

Effects of Communication-Based Translation Activities on EFL High School Students' Vocabulary Achievement

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Abstract

In most EFL contexts of Vietnam high schools, vocabulary learning is accompanied with long lists of L1 equivalents in the grammar-translation method (GTM), which is criticized for abusing translation, focusing much on form and structure, lacking space for communicative performance; whereas the communicative language teaching (CLT) is more preferred in modern language teaching trends because it motivates learners' discovery, participation and communication. How likely is it to integrate translation with CLT in communication-based translation activities (CTAs)? This study suggests some models of CTAs for teaching and learning EFL vocabulary at high school in Vietnam then tests their effects in an experimental project with 73 tenth-graders in two groups (with and without CTAs application), pre-post tests and a survey. After 8 weeks of treatment, the results highlighted CTAs in enhancing students' vocabulary achievement both in recognition and its assistance in subsequent productive skills while GTM only improved students' receptive vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, the survey indicated the experimental students' positive attitudes, which were statistically influenced by their L1 and translation habits except for their gender. The study is supposed to provide practical implications for improving EFL students' vocabulary and communicative performance at high school in Vietnam and those with similar contexts.

Keywords: receptive vocabulary knowledge, productive vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary processes, communication-based translation

1. Introduction

Although vocabulary competence plays a very important role in second language acquisition, most EFL classrooms in Vietnam have not provided adequate concern for teaching and learning vocabulary. To save time, many teachers mainly focus on grammar instruction and skill practice; and vocabulary instruction is done just by providing new words and their Vietnamese equivalents. Students have to look up the words themselves prior the lessons or are given a glossary to learn by heart. However, remembering such long lists of words and their meanings is not easy for many students, especially those at high school where students are almost not English majors and many often lack learning motivation. This not only leads to a serious shortage of input to master the target language but also causes the students some confusion, boredom and discouragement in their real communication as well as their language acquisition.

Translation is to blame for such a case as it follows the traditional patterns of GTM that have been criticized for making the learning process a mechanical activity with emulating and memorizing (Huang & Wang, 2011). However, Mogahed (2011) believes that there is nothing wrong with translation itself; the problem is from the method that misconceives and overuses it, separating language from its communicative function. In fact, translation has recently been brought back to its own deserving position in language learning thanks to the incorporation with CLT, one of the most effective teaching approaches widely utilized in most of the EFL and ESP contexts. The combination of translation and CLT was then suggested and discussed in many studies.

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For example, Kiraly (2000), Colina (2003) and Liao (2011) proposed that language transition should take communicative competence into consideration; Malmkjaer (1998) encouraged integrating translation into real life activities to foster language skills while Gohil (2013) and Nguyen (2016) provided some implications and models of translation activities in communicative approach for language skills and language forms such as vocabulary. In this study, such translation activities in the communicative approach are called communication-based translation activities (CTAs) and used as a means to overcome cultural-linguistic barriers in language acquisition and encourage learners' use of language to communicate in practical contexts. The questions to be answered are:

- (1) How can CTAs be applied in vocabulary teaching and learning at high school in Vietnam?
- (2) To what extent can CTAs enhance students' vocabulary achievement as well as its assistance in productive skills compared to the traditional technique with GTM?
- (3) What are the students' attitudes towards CTAs?

2. Literature review

2.1 Aspects of knowing a word and Vocabulary processes

To suggest a way for assessing how and to what extent one can tell a language learner has acquired a word, Nation (2001, pp. 26-28) analyzes word knowing based on three aspects, i.e. form, meaning and use. Specifically, 'form' is analyzed with pronunciation including stress pattern (spoken), spelling (written) and word structure or word family (word parts); 'meaning' includes successful retrieval of words (form and meaning), knowledge of homonyms (concept and referents), synonyms, antonyms and hyponyms (associations); while 'use' deals with syntactic patterns of words (grammatical functions), word compatibility (collocation) and practical contexts (constraints on use).

Nation (2001, pp. 24-25) also emphasizes that the comprehension of the three aspects within a word requires its receptive and productive knowledge. Receptive vocabulary use is said to involve perceiving the form of a word while listening or reading and retrieving its meaning; productive vocabulary use involves wanting to express a meaning through speaking or writing, retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form to fit the contexts. From the point of view of receptive knowledge and use, knowing the word, for example, 'discontented' involves:

Table 1. Receptive knowledge and use of the word 'discontented'

