0	0
23	2.0	2.0	0	0
24	2.0	2.0	0	0
			<b><math>\Sigma D = -3</math></b>	<b><math>\Sigma D^2 = 1.5</math></b>

The calculation of the data of the experimental and control group is summarized below.

Table 3 The *t* Ratio Summary of the Experimental and Control Groups of Freshmen Binus University Students taking English Entrant during Odd Semester 2012/2013

<i>Groups</i>	<i>S<sub>D</sub></i>	<i>d</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Level of Significance</i>
Experimental (Principled CLT)	0.40860313475	0.40789375431	23	1.99826313465	–
Control (Standard CLT)	0.22116293421	-0.5651941653	23	-2.7688746211	–

Two *t* values are listed in the table. To find the significance of each of these values, the writer consults the table of *t* values in the appendix. To use the table, it is used the number of degrees of freedom associated with each *t* value.

The number of the degrees of freedom (*df*) for the experimental group equals to  $N - 1$  ( $24 - 1 = 23$ ). In the table of *t* values we find that with 23 degrees of freedom a *t* value of 2.069 is needed for the *t* to be significant at the .05 level, and a *t* value of 2.807 for significance at the .01 level. The obtained value of 1.99826313465 does not reach the given value for both the .05 level and .01 level.

The number of the degrees of freedom (*df*) for the control group equals to  $N - 1$  ( $24 - 1 = 23$ ). In the table of *t* values we find that with 23 degrees of freedom a *t* value of 2.069 is needed for the *t* to be significant at the .05 level, and a *t* value of 2.807 for significance at the .01 level. The obtained value of -2.7688746211 does not reach the given value for both the .05 level and .01 level.

The difference between the two score means of the experimental group is not significant not only at the .05 level but also at the .01 level. It can be concluded that there is no significant change on the students' writing scores before and after they receive the principled CLT approach. The main reason for this result is due to the short-term explanation of the grammatical aspects, which was limited to one formal meeting only. Should there be more additional meetings provided, the scores might generate a different result. During the classroom, students generally show positive attitudes to the grammar lesson by giving full attention to it. The grammar lesson itself is delivered in a fun and relaxed way, such as using a story telling technique with imaginative figures familiar to their lives. Moreover, the delivery is made in such a way that makes the students follow the lesson easier. It shifts from the simpler concepts to more difficult ones, ranging from phrases, simple sentences, to complex sentences.

The difference between the two score means of the control group is not significant not only at the .05 level but also at the .01 level. It can be concluded that there is no significant change on the students' writing scores before and after they receive the standard CLT approach. Again, this method is also highly acceptable for these students in a way that they enjoy how grammar is directly put into action without formal instruction. However, the lack of the method is that these students do not have the complete understanding of all grammatical aspects required for sound academic writing purposes. This has led to the circumstances where they are more likely to produce more errors and mistakes in academic writing tasks. This is also due to the fact that not all students ask for feedback for every grammatical problem they find in their writing process as teachers cannot attend to every individual student within the allocated teaching time.

## CONCLUSION

The *t* value for experimental group shows that there is no significant change between the writing pretest scores of freshman Binus University students before they receive the Principled Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and the writing posttest scores of them after they receive the method. This means that the method has not given any significant impact on the way they

used grammar knowledge into their writing work. The *t* value for control group indicates that there is no significant change between the writing pretest scores of freshman Binus University students before they receive the Standard Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and the writing posttest scores of them after they receive the method. This means that the method has not given any significant impact on the way they used grammatical feedback from the teacher into their writing work.

The research findings of the quantitative analysis in this report generate some academic implications concerning the implementation of the Principled and/or the Standard CLT approach of English Language Teaching practice at the tertiary level, especially for the Freshmen Binus University students. The results are as follows. (1) Though both methods do not significantly give impact on the writing scores of these students, each of them have its own advantages and disadvantages that could not just be ignored for academic consideration, especially for teachers and curriculum designers. (2) The Principled CLT method has its biggest strength on the direct link between what the students should know about the grammar in writing and what they need to apply in the real writing work. If delivered appropriately, for example by using a variety of techniques and creating fun learning environment, the method might not have any significant drawback, except for the fact that it might not significantly increase the students' scores. However further research and longer period of experiments might be needed to generate a more conclusive quantitative result. (3) The Standard CLT method has its strongest recommendation for its student-centered approach, where the teacher no longer gives formal grammar instruction, and instead, provide direct feedback and input to the the students' individual needs in a possibly relaxing way. However, the lack of the grammar knowledge in the method might hinder the students from knowing other grammatical aspects that can be applied in the writing, and thus endanger their potential for developing their grammar competency for more serious academic writing purposes. (4) Scores can be derived from the combination of formative tasks (daily assignments) under the guidance of the teacher and summative tasks (Mid-term and Final Tests) under the formal supervision or by computer application. In summary, the central characteristics for the combined approach are: classroom-as-family, teacher-as-mentor, language-learning-as-play, and language-testing-as-control.

