
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Communicative Language Teaching Impact on Students' Cognition and Writing Motivation in Translation Practice

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| ABSTRACT

Language teaching aims to develop communication competence that results in interaction. From the higher education perspective, students are not merely expected to be competent in their particular disciplines but also capable of interacting with people in global cultures. Thus, the teacher should take into consideration the essentials of EFL teaching methods. For this purpose, this study investigates the students' cognitive involvement and motivation in translation activities as part of language learning. The sample group consisted of 62 (control group = 30; experiment group = 32) students from the engineering and economics departments of two universities in North Sumatra, Indonesia. We designed the materials for translation tasks using Indonesian as the source language (L1) to be translated into English (L2). We distributed a questionnaire consisting of 15 items after the completion of each translation task session. The questionnaire items were developed to investigate cognitive involvement and motivation and were categorized into four factors. We analyzed, summarised, and compared student responses on each item. The findings reveal that cognition involvement and writing motivation improved with the application of communicative language teaching in translation classes.

| KEYWORDS

Communicative, language, teaching, translation, cognition, writing, motivation

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 April 2023

PUBLISHED: 08 April 2023

DOI: 10.32996/jeltal.2023.5.2.6

1. Introduction

Translation is not merely the transferring of words from the source language to the target language. It is a complex activity that involves choosing words, solving cultural terms, and preparing the whole text in a target language that is ready for the target language users. Aside from being an act of communication, translation is a complex, naturally-occurring activity that involves cultural and cognitive processes (Leonardi, 2011) and cannot be explained solely through reference to the linguistic structure (Séguinot, 2002). Thus, the field of linguistic cognition, especially in translation, has drawn the attention of scholars and practitioners in translation in recent decades.

Many studies since the 1960s have reported that translation as a bilingual approach to language learning, especially in EFL, highlights the cognitive process in second language acquisition (Lambert, 1990). Further investigation to understand and explain the mental process of the translator in handling the translation has set a basis for our further research in teaching. (Risku, 2014) suggests the sociocognitive interaction as an approach to translation.

However, when translation is situated in the classroom, earnest efforts should be made to encourage the learner in an effective way to experience meaningful learning. (Song, 2013; Tyler & Evans, 2003). By considering motivation as a state of cognitive arousal that sustains intellectual and physical effort, an effective method of learning should reflect the increasing degree of student motivation, as well as the frequency or experiences in using the second language. This supports the process of foreign language acquisition (M. Williams & Burden, 1997).

In addition to foreign language teaching, translation teaching can be successfully applied at any level of proficiency and in any educational context, from secondary to tertiary education (Leonardi, 2015). It should be featured with valuable and creative teaching aids to support, integrate, and further strengthen the four traditional language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Nadri et al., 2019).

Writing is an activity that is inseparable from academicians and is one of the skills that is very important for every student. However, it is realized that writing skills in other languages, such as English, are increasingly difficult for nonspeakers. Translation activities, including writing, require concentration and the ability to analyze, criticize and summarize what has been read from the source language. Students find this activity difficult to do in English because the writing process requires the use of various strategies such as cognitive, linguistic, logical, critical, etc. (Kavaliauskienė, 2010).

Every country has its own guiding principles in language teaching, but they may adopt similar preferences in English language teaching. For example, although the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for second language learners began in the 1970s, this approach has influenced teaching methods worldwide (Richards, 2006). As globalization requires communicative competence, CLT has become a prominent method in language teaching for a globalized world (William Littlewood, 2013).

2. Literature Review

2.1 CLT, Cognitive Involvement and Writing in EFL Class

Communicative Language Teaching is recognised as an influential approach to language teaching, having become one of the leading methods in the field of foreign language teaching worldwide (Liu, 2015). CLT emerges from a language theory that regards language as communication, whereas language learning had previously been viewed as a process of mechanical habit formation (Richards, 2006; Thurgood et al., 1981). In a speech community, there are rules on grammar, vocabulary, and semantics, as well as rules for speaking in the pattern of the speech community's sociolinguistic behaviour (Barnard et al., 2002). Emphasising the communicative language approach resulted in an obvious change from the traditional language teaching approach, moving from linguistic competence to communicative competence and from teacher-centred to learner-centred classes. These approaches were achieved by highlighting key issues such as developing practical and interesting materials and providing instruction on using technology and resources. The CLT method encourages the student to conduct maximum communication in many different contexts (JeonJihyeon, 2009). Positive relationships were formed in doing CLT activities as (Chang, 2011) reported that CLT turned the classroom into a learning-supportive context. The CLT method proved to be effective in improving the students' writing proficiency and learning engagement (Christianto, 2019). Moreover (Zhang, 2006) proposes that successful language learning experiences can be achieved by developing interactive and meaningful communication, while (Wu, 2008) finds that CLT activities develop significant communicative competence.