Form	Spoken form	Being able to recognize the word when it is heard.
	Written form	Being able to locate the word when it is met in reading.
	Word parts	Recognizing that the word includes a root <i>-content</i> , a suffix <i>-ed</i> and a prefix <i>dis-</i> .
Meaning	Form and Meaning	Knowing that the word signals the meanings ' <i>not happy</i> ' or ' <i>not satisfied</i> ' with <i>-content</i> (satisfy), <i>-ed</i> (adjective inflection) and <i>dis-</i> (not).
	Concept and Referents	Knowing that the word refers to conditions opposite happiness or satisfaction and do not have a homonym.
	Associations	Knowing that there are related words like <i>contented</i> , <i>happy</i> , <i>unhappy</i> , <i>satisfied</i> , <i>dissatisfied</i> .
Use	Grammatical functions	Knowing that the word is an adjective and thus may precede a noun or come after a linking verb.
	Collocations	Being able to recognize that ' <i>discontented with</i> ' is a typical collocation.
	Constraints on use	Being able to recognize that ' <i>He felt discontented with the way his life had been improved</i> ' is incorrect, while ' <i>He felt discontented with the way his life had turned hard</i> ' is correct.

From the point of view of productive knowledge and use, knowing the word, for example, 'discontented' involves:

Table 2. Productive knowledge and use of the word ‘discontented’

Form	Spoken form	Being able to say it with correct pronunciation & stress.
	Written form	Being able to write it with correct spelling.
	Word parts	Being able to construct all its word forms with the root given.
Meaning	Form and Meaning	Being able to produce the correct word form to fit the sentence, e.g. ‘ <i>He felt (content) _____ with the way his life had turned hard.</i> ’
	Concept and Referents	Being able to retrieve the word for speaking or writing to express the feeling when unexpected situations occur.
	Associations	Being able to produce <i>dissatisfied</i> or <i>unhappy</i> as synonyms, <i>satisfied</i> or <i>happy</i> as antonyms.
Use	Grammatical functions	Being able to use the word grammatically in an original sentence.
	Collocations	Being able to produce words that commonly occur with it.
	Constraints on use	Being able to decide to use or not to use the word to suit the degree of satisfaction of the situation.

In language teaching context, however, vocabulary acquisition needs instruction, facilitation and enhancement as the target items are required to be obtained purposefully. Nation (2001, pp. 63-70) suggests three important general processes that may lead to a word being remembered. These comprise noticing, retrieval and generation. ‘Noticing’ is giving attention to an item through formal instruction and negotiation based on learners’ interest and motivation to comprehend or produce the word. ‘Retrieval’ refers to the acts of recalling the word meaning with the form encountered in listening and reading (receptive), or recalling the word form when wishing to communicate its meaning in speaking and writing (productive). ‘Generation’ occurs when learners encounter a word used in new ways that have not been met previously (receptive) or when learners produce new ways of using the wanted vocabulary in new contexts (productive).

2.2 Communication-based translation

Despite some criticisms concerning the association with GTM (Owen, 2003; Carreres, 2006 & Campisi, 2015), translation has many advantages that should be taken into account in second language acquisition, i.e. enhancing L2 comprehension (receptive) (Malmkjaer, 1998 & Nord, 2005); easing memory constraints (positive procedure) (Nation, 2001); encouraging expressing ideas in L2 (productive) (Duff, 1994 & House, 2009); reducing anxiety and raising learning motivation (positive attitudes) (Hervey et al., 2002 & Carreres, 2006).

More and more scholars have suggested incorporating CLT with translation in language teaching since it appears as one of the most effective teaching approaches widely utilized by most language educators all over the world. The main characteristics of CLT class are (1) working on tasks or projects, (2) learners processing the knowledge themselves according to teacher’s guidance, (3) learners having choices in communication and (4) use of authentic materials (Wilkins, 1976 & Johnson, 1979). Applying this communicative approach to translation activities in language classes is called communication-based translation (Arranz, 2004; Huang & Wang, 2011; Liao, 2011 & Nguyen, 2016). The combination is preferred because it can not only make up for the ineffectiveness of the traditional method (GTM) but also help students improve their use of translation in term of communicability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Conceptual framework of a CTA in vocabulary teaching and learning

All the CTAs in this study are designed based on the ‘aspects of knowing a word’ and ‘vocabulary processes’ provided by Nation (2001), together with ‘communication-based translation’ described in prior studies. ‘

The aspects of knowing a word' in terms of form, meaning and use with receptive and productive knowledge will decide the aims of a CTA and at the same time influence the way it is conducted to accomplish the expected outcomes. 'Word processes' including noticing, retrieval and generation will decide the procedure of a CTA to make sure the vocabulary knowledge is acquired to a certain extent, depending on the aims of the lesson stage. 'Translation in the communicative approach' will facilitate the procedure as a device or environment to successfully meet the vocabulary learning goals.

