

THE USE OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TEACHING NARRATIVE TEXT WRITING AT GRADE XII OF SMA NEGERI 1 SIANTAR

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving students' ability to write narrative texts at Grade XII of SMA Negeri 1 Siantar. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design consisting of two cycles, each involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages. The participants were 32 students of Class XII-Science 2 in the academic year 2024/2025. Data were collected through writing tests, observation sheets, and field notes. Quantitative data were obtained from pre-test and post-tests to measure students' writing performance, while qualitative data were used to examine students' participation, motivation, and classroom interaction during the implementation of CLT. The findings showed a marked improvement in students' narrative writing skills, particularly in content development, organization, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and mechanics. In addition, students demonstrated higher engagement, confidence, and collaboration during communicative writing activities such as group discussions, storytelling, and peer feedback. The results indicate that Communicative Language Teaching is an effective and meaningful approach for enhancing students' narrative writing ability and creating a more interactive learning environment. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers apply CLT-based strategies in writing instruction to improve students' communicative competence and writing proficiency.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, Narrative Writing; Writing Ability; Classroom Action Research

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most essential skills in English language learning because it enables students to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a structured and meaningful form. According to Harmer (2004), writing is a process that involves several stages planning, drafting, revising, and editing to produce an effective piece of communication. Similarly, Brown (2001) defines writing as a process of putting thoughts into words that are structured and understandable, which helps learners strengthen their grammatical and lexical knowledge. Among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is considered the most complex and challenging to master. It requires not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to organize ideas logically, use appropriate vocabulary, and apply the correct text structure. Nunan (2003) states that writing is a process of generating, organizing, and refining ideas to communicate meaning effectively. However, in the Indonesian EFL context, writing becomes even more

difficult because students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom and often lack opportunities to use it communicatively.

Narrative texts aim to entertain and teach moral values through stories, and they help students develop their creativity and logical sequencing of events. However, in practice, many students especially those in Grade XII of SMA Negeri 1 Siantar struggle to write narrative texts effectively. They face common problems such as limited vocabulary, incorrect use of the past tense, poor organization, and low motivation to write. The traditional teaching method of writing in many Indonesian classrooms is often teacher-centered, focusing heavily on grammar explanation and error correction. Although this method builds awareness of linguistic accuracy, it does not foster communicative competence or creativity. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), traditional approaches tend to prioritize linguistic form rather than communicative function, which makes learning less meaningful for students. As a result, students often perceive writing as a mechanical and monotonous activity, not as a tool for expressing ideas or communicating meaning. This gap between curriculum goals and classroom practice highlights the need for a more interactive and communicative teaching approach.

To address this pedagogical issue, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has emerged as an effective approach that emphasizes interaction, negotiation of meaning, and authentic communication. Littlewood (1981) explains that CLT helps students use language in realistic contexts by combining functional communication activities with social interaction. In addition, Nunan (1991) asserts that CLT views language learning as a process of learning to communicate through authentic interaction and meaningful tasks. In the context of writing, Richards and Schmidt (2010) note that CLT encourages learners to express ideas through cooperative activities such as group discussion, peer feedback, and task-based writing, which enhance fluency and confidence. By applying CLT in teaching writing, students are expected to become more active and engaged in the learning process. Activities such as storytelling, pair work, group discussions, and peer editing can help them generate ideas, structure their stories, and improve accuracy while maintaining creativity. Through this approach, writing becomes a communicative process rather than a grammatical exercise.

Despite its potential, relatively few studies in the Indonesian EFL context have explored the use of CLT in teaching narrative text writing. Most previous studies have focused on its application in speaking or reading, while its use in writing classes—particularly at the senior high school level remains limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by implementing CLT in teaching narrative text writing to Grade XII students of SMA Negeri 1 Siantar.

The objective of this research is to investigate the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in teaching narrative text writing and to evaluate its effectiveness in improving students' writing performance. Specifically, the study aims to:

- a. Identify the main difficulties faced by students in writing narrative texts.
- b. Describe how CLT can be applied in teaching narrative text writing.

c. Measure the improvement in students' writing performance after the implementation of CLT

This research is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of language teaching methodology by providing insights into how CLT can be effectively integrated into writing instruction, particularly in an Indonesian EFL context. Practically, it provides valuable guidance for teachers seeking to adopt more communicative and student-centered approaches in their writing classrooms. The findings of this study are expected to offer meaningful implications for teachers, curriculum developers, and future researchers aiming to enhance English language teaching and learning in Indonesian schools.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which aimed to improve students' ability in writing narrative texts through the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), classroom action research is a cyclical process that involves four main stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This design allows teachers and researchers to identify students' learning problems, apply specific teaching strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness through ongoing reflection and revision. By using CLT, students are encouraged to use the target language actively and meaningfully in communicative contexts, thus enhancing their writing competence.