There has been an increase in studies that investigate the effectiveness of CLT in the classroom. The implementation of CLT links theory to practice and has many benefits. According to (Marqués Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013), CLT emphasises communication as the goal and as the means to learn a language in classroom activities. Classroom activities (Hunter & Smith 2012) have been observed that it provokes communicative ideas among students. When CLT principles are applied in different social and educational contexts, it brings out notably different attitudes from the students. Different activities may be used by the teacher to encourage the students' participation. Students should be able to apply its principles when negotiating meanings. In this sense, CLT fosters the cognitive ability to negotiate meanings in interactions (Hall, 2011).

In many parts of the world where English is a secondary language, the teaching of grammar is a primary focus in the EFL classroom. However, studies in the contexts of China, Taiwan, Thailand, Korea, and Indonesia imply that merely acquiring knowledge of grammar is not enough. In the absence of communication activities in the classroom, students tend to be passive learners. Thus, some teachers and researchers have found that the CLT method is suitable for encouraging student involvement in communicating ideas in writing.

An additional perspective on the result of the CLT method application in the classroom context was proposed by (Mustapha & Yahya, 2013). The success of CLT primarily depends on the teachers' understanding and beliefs about CLT, which transforms into

teaching practices in the classroom (Sarfraz et al., 2015). With the implementation of CLT, students are more active in participating in classroom activities, and they are encouraged to engage in natural communication in the classroom context (Huang, 2016). Contrary to the traditional teaching method, which lacks opportunities for students to express their views (Sun, 2016), the CLT method focuses on the development of students' communication skills, involving active decision-making processes (Ballman & Larsen-Freeman, 1988; Hutchinson & Waters, 1984). To achieve this goal, CLT elements of cognitive linguistic analysis are incorporated into learning materials and activities (Jacobsen, 2018). The activities may include task-completion activities, information-gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, information-transfer activities, reasoning-gap activities, and role-playing activities based on pair and group work models (Richards, 2006). In practice, the CLT enhance students' level of ability in writing (Once, 2020; Samiullah & Zaigham Qadeer, 2018)

To stimulate communicative intent, students are paired in work groups, and teachers take on the role of advisors, monitoring student performances. In addition (Larsen-Freeman, 2013) points out that a characteristic of the CLT method's teaching-learning process is that they must use authentic materials. (Intarapanich, 2013) confirms that students are encouraged to convey purposeful communication with others when working in a small group. In CLT activities, the students learn by practicing and examining their perceptions in a positive and non-threatening learning atmosphere. Students can gain knowledge in terms of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic competence (Pokorna & Vasylyeva, 2014). In doing the CLT activities, the teacher provides whole-task practices that are structured to suit the student's ability and help maintain or enhance learning motivation (William Littlewood, 2013).

Motivation becomes an even more important aspect of language learning due to the increase in people having better careers, travelling abroad to meet new people and new cultures, and living in an English-speaking country Redondo & Martín (2015). Students feel highly motivated when participating in communicative activities, as they help them have a realistic and enjoyable experience of using English during their interactions (Ochoa et al., 2016). Furthermore, the more effective a student is in communicating with others, the higher the level of motivation they will have in the learning process. Further investigation is needed to see what this means in practice. Persistent learning behaviour and high levels of involvement are elements of motivation, but the rapid changes in the globalized world and the ease of technological access may distract and spoil students' impulses in language learning.

2.2 Writing in Translation Process

Writing is a productive and active process of the mind in conveying ideas (D. Williams, 2002). It is an effective tool of communication between people to fulfill their needs and goals in self-expression, conveying ideas, and convincing others. This function is also found in translation, where the translator creates meaning in the target language and conveys it in writing.