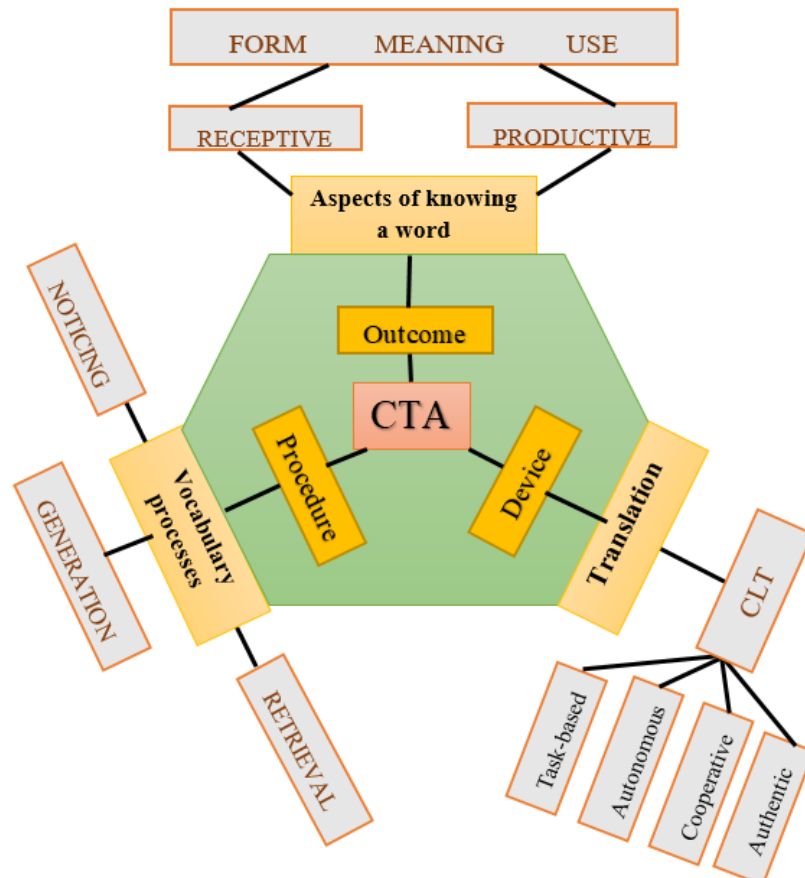


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of a CTA in vocabulary teaching and learning

3.2 Experimental project of CTAs application

3.2.1 Design of the project

The project was designed to test the intervention of CTAs towards EFL high school students' vocabulary competence and its application in practical use. For this purpose, the project followed a quasi-experimental study designed in the form of pre-and post-tests with one control group (CG) and one experimental group (EG) as briefly displayed in Figure 2.

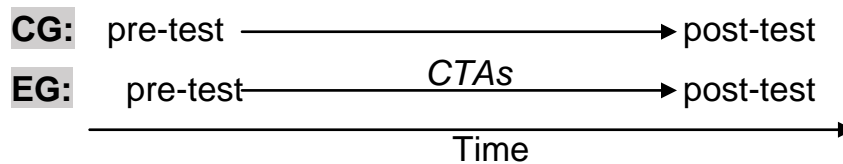


Figure 2. Design of the experimental project

3.2.2 Participants

The sample of the research project consists of 73 students from two classes at a high school in Vietnam. To choose the convenient participants, the English scores in the placement test were compared among many classes of grade 10 at the school. The two classes chosen were those with some equivalence in English proficiency.

The participants are not English majors and are at the pre-intermediate level in a general English course required by Vietnam Minister of Education and Training. They all have studied English for at least 4 years and are from similar academic backgrounds such as learning environment, learning conditions, learning chances, and learning aptitude.

3.2.3 Procedure

The activities and instruments were first piloted for their reliability. The teacher had four 45-minute periods of trial teaching with the treatment. After that, two students (chosen at random, 1 male and 1 female) were interviewed to check their understandings on the application in terms of content and usefulness. Some questions included in the questionnaire were also provided to get their feedbacks on the activities as they had been implemented.

In the implementation stage, the pre-tests in Vocabulary-Recognition, Writing and Speaking were first used to test the students' vocabulary level acquired implicitly or explicitly in previous lessons or outside the classroom. After that, the lessons (unit 5 to unit 8, English 10) were provided to the participants by the same instructor (the researcher himself) within 8 weeks, each had 4 periods (180 minutes) per class. Students in two groups received the same amount of time and input but the techniques were different. In the control group, the students learned the new vocabularies from a list of Vietnamese equivalents and examples; the teacher gave them more direct explanation, pronunciation and exercise practice before and after each lesson. In the experimental group, however, vocabularies were acquired directly or indirectly through CTAs in each lesson and exercise practice afterwards.