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## APPENDICES

### Computation for Quantitative Data

The standard deviation of the difference scores ( $S_D$ ) in experimental group is found by using this formula:

$$S_D = \frac{\Sigma D^2 - (\Sigma D)^2 / n}{N - 1}$$

Based on the formula, the standard deviation is

$$S_D = \sqrt{\frac{4.5 - (4)^2 / 24}{24 - 1}}$$

$$S_D = \sqrt{\frac{4.5 - 16 / 24}{23}}$$

$$S_D = \sqrt{\frac{3.84}{23}}$$

$$S_D = \sqrt{0.16695652173}$$

$$S_D = 0.40860313475$$

The effect size ( $d$ ) is found by using this formula:

$$d = D / S_D$$

Based on the formula, the effect size is:

$$d = 0.1666 / 0.40860313475$$

$$d = 0.40789375431$$

The  $t$  ratio is found by using this formula:

$$t = d \sqrt{N}$$

Based on the formula, the observed ratio is:

$$t = 0.40789375431 \sqrt{24}$$

$$t = (0.40789375431) (4.89897948556)$$

$$t = 1.99826313465$$

The standard deviation of the difference scores ( $S_D$ ) in control group is found by using this formula:

$$S_D = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma D^2 - (\Sigma D)^2 / n}{N - 1}}$$

Based on the formula, the standard deviation is

$$S_D = \sqrt{\frac{1.5 - (-3)^2 / 24}{24 - 1}}$$

$$S_D = \sqrt{\frac{1.5 - 9 / 24}{23}}$$

$$S_D = \sqrt{\frac{1.125}{23}}$$

$$S_D = \sqrt{0.04891304347}$$

$$S_D = 0.22116293421$$

The effect size ( $d$ ) is found by using this formula:

$$d = D / S_D$$

Based on the formula, the effect size is:

$$d = -0.125 / 0.22116293421$$

$$d = -0.5651941653$$

The  $t$  ratio is found by using this formula:

$$t = d \sqrt{N}$$

Based on the formula, the observed ratio is:

$$t = -0.5651941653 \sqrt{24}$$

$$t = (-0.5651941653) (4.89897948556)$$

$$t = -2.7688746211$$

### Pre-Test

Choose ONE topic below and write a minimum of a 300-word-essay based on the topic of your choice. The essay should be organized into 4 – 5 paragraphs with an introduction, middle parts, and a conclusion. Please provide examples and details to support your arguments.

The topics are:

- In your opinion, what are the qualities of a good best friend?
- What are very important skills a person should have in order to be successful in the world today?
- Do you agree/disagree with the following: F2F communication is better than Technology communication, such as FB, email or SMS.
- What are the best ways of reducing stress?
- Would you prefer to live in the countryside or city? Why?

You are given 60 minutes to complete your essay.

### Post-Test

Choose ONE topic below and write a minimum of a 300-word-essay based on the topic of your choice. The essay should be organized into 4 – 5 paragraphs with an introduction, middle parts, and a conclusion. Please provide examples and details to support your arguments.

The topics are:

- Do you like to eat out or eat at home?
- What are the good things (or bad things) about the place you live in?
- Do you agree/disagree with the following: "It is more enjoyable to see a performance live than to watch it in TV"?
- Do you like to have a class early in the day or later in the day?
- What are the qualities of a good friend?
- What are the skills that a person should have in order to be successful in the modern world?

You are given 60 minutes to complete your essay.

### Writing Rubric

Score	Description
4	Addresses the topic and task well Generally well organized (appropriate explanations and/or details) Generally well developed (mostly cohesive and coherent) Facility in the use of language (mostly varied and appropriate vocabulary, <b>few</b> grammatical errors)
3	Addresses the topic and task adequately Somewhat organized (adequate explanations and/or details) Somewhat developed (adequately cohesive and coherent) Adequate facility in the use of language (limited vocabulary, <b>some</b> grammatical errors)
2	Limitedly addresses the topic and task Inadequately organized (inappropriate/insufficient explanations and/or details) Inadequately developed (inadequately cohesive and coherent) Limited facility in the use of language (clearly inappropriate vocabulary, <b>many</b> grammatical errors)
1	Very limitedly addresses the topic and task Very limitedly organized (little/no explanations and/or details) Very limitedly developed (irrelevant and unrelated) Very limited facility in the use of language ( <b>too many</b> errors in vocabulary and grammar)
0	Copies words from the topic/rejects the topic/unrelated to the topic