Translation activities have been used as part of foreign language learning. Translation can improve aspects of language skills. One aspect of language skills that is most dominantly affected is writing. Therefore, in universities, translation has been integrated into language teaching. As stated by (Naif, 2014), translation practice in class can improve writing skills by imitating professional translation processes in the real world. Students seem to be working on a project, and this makes them realize the importance of paying attention to language conventions. Incorporating the translation into other studies shows that translation can be a useful tool in teaching writing. Through translation, students can practice writing by reducing the complexity of language, especially at the macro level (Göpferich & Nelezen, 2014).

In examining previous CLT implementation and translation as a subject that has a place in English language learning and teaching in Indonesia, this study aims to enhance students' cognitive involvement and writing motivation in translation by employing the CLT method. The general aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of this method in translation teaching in order to increase teacher awareness in EFL classes in higher education in Indonesia.

3. Methodology

The participants of this study are students of Universitas Al-Azhar Medan and Universitas Sumatera Utara, who were selected through convenience sampling. This study uses a quasi-experimental method, as the distribution of students is fixed in each department. The study involved a sample group consisting of 62 students at the undergraduate level (24 males and 38 females) with intermediate proficiency in English (according to a preliminary test). At the time of the study, these students were in their fifth semester, in the 2022-2023 academic year, as well as participants in a sequence course conducted from September to November 2022. Of these students, 32 are from the economics department (20 from USU and 12 from Al-Azhar University), and 30 students are from the engineering department (18 from USU and 12 from Al-Azhar University). In total, the participants are divided into four classes. All of the participants were selected with personal consent to participate in the survey, which was conducted after applying the traditional teaching method for the control group (CG) and the CLT method for the experiment group (EG).

We developed the questionnaires in Google Forms, distributing and collecting their feedback online. Each questionnaire is comprised of 15 items that reflect the four criteria of student cognition involvement and motivation in learning. We assessed each item of the questionnaire based on a Likert-type five-point scale questionnaire, where 1 is 'very low', 2 is 'low', 3 is 'average', 4 is 'high', and 5 is 'very high'.

The implementation of the CLT method in translation teaching was based on exercise (test) sessions. The first exercise was given with a traditional test or labelled as the control group (CG). The CG students were tested with general genre material and individual work. The material consisted of approximately 300 to 400 words. Each participant had to write down their translation version on the worksheet prepared by the teacher. The participants completed the pre-exercise in 30 minutes. In the last session of the class, the students were given a 15-minute pre-test questionnaire, which consisted of 13 items. This individual performance test is intended to reveal the students' style as an individual.

In contrast to the previous method, the second exercise was conducted two weeks after the first one. Three to four students from each class were assigned to bring their notebooks/laptops to the next session. In this second exercise, the course material was developed with structured and purposive content. The class was divided into working groups. The exercise took 30 minutes. Each class was given subject-related content to encourage discussion within the group. For example, the economics class was given a subject closely related to economics, such as accounting, banking, and money. Each participant in the group was encouraged to be active and as involved as possible in communicating their ideas in the translation process. The participants were also allowed to use online dictionaries as a tool. Each group assigned a participant to use the notebook/laptop to write their translated version of the text as a result of the discussion and the exercise. Moreover, each group was asked to prepare a list of terms they found to be difficult in the translation process. In the next session, the students were given the 15-minute post-test questionnaire, which they completed individually. The framework of the CLT application is illustrated in the figure below.