After the treatment, students of both groups did the post-tests in Vocabulary Recognition, Writing and Speaking. A survey was also conducted in the experimental group to collect data from the students' questionnaires concerning their attitudes towards the application. Finally, all the data was processed with the statistical software SPSS 22.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Research question 1: How can CTAs be applied in vocabulary teaching and learning at high school in Vietnam?

To respond research question 1, some CTA models for teaching English vocabulary at high school in Vietnam are designed based on the conceptual framework (Figure 1). Since the target language is more preferred in the communicative approach, the translation activities are mainly for the transfer from L1 to L2; the vice versa is only taken for abstract items.

CTA 1: Vocabulary brainstorming

The teacher or a student says a word in Vietnamese; the other students find any words that are equivalent or nearly equivalent in English. The students are allowed to think of as many words as possible and choose the words of their own interest to express the meaning providing that the options given are somehow related to the source word. The teacher may ask the student himself to spell out or write down the words on the board.

CTA 2: Vocabulary recognition

The teacher says a word/ phrase in Vietnamese, students look at the word list or the short text and say aloud its English equivalent. For the words they cannot recognize the equivalent, some direct instruction will be given (i.e. noticing by glossing the word) and then the activity can be taken as a means to check the students' understanding.

CTA 3: Vocabulary guessing

The teacher asks the students to underline or highlight and translate a sentence containing a key word that needs paying attention to. The students guess the meaning and use of the new item based on the translation with the words they have known and the context given. Then they are asked to use the new item to translate or make a similar sentence as a means to enhance the knowledge they have gained from the context.

CTA 4: Controlled sentence translation

The teacher provides the students with some sentences extracted from a reading text in Vietnamese. The students are asked to find the equivalents and say it aloud. Depending on the students' language proficiency and the difficulty level of the text, the students can be asked to work individually, in pairs or in groups.

The students may also be required to give the answers without looking back to the text; the aim is to encourage them to remember the words and other linguistic devices that may come together.

CTA 5: Free sentence translation

The teacher asks the students to work in pairs. Each pair receives two different cards containing some sentences – one in English and the other one in Vietnamese. Student A reads a Vietnamese sentence in the card for Student B to translate it into English and vice versa until all the sentences in the card is done. Then some random pairs (one from this pair and one from other pairs) are invited to report their answers in front of the class.

CTA 6: Role play

The teacher provides a practical situation in which a Vietnamese and an English-speaking need to communicate with each other and thus need a translator in-between. A model role play should also be provided so that the students can have some ideas for their own play. Each group has 5 minutes to get prepared and no more than 5 minutes to play the role in front of the class. The teacher goes around for help when necessary.

CTA 7: Translation with pictures

The teacher shows a slide with boxes and asks the students to choose a random box which contains a picture related to a new word or phrase that they have learned. They have to tell what word or phrase the picture is about and make a sentence with it to get 10 points for their group. Then a student in another group will be called randomly to translate the sentence into Vietnamese. If he/she does the job successfully, his/her group will receive a bonus and vice versa, a minus if he/she cannot.

CTA 8: Translator-to-be

The teacher chooses some popular cartoon characters - such as Smurf, Minion, Micky Mouse, The giant, Panda, Bunny and so on with dubbing in Vietnamese, containing the words and phrases whose English equivalents have been taught. The students choose their favorite character and try to translate the dubbing uttered from it one by one into English. The dubbed sentences are designed from easy to difficult levels and are recorded beforehand with separate pauses, from slow to fast speed in different accents suitable for each character by using the Voice Changer App for computers or smart phones.

CTA 9: Speedy translation

The teacher provides 10 new words and 10 model sentences in Vietnamese. The students are asked to translate them into English in an allocated time (1 minute 30 seconds). For those of low levels, the given time can be longer; or a stopwatch can be used among advanced students to see who can finish the task successfully in the shortest time. The teacher takes notes of their answers, gives comments on their word choice, pronunciation as well as grammar to assess their performance.

CTA 10: Writing-translation

The teacher instructs the students to write a short paragraph responding to a topic required in their student book. Then the writings are exchanged among the students (in pairs or in groups) who are asked to translate them into Vietnamese. Finally, the two authors of the two versions will sit together to find out and correct any errors that may appear in their works.

The CTAs mentioned above can be analyzed for application as followed with the tick (✓) presenting the areas in which the CTAs are constructed or improvement might be observed.