The study was conducted in two cycles, and each cycle consisted of two meetings. In every cycle, the researcher planned the lesson using communicative tasks related to narrative text writing, implemented the activities in the classroom, observed students' engagement and participation, and reflected on the outcomes to improve the next cycle. The primary purpose of this Classroom Action Research was to determine to what extent the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) could improve students' ability in writing narrative texts among the twelfth-grade students of SMA Negeri 1 Siantar.

Participants / Data

The participants of this research were 32 students of Class XII-Science 2 at SMA Negeri 1 Siantar in the academic year 2024/2025. This class was selected based on preliminary observations indicating that many students encountered difficulties in writing narrative texts, particularly in organizing ideas, using appropriate tenses, and developing coherent stories. The selection of this class was also based on the teacher's recommendation that the students needed improvement in their writing performance. The data of this research were collected from two types of sources: quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative data were obtained from the results of the writing tests (pre-test and post-tests of each cycle) to measure students' improvement in writing narrative texts. Meanwhile, qualitative data were gathered from classroom observations, field notes, and students' participation records during the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. These data provided detailed descriptions of students' engagement, classroom atmosphere, and learning progress throughout the research cycles.

Instruments / Variables

To collect the required data, several instruments were used in this study. These instruments were designed to measure both the improvement of students' ability in writing narrative texts and the changes in their learning behavior during the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach.

Writing Tests (Pre-test and Post-tests):

The main instrument used to measure the improvement of students' writing ability was the writing test, which was administered before and after each cycle. Each test required students to compose a narrative text based on a given topic or picture series.

The scoring rubric assessed five aspects of writing performance:

Content: relevance and completeness of the story.

Organization: logical flow and coherence of ideas.

Vocabulary: appropriate and varied word choice.

Language use: correct grammar and sentence structure.

Mechanics: accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Each aspect was rated on a scale, and the total score was converted into a scale of 100. The writing tests were validated by an English teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Siantar to ensure their appropriateness, clarity, and alignment with the school's curriculum objectives.

Observation Sheet:

The observation sheet was used to record students' engagement, participation, and interaction during the implementation of the CLT approach. The observed aspects included students' activeness in group discussions, their willingness to communicate in English, cooperation in completing communicative tasks, and enthusiasm during speaking and writing activities. The data from the observation were analyzed qualitatively to support the quantitative findings from the writing tests.

Field Notes:

Field notes were written by the researcher during each lesson to describe the classroom atmosphere, students' attitudes, and notable events that occurred during the learning process. These notes provided additional qualitative evidence to strengthen the interpretation of test and observation results, particularly regarding the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching approach in improving students' narrative writing skills. The main variable of this study was students' writing ability in narrative text, defined as their capacity to express ideas coherently and accurately in written form. The independent variable was the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which served as the instructional treatment applied to enhance students' writing performance.

Research Procedure

The implementation of this research followed two cycles based on Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) model of Classroom Action Research (CAR). Each cycle consisted of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Planning:

In this stage, the researcher identified problems in students' writing skills through a pre-test and initial classroom observation. The results showed that many students faced difficulties in developing ideas, organizing narrative structure, and using correct grammar when writing narrative texts. Based on these findings, the researcher designed a lesson plan that applied the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The learning materials focused on narrative text topics such as legends, fables, and short stories. Communicative tasks were prepared, including story completion, role-play, group storytelling, and pair discussion activities to encourage active language use. In addition, writing test instruments, observation sheets, and field note templates were developed to collect data during each cycle.

Acting:

During this stage, the researcher implemented the teaching and learning process according to the CLT-based lesson plan. Students were actively involved in communicative activities where they shared ideas, discussed story elements, and composed narrative texts collaboratively. In the first cycle, the researcher emphasized guided communication—students discussed story outlines and wrote short narratives in groups. In the second cycle, the tasks became more independent and interactive, focusing on peer feedback and individual writing performance. Students were encouraged to use English naturally in discussion and writing while the teacher acted as a facilitator.