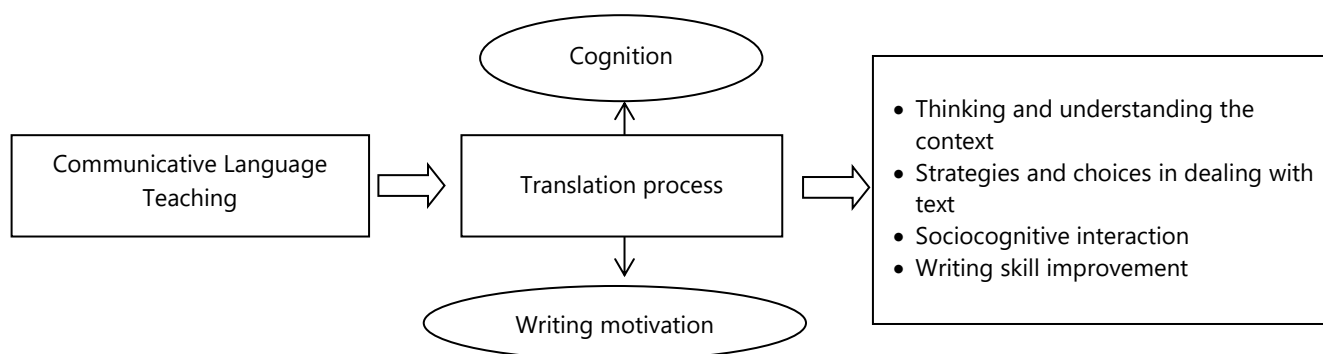


Figure 1. Communicative language teaching and investigated result

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

After we collected the participants' responses, we tabulated the data and summarised every item. Table 1 shows the students' responses to both the traditional learning method (control group) and the CLT method (experiment group). We conducted the data analysis to present the mean and the standard deviation in order to ensure the reliability of the test.

The results of the study show the variation in the mean scores of the items. The control group shows a mean range of 1.484 to 4.532, while the experiment group shows 2.758 to 4.453. The minimum score on traditional teaching is found on item 9, concerning the need to discuss the difficulty of related material. The maximum score is found on item 5 concerning the use of tools in dealing with the translation task. The experiment group shows the minimum score on item 11, which reflects the degree of difficulty of the task, while the maximum score is found on item 6, which is related to communication activities in dealing with a difficult task.

Table 1. Cognitive involvement

Factors and Items	Control Group (CG)		Experiment Group (EG)	
	Mean	STD	Mean	STD
A. Thinking and understanding the structure and context				
1 Imagine the situation of the text in my mind before translating	2,597	0.706	4,194	0.563
2 Ability to distinguish formal meaning and context meaning	2,355	0.625	4,419	0.555
B. Strategies and choice in dealing with text				
3 Aware the cultural and technical-related problems	2,419	0.572	3,597	0.659
4 Identify the interrelations between visual and verbal components	3,258	0.620	4,081	0.517
5 Requires the translation tools in dealing with tasks	4,532	0.530	4,387	0.549
C. Sociocognitive Interaction				
6 Discuss the context and structure, difficult terms or problem related text with other students	1,484	0.561	4,339	0.594
7 Individual and work-group tasks motivate students to communicate in English frequently	2,210	0.572	3,984	0.523
8 Mutual communication among the students and or teacher in doing translation task	1,919	0.048	4,290	0.579
9 Discuss related-material of learning with others outside the class	2,048	0.065	3,468	0.499
10 Enjoy the classroom atmosphere and working in individual or group	3,629	0.546	3,984	0.553
D. Writing Motivation				
11 The difficult degree of the task	3,710	0.811	2,758	0.529
12 Enjoy the process of rendering text from the source language to the target language	2,194	0.470	4,403	0.566
13 Aware of the languages convention in writing	2,968	0.507	3,677	0.532
14 Enjoy the revising and editing process	3,323	0.713	4,274	0.544
15 Improve student's writing skill	2,758	0.797	3,661	0.594

Based on the control group results, the lowest mean score is identified in factor C, item 6 of 1.484, while the highest mean score is found in factor B, item 5 of 3.403. Thus, the range of the scores from 1.484 to 4.532 can be attributed to students' cognition and writing motivation in traditional learning. On the other hand, the experiment group results show the lowest mean score on factor D is on item 11 and the highest mean score on factor A, item 2. The CLT method results in scores ranging from 2.758 to 4.419.

In comparing the results based on the items, the three first items that show higher mean ranges are items 2, 6, and 12. Item 2 reflects the ability to distinguish formal meaning and context meaning in translation texts. Item 6 reveals the students' intention to discuss the context and structure, difficult terms or problem related text with other students, while item 12 shows the student's interest in the process of rendering text from the source language to the target language. On the other hand, the first three items that reveal the lower range are items 5, 6, and 15. Item 15 shows student enjoyment regarding classroom situations, with a range of 3.629 to 2.984. This reflects the situation of the classroom environment. Item 6 indicates the students' intentions to discuss the technical problems of the text, with a range of 4.532 to 4.339. However, item 5, with a range of 4.532 to 4.387, shows the reverse score. This item shows that students relied on the use of translation tools in dealing with tasks. On the other hand, the first three items that reveal the lower range are items 5, 10, and 11. Item 5 shows the small differences between the CG and EG in requirement translation tools in dealing with tasks. Item 10 shows the slight differences between CG and EG concerning work individually and in the group. Item 11 shows that CG experiences a greater degree of task difficulty than EG.