Table 3. The analysis of CTAs

		<i>CTA 1</i>	<i>CTA 2</i>	<i>CTA 3</i>	<i>CTA 4</i>	<i>CTA 5</i>	<i>CTA 6</i>	<i>CTA 7</i>	<i>CTA 8</i>	<i>CTA 9</i>	<i>CTA 10</i>
<i>Vocabulary aspects</i>	<i>Form</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Meaning</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Use</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Vocabulary processes</i>	<i>Noticing</i>		✓	✓							
	<i>Retrieval</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Generation</i>			✓			✓	✓			✓
<i>Communication-based translation</i>	<i>Task-based</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	<i>Autonomous</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Cooperative</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	<i>Authentic</i>						✓	✓			✓

These CTAs help students to improve their knowing words. Obviously, no activity can cover everything at the same time. Therefore, it depends on the aims of a certain lesson, the teacher can choose one or more CTAs for the students to practice.

4.2 Research question 2: To what extent can CTAs enhance students' vocabulary achievement as well as its assistance in productive skills compared to the traditional technique with GTM?

To respond research question 2, the descriptive statistics data that stemmed from the pre- and the post-tests were calculated and analyzed. The illustration of data analysis and discussions were laid out along the training process: before and after the treatment.

4.2.1 Before the treatment

Table 4. Summary of pre-test results

		Independent samples t-test					
<i>Tests</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Recognition	CG	37	4.02	.91	-.52	71	.607
	EG	36	4.13	.93			
Writing	CG	37	1.65	.76	-.18	71	.855
	EG	36	1.69	.98			
Speaking	CG	37	5.99	1.58	-1.86	71	.067
	EG	36	6.63	1.34			

In the pre-test, as shown in Table 4, although the scores of the experimental group were higher than those of the control group in recognition (M=4.13 vs. M=4.02), writing (M=1.69 vs. M=1.65) and speaking (M=6.63 vs. M=5.99), there was no statistically significant difference in such mean scores between the groups because all the p-values were higher than .05 allowed for this test (p=.607; p=.855 and p=.067). Thus, it was completely safe to confirm that the two groups were quite equivalent in both general recognition and productive performance before the treatment.

4.2.2 After the treatment

Table 5. Summary of control group's results

Paired samples t-test							
<i>Tests</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Recognition	pre	37	4.02	.91	-2.40	36	.022
	post	37	4.27	.88			
Writing	pre	37	1.65	.76	-.166	36	.869
	post	37	1.67	.63			
Speaking	pre	37	5.99	1.58	-1.03	36	.312
	post	37	6.26	1.62			

In the control group, there was a significant difference in the vocabulary-recognition scores after the treatment ($p = .022 < .05$); the post-recognition score was higher than the pre-recognition score ($M=4.27$ vs. $M=4.02$). However, there was no statistically significant difference observed in the writing and speaking tests as $p = .869$ and $p = .312 > .05$.

Table 6. Summary of experimental group's results

Paired samples t-test							
<i>Tests</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Recognition	pre	36	4.13	.93	-2.10	35	.043
	post	36	4.34	.76			
Writing	pre	36	1.69	.98	-2.85	35	.007
	post	36	2.03	.88			
Speaking	pre	36	6.63	1.34	-2.08	35	.045
	post	36	6.97	1.28			

In the experimental group, a significant difference was statistically observed between the pre-recognition score and the post-recognition score ($M=4.13$ vs. $M=4.34$), $p = .043 < .05$; between the pre-writing score and the post-writing score ($M=1.69$ vs. $M = 2.03$), $p = .007 < .05$. A statistically significant difference in the speaking test was also found ($p = .045 < .05$) with the post-speaking score higher than the pre-speaking score ($M=6.97$ vs. $M=6.63$).

Such results suggest that the application of CTAs did help improve the students' achievement of vocabulary both in recognition and production while the traditional method only improved the students' vocabulary recognition. Then the question to be asked here is – to what extent did the experimental group surpass the control group in the achievement of vocabulary knowledge as well as its assistance in subsequent skills? To answer the question above, an independence samples t-test was then conducted to compare the students' post scores between the two groups.

Table 7. Summary of post-test results

Independent samples t-test							
<i>Tests</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Recognition	CG	37	4.27	.88	-.36	71	.723
	EG	36	4.34	.76			
Writing	CG	37	1.67	.63	-.21	71	.043
	EG	36	2.03	.88			
Speaking	CG	37	6.26	1.62	-2.05	71	.044
	EG	36	6.97	1.28			

As can be seen from Table 7, no statistically significant difference was found between the groups in the recognition score ($p = .723 > .05$).

However, there was a statistically significant difference in the writing scores ($p = .043 < .05$) and speaking score ($p = .044 < .05$). To be specific, the experimental group achieved higher scores than the control group both in writing ($M=2.03$ vs. $M=1.67$) and speaking ($M=6.97$ vs. $M=6.26$). In short, there was no significant difference in the vocabulary recognition score between the two groups after the treatment except for the writing and speaking scores, in which the experimental group surpassed the control group. The equal effect of CTAs versus the traditional method on the students' vocabulary recognition achievement might be because in both groups, the form and meaning of vocabulary were paid equal attention to with intensive controlled practice; such mechanical drills as repetition, substitution and question-answer in traditional classes when well designed and successfully applied might provide the students with intensive practice and lead them to automatic and natural reflection (Maley, 2011; as cited in Pham & Nguyen, 2014, p. 79).