Observing:

The researcher and collaborator observed students' participation and behavior during the learning process. The observed aspects included students' activeness in communication, cooperation during group tasks, confidence in using English, and improvement in writing performance. All observations were documented using the prepared observation sheets and field notes, while students' progress was measured through pre-tests and post-tests of narrative writing.

Reflecting:

After each cycle, the researcher analyzed and reflected on the data obtained from tests, observations, and field notes. The reflection aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the CLT approach and identify aspects that needed improvement in the next cycle. Based on the reflection of the first cycle, revisions were made to the lesson plan, such as giving clearer instructions, providing more vocabulary support, and increasing time for peer review activities. The second cycle focused on enhancing students' creativity, fluency, and confidence in expressing ideas through written narrative texts. This study provides a clearer and more systematic description of the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in each research cycle. The communicative activities namely group discussions, storytelling, and peer feedback were carefully structured in terms of duration, steps, materials, task formats, and feedback mechanisms. Each cycle consisted of two meetings (2×90 minutes) and followed the principles of CLT, emphasizing meaningful interaction, collaboration, and student-centered learning. The instructional procedures in Cycle I and Cycle II were designed progressively, with revisions based on reflection results from the previous cycle.

Cycle I: Guided Communicative Writing

Cycle I focused on familiarizing students with narrative text structure and encouraging idea generation through guided communicative activities.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher introduced narrative texts by discussing their social function, generic structure (orientation, complication, resolution), and language features. Students were then divided into small groups of four to five members. Each group was given a short narrative prompt or picture series as learning material.

- a. During the group discussion stage (approximately 25 minutes), students discussed story elements such as characters, setting, and plot sequence. The teacher acted as a facilitator by providing guiding questions and vocabulary support.
- b. Next, in the storytelling activity (30 minutes), each group collaboratively developed a short narrative outline and orally shared their story ideas with the class.
- c. In the writing stage (25 minutes), students jointly wrote a narrative text based on their discussion results.

Peer feedback in Cycle I was conducted informally. Students exchanged drafts with another group and gave general comments focusing on story completeness and clarity. Reflection results showed that although students were more engaged, they still needed clearer guidance on feedback criteria and more time to revise their writing.

Cycle II: Independent and Interactive Communicative Writing

Based on reflections from Cycle I, several improvements were made in Cycle II. The focus shifted toward independent writing, structured peer feedback, and revision quality.

In Cycle II, students worked individually but still engaged in communicative interaction through peer collaboration. The lesson began with a brief review of narrative structure and common errors found in Cycle I. Students were then given a new narrative writing task based on a different theme (e.g., legends or personal experiences).

- a. The pre-writing discussion (20 minutes) involved pair discussions to brainstorm ideas and vocabulary.
- b. The individual writing stage (40 minutes) required students to write a complete narrative text independently.
- c. After that, peer feedback activities (20 minutes) were conducted using a simple peer feedback rubric prepared by the teacher. The rubric guided students to comment on content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar.
- d. Finally, students revised their drafts based on peer suggestions and teacher feedback.

Cycle II showed significant improvement in students' writing quality, participation, and confidence. The structured peer feedback helped students become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, resulting in more coherent and accurate narrative texts.

Table 1. Summary of CLT-Based Writing Activities in Cycle I and Cycle II

Aspect	Cycle I	Cycle II
Objectives	Introduce narrative structure and encourage idea generation through guided communication	Improve writing quality, independence, and revision skills
Duration	2 meetings × 90 minutes	2 meetings × 90 minutes
Main CLT Activities	Group discussion, collaborative storytelling, group writing	Pair discussion, individual writing, structured peer feedback
Learning Materials	Picture series, short narrative prompts	New narrative themes (legends/personal stories)
Writing Product	Group-written narrative text	Individually written narrative text
Feedback Format	Informal peer comments (general)	Structured peer feedback rubric (content, organization, language use)
Teacher's Role	Facilitator and guide	Facilitator, feedback provider
Revision Focus	Story completeness and idea clarity	Language accuracy, organization, and coherence
Reflection Result	Students engaged but needed clearer feedback guidance	Improved writing quality, confidence, and autonomy

Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the data obtained from the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in teaching narrative writing to Grade XII students of SMA Negeri 1 Siantar. The analysis is based on quantitative data from students' writing tests and qualitative data from classroom observations. The quantitative data were collected through three stages of testing: pre-test, post-test in Cycle I, and post-test in Cycle II. The writing tests assessed students' narrative writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