Following this overview of the results on an item-to-item basis in Table 1 and Table 2, Table 3 summarises the results on four factors that this study investigated. Table 3 presents the average score of each item based on the factors that exhibit each variance and the percentage that indicates the change, whether it is decreasing or increasing students' scores on respective factors.

Table 2. Cognitive Involvement and Writing Motivation

Measured factors	Control Group (CG)	Experiment Group (EG)	Var	Percentage
A. Thinking and understanding the structure and context	2.476	4.306	1.831	73.94%
B. Strategies and choices in dealing with text	3.403	4.022	619	18.18%
C. Sociocognitive interaction	2.258	4.013	1.755	77.72%
D. Writing Motivation	2.991	3.755	764	25.5%

In addition to the overall results of the scores, we compare the results of the CG to the EG on each factor we investigate in this study. The variance of items concerning the change of students' cognitive involvement, interaction, and attitude on the change in the learning method.

Factor A is attributed to thinking and understanding the structure and context of the translation material, which resulted in the second improvement. The variance of 1.831 means increasing the CLT result by 73.94%. These items are the strategy in the initial translation task and the ability to distinguish the form and meaning of the context in the translation task.

Factor B, which resulted in the lowest variance score of 619, is attributed to students' strategies and choices in dealing with the text. These factors resulted in an average increase of CLT of 18.18%. This factor is comprised of three investigated items: 1) the student's awareness of cultural and technical problems; 2) the ability to identify an interrelation between the visual and verbal components in the text; and 3) the need for tool usage in dealing with the translation task. Although the lowest average results were found in this factor, two items of factor B revealed significant scores that indicate the students' improvement from the traditional method to the CLT method.

Factor C, which is comprised of four items, shows the highest result variance of 1.755, which means an increase of CLT result of 77.71%. This very significant improvement was achieved in the experiment group, particularly regarding the sociocognitive interaction. A major characteristic of CLT is that it offers more opportunities for students to interact in the learning process, discussing the difficult terms and problems related to the text. The individual workgroup also motivates the student to communicate in English frequently, both among the students and between the students and the teacher.

Factor D, which is attributed to writing motivation, resulted in an increased value of 764 or 25.5% on the EG compared to the CG. This factor is comprised of four items that represent the students' motivation for writing. The greatest improvement was in the student's preferred method of working. Students experienced higher motivation in the work group than in the individual task. The CLT method also influenced the student's perception of the degree of difficulty of the translation task. Based on the scores for both learning methods, students perceived less difficulty in the task and had higher self-ratings for their performance in the CLT method. Other significant improvements were also achieved in writing skills, while the enjoyment of the classroom environment between the traditional method and the CLT method did not contribute significantly to students' writing motivation. The changes in values in both learning methods are illustrated in Figure 2.

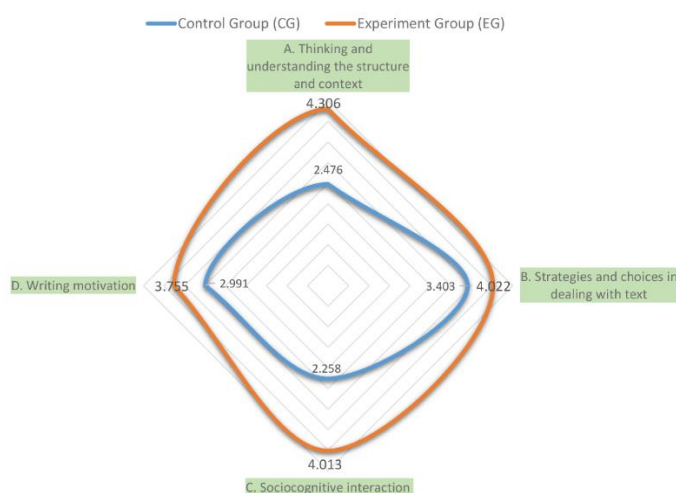


Figure 2. Students' cognition involvement and writing motivation

The area of students' cognitive involvement and writing motivation with traditional methods is plotted in blue, and the area of students' cognitive involvement and motivation with CLT is plotted in red. The farther the gap between the blue and red shapes, the greater the change that resulted from the learning methods. For example, both markers of factor B exhibit the closest gap, which implies that CLT only causes a slight improvement in students' strategies and choices in dealing with texts.