The effect of CTAs over the traditional method on the students' vocabulary production might be explained in the comparison between GTM and CLT. The control group was typical of a traditional class with GTM, in which the rules of new vocabulary were presented explicitly; such repeated explicit rule-giving together with a lack of chances to practice in communicative contexts might cause the students quick tediousness and reduce their sense of discovery as well as real-life practical application in the learning process; that is, they might remember the form and meaning of words well but hardly recall them successfully to communicate with others. In contrast, the students in the experimental groups witnessed a significant improvement in their vocabulary production. The dynamic conversations in the content and process of CLT class might account for this. The approach considered students as the center of the class; they were encouraged to construct and use the knowledge themselves, and thus became more active in the learning process. The focus on communicative practice might also make a substantial contribution to the production improvement. Many researchers agree that the language activities such as role-plays, problem-solving tasks, cross-checking, or information gaps when well designed and applied would succeed in training students how to produce sentences appropriately to achieve communicative purpose within CLT class (Nation, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Additionally, the real-life contexts set up in the stages of practice and production might have created an opportunity for the students to communicatively use the target language as what was found in studies of Ozverir & Herrington (2011), Lawarn & Jitpanat (2013). In a word, the characteristics of CLT incorporated in CTAs might have helped the students in the experimental group outperform those in the control group both in writing and speaking.

Besides, the higher production-achievement that was observed in the experimental group might be explained on the utilization of translation in the communicative activities. According to Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1983; as cited in Nguyen & Nguyen, 2016, p. 561), transfer from native language is one of the communicative strategies. In the experimental group, translation was deployed as a tool to approach and practice the new language items; it was included in a wide range of textual varieties, various written and oral activities. Karoly (2014, p. 15) points out that translation used in such a communicative way has excellent potentials in foreign language learning and teaching, for example to improve text comprehension and production. Although the control group also took up translation in the implementation stage, it was only used for rigid memorization but not for communicative understanding and flexible choices as what was done with translation in the other group.

4.2.3 Correlation between recognition and production

To investigate if there was a statistically significant association between the students' vocabulary recognition and production, a correlation test was computed in each group. In the control group, there was a positive relationship between the recognition score and the other two test scores: writing ($r = .631$, $p < .01$) and speaking ($r = .338$, $p < .05$). Similarly, the correlation figures between the recognition score and the writing score ($r = .779$, $p < .01$), and the speaking score ($r = .449$, $p < .01$) in the experimental group were all statistically significant. In sum, the statistics revealed a high correlation between the receptive knowledge acquired and their subsequent use in the oral and written tests of both groups, which means that students who have gained more vocabulary knowledge tend to have fewer errors in production with the vocabularies. The results match the arguments discussed on the role of vocabulary in language acquisition (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009; Olinghouse & Wilson, 2013) and thus help assure the research tests in terms of reliability and validity. Also, the fact that more meaningful correlation was observed in the experimental group indicates the superior role of CTAs in comparison with the traditional way of teaching and learning words.

4.3 Research question 3: What are the students' attitudes towards CTAs?

To respond research question 3, a survey with a questionnaire was conducted in the experimental group after the treatment to determine the students' attitudes towards CTAs applied in their EFL classroom.

First of all, Cronbach's alphas were computed to assess whether the data from the variables in each factor form a reliable scale. The alpha for the whole questionnaire was .89, which provides acceptable estimates for this study.

The alpha for each factor was also computed as follows – Difficulty (.60), Cognitive competence (.81), Affect (.83), Interest (.70), Value (.77), Effort (.77), which indicates that the items would form a scale that has good internal consistency reliability. The questionnaire data was analyzed on the 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neither disagree nor agree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree).

Table 8. Attitudes towards difficulty level of CTAs

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
easy instructions	36	6.17	.74
easy to take part in	36	5.67	.72

Table 8 presents the students' rating on the difficulty level of CTAs. As can be seen, the students strongly agreed that the instructions of the activities were not too difficult to understand (M=6.17) and the activities were easy enough to take part in (M=5.67). The reason for this might be because of clear instruction and good model examples given by the teacher in charge.

Table 9. Attitudes towards cognitive competence

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I can process translation	36	5.69	1.09
I can guess and choose words	36	5.86	1.05
I can interact with others	36	5.50	1.11

Table 9 indicates the students' attitudes towards the intellectual knowledge and skills related to CTAs. As can be shown, the students believed that they could process the translation in the activities (M=5.69), could understand how to guess the meanings (M=5.86) and interact with others (M=5.50). Of all the competences, the ability to guess and choose the meanings of words seemed to be the most successful achievement thanks to the conscious-raising tasks in CTAs.