Quantitative Findings**Students' Writing Test Scores**

The overall improvement of students' writing scores can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 2. Students' Writing Test Scores

No	Test Type	Mean Score	Highest Score	Lowest Score
1	Pre-test	62.4	75	50
2	Post-test Cycle I	71.6	85	60
3	Post-test Cycle II	81.2	92	70

Based on Table 4.1, students' writing performance showed a consistent improvement after the implementation of the CLT approach. The mean score increased from 62.4 in the pre-test to 71.6 in the post-test of Cycle I. A more significant improvement occurred in Cycle II, where the mean score rose to 81.2, exceeding the minimum mastery criterion (KKM = 75). This indicates that CLT contributed positively to the development of students' narrative writing ability.

Students' Achievement of Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM)

The improvement in students' achievement of the minimum mastery criterion is presented in Table 2.

Table 3. Students' Achievement of Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM = 75)

Test Type	Number of Students	Students Achieving KKM	Percentage
Pre-test	30	8	26.7%
Post-test Cycle I	30	15	50.0%
Post-test Cycle II	30	25	83.3%

As shown in Table 4.2, only 26.7% of students achieved the KKM in the pre-test. After the implementation of CLT in Cycle I, the percentage increased to 50%, indicating a moderate improvement. In Cycle II, a substantial improvement was observed, with 83.3% of students successfully meeting the KKM. This result demonstrates that CLT was effective in helping most students reach the expected level of writing proficiency.

Improvement of Students' Writing Scores

To clearly illustrate the progress made by students across the cycles, the increase in mean scores is summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 4. Improvement of Students' Writing Scores

Test Comparison	Mean Score Increase
Pre-test → Cycle I	+9.2
Cycle I → Cycle II	+9.6
Pre-test → Cycle II	+18.8

Table 4 shows that students' writing scores improved steadily in each cycle. The total increase of 18.8 points from the pre-test to the post-test of Cycle II indicates a significant enhancement in students' narrative writing ability after the implementation of CLT.

Students' Writing Performance Based on Writing Aspects

In addition to overall scores, students' improvement can also be seen in each aspect of writing, as presented in Table 4.4.

Table 5. Students' Writing Performance Based on Writing Aspects

Writing Aspect	Pre-test	Cycle I	Cycle II
Content	Fair	Good	Very Good
Organization	Fair	Good	Very Good
Vocabulary	Poor	Fair	Good
Language Use	Poor	Fair	Good
Mechanics	Fair	Good	Good

Based on Table 5, improvements were found in all aspects of writing. The most notable progress occurred in content and organization, indicating that communicative activities helped students develop ideas and structure their narratives more effectively. Improvements in vocabulary and language use suggest that students gradually enhanced their linguistic accuracy through meaningful communication. Mechanical errors were also reduced, particularly in Cycle II.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data in this study were obtained from classroom observations and field notes during the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). To ensure systematic and transparent analysis, the qualitative data were analyzed using three main stages: data reduction, data categorization, and theme extraction. First, data reduction was conducted by selecting observation and field note data that were relevant to students' involvement in the learning process. The reduced data focused on students' participation in communicative activities, interaction during group work, confidence in expressing ideas, and responses to CLT-based writing tasks. Irrelevant or repetitive classroom events were excluded to maintain analytical focus.

Second, the reduced data were categorized based on indicators of student involvement. These indicators included:

- a. Students' Active Participation In Group Discussions And Storytelling Activities,
- b. Collaborative Interaction Among Students During Writing Tasks,
- c. Students' Confidence In Expressing Ideas And Providing Peer Feedback, And
- d. The Teacher's Role As A Facilitator In Guiding Communicative Learning.

These categories were consistently applied to both observation sheets and field notes to ensure reliability.

Third, theme extraction was conducted by identifying recurring patterns across the categories. The main themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis were increased student engagement, improved collaboration in writing activities, and greater confidence in narrative writing. These themes were then compared with quantitative data from writing tests to strengthen data triangulation. To support the qualitative findings, several summarized examples from observation notes are presented. For instance, observation notes in Cycle I indicated that students actively discussed narrative ideas in small groups before writing, although some students still relied on

their peers for vocabulary support. In Cycle II, observation notes showed that most students confidently expressed ideas, gave feedback to their peers, and completed narrative texts more independently. In addition, field notes revealed that the teacher primarily acted as a facilitator, encouraging students to negotiate meaning and express ideas freely rather than focusing on direct error correction. These qualitative findings support the quantitative results and confirm that the implementation of CLT created a more communicative, student-centered classroom atmosphere and positively influenced students' narrative writing ability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving students' ability to write narrative texts at Grade XII of SMA Negeri 1 Siantar. The findings of the study were derived from the quantitative data of students' writing test scores and supported by qualitative data from classroom observations.