Figure 2 shows a larger gap in factor A. The CLT method significantly affected the students' thinking and understanding of the context as compared to the traditional method. The CLT method also affected the writing motivation that is represented in factor D. However, the greatest gap is exhibited in factor C, which represents the improvement from applying CLT to translation activities.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the results illustrated above, we arrive at the discussion of the four factors in measuring students' cognitive involvement and motivation. Both factor A and factor B were developed to seek cognitive involvement in each learning method.

With traditional methods, materials and tasks are prepared in line with an objective learning plan. The teacher gives brief instructions and highlights the theory before assigning the task. However, most of the students may not be concerned with the importance of strategies in dealing with translation tasks. This was reflected in the low score for thinking and understanding the structure and context of the traditional method. The importance of context in sense-for-sense translation was unavoidable (Melby & Foster, 2010). Because students were working individually, they tended to complete the task independently and worry about the time for completion. Moreover, students rely on memory when doing translation, which hinders them in finding the best choice of equivalence by thinking about the structure and context and distinguishing between the formal and contextual meanings.

With CLT, students are free to ask anything related to the topic of learning, both their teacher and their peers. For example, when dealing with the problem equivalence in the target language, students frequently asked their teacher and peers. The ability to distinguish formal meaning and context also improved significantly with CLT. Getting opinions from various perspectives helps them make their own choices of words in the target language, or sometimes find that leaving the term in its original language is the best choice (Ballman & Larsen-Freeman, 1988; Richards, 2006). Students also relied more on translation tools in dealing with tasks. However, with CLT, the reliance on the tools decreased slightly. This does not imply that students should not use translation tools, such as an online dictionary; rather, the decrease in the usage of the tool was due to the sharing of opinions with their peers.

The investigation of factor B was related to sociocognitive interactions, which are attributed to factor C. On these items, the communication activities were conducted in dealing with difficult terms and text-related problems, the frequent practicing of English as the language of communication, and encouraging the discussion of the related material with peers outside of class. The overall items of factor C reveal lower sociocognitive interactions with traditional learning compared to CLT. As mentioned earlier, the lower sociocognitive interaction results from the students' limited opportunities to exchange information with traditional learning (Ballman & Larsen-Freeman, 1988). With CLT, students are free to share their opinions and discuss the difficulties and problems in the work group.

Obviously, the students' collaboration with CLT had an impact on students' perception of learning. The items of factor D concern the students' attitudes on working individually versus working in a group, their self-performance rating on translation tasks, the relevance of the material to their needs (Intarapanich, 2013), and the general perception of the learning environment. There is a significant improvement when using CLT compared to the traditional method. Since the students' attitude is a reflection of the mental image of motivation (Hunter & Smith, 2012), it is an important indicator of the effectiveness of the learning method.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of students' responses to the questionnaire items demonstrates that communicative activities develop a relaxed atmosphere that encourages participation in the classroom and enhances the students' motivation in the learning process. As one characteristic of CLT, working in a group increased the students' enjoyment of the translation task. Motivation is an important factor in maintaining the students' engagement with the learning process, especially the translation process, which requires prolonged cognitive involvement.

Although implementing CLT clearly improves these aspects of translation teaching and learning, it is undeniable that the traditional methods of grammar-based teaching (GMT) and translation theories should still be a part of translation curricula. Using both methods in collaboration can serve as a more effective foundation for students to develop L2 competence. The CLT method encourages students to present their ideas in a friendly manner, discuss the problems related to translation tasks, enjoy the learning activities, and decrease their experiences of boredom in the classroom. Moreover, the students encountering less difficulty with the CLT method reflect the importance of cooperation in work groups. Working in groups encourages interaction and allows students to apply theories and use sources and tools to carry out a translation.

This study is limited in that it was administered over a short period, from September to November 2022. Further studies can derive better results by developing specific activities and materials over a long period of time in order to measure the students' cognitive involvement and writing motivation.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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