Table 10. Attitudes towards how CTAs affect feelings

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I can understand CTAs' content	36	5.61	1.10
I enjoy taking part in CTAs	36	6.03	1.03
I prefer CTAs to long vocabulary lists	36	6.53	.91

Table 10 describes how the students felt after trying CTAs. The table indicates that they very much enjoyed participating in the activities (M=6.03) and really preferred learning vocabularies in this way to memorizing a long list of words (M=6.53). However, the amount of the content that the students thought they could understand was not much compared to their high preferences towards the activities (M=5.61). This might be because the tasks required a certain level of English proficiency to handle, and the technique was quite new to them.

Table 11. Attitudes towards personal interests

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I like interacting with others	36	5.67	1.24
I like visual aids enclosed	36	6.33	.86
I like interacting with computer	36	5.92	1.32
I am interested in reading and translating friends' writing	36	5.03	1.18

Table 11 presents how much the students were interested in the features of CTAs. As can be seen, visual aids such as videos and pictures were the most favored (M=6.33); this was followed by the interaction with computer (M=5.92), then with teacher and friends (M=5.67). Although the rating was high, translation was the least favored activity (M=5.03). The high preference for visual aids and computer integrated in CTAs confirms the findings of prior research on the areas of CALL in second language acquisition (Nguyen &Henriette, 2014;Luu, 2015;Pham, 2016).

Table 12. Attitudes towards the values of CTAs

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
CTAs help remember vocabulary meaning and use	36	6.17	1.00
CTAs help speak and write better	36	5.94	1.07
Translation in CTAs is necessary	36	6.19	.86
Translation in CTAs is complicated	36	5.42	1.36
CTAs should be included in lessons	36	6.42	.84
CTAs help have good notes for lesson review	36	5.69	1.09
CTAs help know more about culture	36	5.50	1.25
CTAs help interact more with teachers and friends	36	5.83	1.32

Table 12 shows the students' evaluation on how well the activities were working with their learning process. According to the table, the students strongly believed that CTAs did help them remember vocabulary meaning and use easily ($M=6.17$) and that CTAs should be included in the upcoming English lessons ($M=6.42$). They also reported that thanks to the activities their productive skills were improved ($M=5.94$), their interaction with teacher and friends were enforced ($M=5.83$) and their knowledge of some similarities and differences in cultures was enhanced ($M=5.50$). When asked about the importance of translation in language learning, the students generally thought that translation is quite complicated ($M=5.42$) but very necessary ($M=6.19$); and CTAs did provide them with useful notes to review and self-study at home ($M=5.69$). In sum, the students agreed that CTAs boosted their active work, attention, memory of the target language and interaction with others. As supported by Harmer (2007, p. 43), such cooperative activities as group work and pair work might provide students with more opportunities to be more independent.

Table 13. Attitudes towards personal efforts

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I will take part in CTAs	36	6.00	1.01
I will share my knowledge in CTAs	36	5.22	1.51
I will share my work and answers in CTAs	36	5.33	1.17

Table 13 presents the effort that the students believed they would make to take full advantages of CTAs. They strongly believed that they would take part in the activities ($M=6.00$) and that they would present their work in front of the class ($M=5.33$) or share what they knew to contribute to the lessons ($M=5.69$).

Table 14. Correlations between students' attitudes and their background

<i>Selected Items</i>	<i>Often translate</i>	<i>Interested in Vietnamese</i>	<i>Good at Vietnamese</i>	<i>Gender</i>
I can understand the contents	.296	-.132	-.153	-.014
I enjoy taking part in CTAs	.367*	.001	-.067	-.006
I prefer CTAs to long wordlists	.166	.074	-.021	-.014
I am interested in translation	.323	.362*	.435**	-.239
I like to interact with others	.185	.419*	.243	-.042

Because each of the selected variables was not normally distributed and the assumption of linearity was not markedly violated, Spearman correlations were computed to examine the inter-correlations of the variables. Table 14 shows that four pairs of variables were significantly correlated. The strongest positive correlation was between students' proficiency of Vietnamese linguistics and their interest in translation, $r(71) = .435$, $p < .001$. This means that students who think they are good at Vietnamese Linguistics are likely to enjoy translation activities and vice versa. Other positive correlations were found between the students' interest in Vietnamese Linguistics and translation, $r(71) = .362$, $p < .005$; as well as the interaction preference, $r(71) = .419$, $p < .005$.