Quantitative Research Findings

The quantitative findings were obtained from the results of the pre-test, post-test in Cycle I, and post-test in Cycle II. The overall improvement in students' writing performance is clearly presented in Table 1. Based on Table 1., the mean score of students' writing in the pre-test was 62.4, indicating that students' initial ability in writing narrative texts was below the minimum mastery criterion (KKM = 75). After the implementation of CLT in Cycle I, the mean score increased to 71.6. Although this improvement had not fully met the KKM, it showed that students began to develop better understanding of narrative structure and idea organization. A more significant improvement occurred in Cycle II, where the mean score rose to 81.2, exceeding the KKM. Further evidence of students' improvement can be seen in Table 2., which presents students' achievement of the minimum mastery criterion. In the pre-test, only 8 students (26.7%) achieved the KKM. This number increased to 15 students (50%) in Cycle I and rose substantially to 25 students (83.3%) in Cycle II. These results indicate that the majority of students were able to reach the expected level of narrative writing proficiency after the full implementation of CLT. The improvement in students' writing scores across the cycles is summarized in Table 3. The mean score increased by 9.2 points from the pre-test to Cycle I and by 9.6 points from Cycle I to Cycle II, resulting in a total improvement of 18.8 points. This steady progress demonstrates the effectiveness of CLT in enhancing students' writing performance.

In addition to overall scores, students' improvement was also observed in each aspect of writing, as shown in Table 4. The most noticeable improvement occurred in the aspects of content and organization, which progressed from fair in the pre-test to very good in Cycle II. Improvements were also found in vocabulary and language use, which developed from poor to good. The mechanics aspect showed improvement as students made fewer spelling and punctuation errors in Cycle II.

Qualitative Research Findings

The qualitative findings obtained from classroom observations supported the quantitative data. During the pre-cycle observation, students were passive and reluctant to express ideas in

English. In Cycle I, students became more active during group discussions and collaborative storytelling activities, although some still depended on their peers. In Cycle II, students showed significant improvement in participation and confidence. Most students actively expressed ideas, provided feedback to peers, and were able to write narrative texts more independently. The classroom atmosphere became more interactive and supportive, indicating positive changes in students' attitudes toward writing after the implementation of CLT.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an effective approach for improving students' ability to write narrative texts. The improvement in students' writing performance, as shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3, indicates that CLT contributed significantly to the development of students' writing skills. The increase in mean scores from 62.4 in the pre-test to 81.2 in the post-test of Cycle II demonstrates that students benefited from communicative learning activities. These activities encouraged students to actively generate ideas, organize story events, and express meaning through language use. This finding supports Littlewood's (1981) assertion that communicative activities promote meaningful language use through interaction. The significant improvement in the aspects of content and organization (Table 4.) suggests that CLT helped students better understand narrative structure, including orientation, complication, and resolution. Group discussions and collaborative storytelling enabled students to share ideas and construct narratives more coherently. As a result, students' written texts became more structured and logically organized.

The findings also show improvement in vocabulary and language use, indicating that CLT does not ignore linguistic accuracy. Instead, grammar and vocabulary are developed naturally through meaningful communication. Peer feedback and collaborative writing activities in Cycle II allowed students to notice and correct language errors, leading to gradual improvement in accuracy. This finding is consistent with Richards and Schmidt (2010), who argue that CLT integrates fluency and accuracy in communicative practice.

Furthermore, the qualitative findings reveal that CLT positively influenced students' motivation and confidence in writing. The increase in the percentage of students achieving the KKM (Table 2.) reflects not only improved writing ability but also greater student engagement in the learning process. The shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered communicative activities created a supportive learning environment where students felt encouraged to express ideas without fear of making mistakes. This finding aligns with Nunan (1991), who emphasizes the importance of meaningful interaction in language learning. Overall, the discussion confirms that the improvement shown in the data analysis and research findings resulted from the effective implementation of Communicative Language Teaching. By emphasizing interaction, collaboration, and meaningful language use, CLT effectively enhanced students' narrative writing ability and classroom participation.

4. CONCLUSION

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