Accordingly, the students who love studying Vietnamese Linguistics tend to prefer working with others and often take up translation in their learning process. Additionally, as can be seen from the table, there was a positive correlation between students' frequent use of translation and their interest in CTAs, $r(71) = .367$, $p < .05$. This indicates that students who often translate text in language learning are likely to enjoy taking part in CTAs. Such a strong association between the students' first language and their interest in translation as well as CTAs is in accordance with what has been found in studies by Ellis (1985, p. 7) and Gass & Selinker (2008, p. 89) who advocate that learners may extensively rely on their native language as a source from which they consciously borrow in order to improve their performance in the target language. This also explains why the students who had a habit of translation in their self-study tended to find CTAs more enjoyable and worth joining in.

On the other hand, Table 14 revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female students in their interest as well as their perception of CTAs. Discussing the learner factors that potentially influence the process of second language acquisition, Ellis (1985, p. 10) mentions age, aptitude, motivation, personality and cognitive style except for gender, which might be a possible explanation for the finding.

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1 Conclusions

The study is successful in designing some CTAs and testing their effects in the context of teaching English at high school in Vietnam. Two specific highlights can be drawn as follows.

First, CTAs can make great contributions to intensifying students' achievement of English vocabulary both in recognition and production (writing and speaking) while GTM in the traditional class can only improve students' receptive knowledge of words. The reason for this can be explained by the superior CLT approach integrated with the appropriate utilization of translation in CTAs.

Second, most of the students' responses towards CTAs are positive due to such factors as detailed instruction, vivid models, consciousness-raising tasks, computer assistance and cooperative activities. Besides, the students' native language and translation skill are likely to affect the way CTAs are approached. In contrast, gender is not supposed to be an intervening variable. This can be an advantage of applying CTAs in EFL classrooms at high school where male and female students are not always distributed evenly; given that, the result should be studied further in different contexts.

5.2 Implications

There might be some considerations for effective application of CTAs.

First, the activities should be conducted flexibly in a lesson. For example, Vocabulary recognition can be integrated with Controlled sentence translation and Vocabulary guessing; Translation with pictures can be taken up together with Vocabulary guessing for eliciting or noticing. Vocabulary brainstorming, Speedy translation and Free sentence translation can be performed in the beginning to check students' acquired knowledge or at the end of the lesson to reinforce the knowledge. Writing-translation activity can be done in other classes (reading, speaking or listening), not just for writing lessons as the four language skills are integrated in a class of communicative language teaching (Widdowson, 1978). Similarly, Role-play and Translator-to-be can be carried out not only in a speaking lesson but also in the post-stage of reading, listening or writing classes to enhance understanding or practice using the new input.

Second, although translation is quite familiar in traditional classes, translation activities conducted based on communicative aspects such as discussions, gap-filling information, exchanging ideas, real-life contexts are quite new to students, especially those at high school where the learning process focuses on grammar and written tests. Therefore, the activities should be instructed slowly and clearly beforehand with vivid examples, making sure that all the students can figure out what they are going to do and what they are expected to achieve. Some concept-checking questions can be made as a way to check how much students understand the instructions.

Third, despite the fact that translation is an important skill for second language acquisition and communication (Tarone et al., 1983), in the teaching contexts at high school it should be used as a tool to approach the L2, not a skill to master. Hence, the translation contents for the activities should not be so complicated and widely-expanded.

Students' translation should not be judged seriously as it is in a translation class; on the contrary, students can freely provide various equivalents as long as they are related and acceptable in a certain context; in terms of grammar, culture or style, only huge mistakes are notified and corrected.

Fourth, computer assistance should be taken into consideration in order to make the activities become more tempting and interactive. Such activities as Role-play, Translation with pictures, Translator-to-be and Speedy translation surely need the help of computer to be designed. Therefore, teachers should explore and learn how to use such computer programs so that they can make the best use of the activities.

Fifth, cooperative activities are worth considering when taking the approach. Pair work, group work or the whole class involvement will give students opportunities to check their self-discovered knowledge and make it more engraved in their memory.

Finally, because the research results show that there is no significant correlation between students' gender and their attitudes towards the approach, teachers can be able to apply the activities in classes of mostly males or mostly females without worrying that the lessons will be demotivating. However, students' L1 should be taken into account because it influences how much they will get involved and improved in the activities. Thus, teachers should investigate the students' L1 level beforehand to decide the level of the translation activities (simple or challenging); pilot stage with some trial activities and a survey questionnaire is highly suggested before the application.

Overall, despite some limitations concerning the research scales, the study has been successful in designing a number of CTAs as well as investigating their effects on learners' vocabulary achievement and attitudes. Its results are believed to make a contribution to helping EFL learners, especially those at high school, get closer to the target language in a very limited facility as observed in most of the current teaching and learning contexts in Vietnam and other countries with similar features.

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