

Communicative language teaching as English pronunciation teaching method:
Developing exercises

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ABSTRACT

This thesis pursues to apply communicative language teaching (CLT) into English pronunciation teaching in the context of Finnish school and curriculum for grades 7.-9. CLT is the theoretical basis of this thesis and the research question is: How can CLT be applied to English pronunciation teaching to promote learner autonomy and motivation in order to achieve more effective learning results? This question is answered in the form of communicative pronunciation tasks (CPTs) which aim to realise the principles of the theory of CLT. Research methods used in this thesis are ethnographical observations and experience, and ideation based on the theory of CLT. The analysis resulted in three communicative pronunciation tasks which each include communicative features. However, each of the tasks also face challenges in realising the principles of CLT and are therefore examples on how to begin developing new language tasks, rather than finished model examples of communicative pronunciation tasks. Further research should be conducted in order to prove the functionality of the CPTs presented in this thesis, and to develop them further.

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1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to apply the theoretical basis of communicative language teaching (CLT) to English pronunciation teaching within the context of Finnish school and curriculum for grades 7-9. Communicative language teaching is a prevailing teaching method used in English language teaching in Finland among many other Western countries. However, it has been claimed a problematic teaching method when it comes to pronunciation teaching and hence it has not been widely used by English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Finland. CLT is a method that mainly aims to promote learner autonomy and increased learner motivation in order to achieve more effective learning results. CLT relies on learning activities in which the learners create their own content, instead of strict language tasks and exercises set by the teacher. In short, CLT is learner-centred as opposed to teacher-led teaching methods.

The goal of this thesis is to apply CLT on English pronunciation teaching and present practical examples of pronunciation activities following the theory. The research question for this thesis is: How can CLT be applied to English pronunciation teaching to promote learner autonomy and motivation in order to achieve more effective learning results? Teaching pronunciation is an important aspect of language teaching because when using language orally, the key in passing one's message on lies in intelligibility which again relies strongly on pronunciation. Applying CLT to English pronunciation teaching and developing pronunciation activities that support the principals of CLT is an important goal because English pronunciation teaching is lacking in effectiveness that other areas of language teaching have already established with the use of CLT. English Pronunciation teaching also varies a great deal among Finnish EFL classes when it comes to the amount and the quality of it. The root of the problem is in Finnish teacher training where pronunciation is taught, but not the teaching of pronunciation. Other possible reasons for the incoherence and lack of pronunciation teaching are the different interpretations of the Finnish national core curriculum, where pronunciation does not play as big of a role as many other aspects of language teaching. Therefore developing English pronunciation teaching and further study on how English pronunciation teaching could be made more meaningful and learner-centred is important.

2 English language pronunciation teaching in Finland

This section addresses the current state of English pronunciation teaching in Finland and clarifies the reasons why developing new approaches to English pronunciation teaching is needed. The section begins with the introduction of the Finnish national core curriculum for grades 7-9 in English as A-language to clarify what are the national learning objectives for English pronunciation in Finland. After this, studies on the current state of English pronunciation teaching in Finland are introduced.

2.1 Finnish national core curriculum on pronunciation learning objectives

The current Finnish national core curriculum came into effect on 2004. In the core curriculum Finnish National Board of Education (2004) lists the objectives for English language learning. This thesis focuses on objectives for English as A-language or core subject from grades seven to nine. For this level of English language learning, the core curriculum does not mention pronunciation on its own at all, instead it seems to be submerged for example in wider concepts of oral interaction and spoken communication in the list of communication strategies:

Use of certain idioms peculiar to oral interaction, such as those associated with giving feedback, taking and maintaining a turn to speak, and beginning and ending a spoken communication (p.143).

When discussing language proficiency and considering language performance in speech, Finnish National Board of Education (2004) states that in the ninth grade, the final-assessment criteria for a grade of 8 in English is "A2.2 Developing basic language proficiency"(p.143). In Appendix 2 it is stated that this language proficiency scale is "a Finnish application of the scales included in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment" (p.278). When it comes to pronunciation, proficiency level A2.2. requires sometimes fluent speech with evident breaks of different types, and intelligible pronunciation, even if mispronunciations occur and foreign accent is evident (p.278).

What is more, curriculum reform will take place in 2016 (Finnish National Board of Education,). This new core curriculum was produced by Opetushallitus or Finnish National Board of Education (2014) in 2014 and it also lists general objectives for learning of English as a level A-language on the grades 7-9. This new core curriculum describes further and in more detail the learning objectives of English language. However, when it comes to oral production of English language, the objectives continue to concentrate more on communication and interactional skills, rather than pronunciation (pp. 348-352). Pronunciation on its own is mentioned only once: in the 10th listed objective it is stated that student should be guided to produce both spoken and written text for different purposes about general topics and topics, that are meaningful for the student themselves, while at the same time paying attention to the diversity of structures used and to guide the student towards good pronunciation (Opetushallitus, 2014, p.352).

It seems that Finnish national core curriculum has not provided much guidance for English pronunciation teaching planning over the past decade. In the future, the curriculum reform seems to improve the situation slightly. However, it remains to be seen how the reform effects individual aspects of English language teaching such as pronunciation teaching and will the teachers be given better tools to accomplish the goals of communication and interaction on those aspects.

2.2 Current state of English pronunciation teaching in Finland

Foreign language teaching emphasises oral skills strongly in Finland. However, at least English language teaching has been speculated to lack specific pronunciation teaching (Lintunen, 2004, p.215) in (Tergujeff, 2012a, p.29). What is more, even though the emphasis on oral skills has increased the willingness of oral language production, it has done so on the expense of accuracy (Lintunen, 2004, p. 220). According to a research by Tergujeff (2012a), Finnish EFL teachers are of the opinion that pronunciation is an important skill, but not a lot of time is spent on teaching it. Pronunciation was also rated lower in importance in comparison to other language skills, but still as relatively important. Majority of the teachers participating in the research devoted up to 25% of their time for pronunciation teaching, but there were some who did not devote any time for pronunciation at all,

and also those, who devoted up to 50-75% of their time for pronunciation. The two latter groups were clear minorities though. However, all of the respondents would have wanted to devote more time for pronunciation teaching (pp. 34-35). Four case studies carried out by Tergujeff (2012b) support these results and reveal that one out of the four teachers participating in the study carried out over 50 percent of all the pronunciation tasks observed on the teachers' lessons, while the other three carried out significantly less amount of pronunciation tasks (p.603). Though case studies cannot be directly generalised, the result indicates that the amount of pronunciation tasks set by different teachers during lessons varies a great deal. The four case studies also indicate that pronunciation teaching seems to be very teacher-led, for example the frequency of correcting pupils' pronunciation is very high among the teachers (Tergujeff, 2012b, p.603).

When considering teaching materials, Finnish EFL teachers use textbooks widely and prefer them over online materials (Tergujeff, 2012a, p.35). However, Tergujeff (2012a) also mentions that according to her study, the use of websites for teaching is more common (80,9% of the participants used web-based teaching materials often or sometimes) than it has been stated in a previous study (corresponding number 53%) made by Luukka et al. (2008, p.95) in (Tergujeff, 2012a, p. 35). This comparison indicates that use of online materials has increased among EFL teachers in Finland and a wider range of teaching materials are introduced as an alternative to the perhaps textbook-centred teaching tradition. What is more, the study indicates that the use of websites that are not actually intended for language learning is increasing, which raises a question about what kind of websites the EFL teachers use and how (Tergujeff, 2012a, p. 35). When it comes to the use of language laboratory, it does not seem very common and not many of the respondents in the study even had an access to one. However, classroom environment allows varied pronunciation teaching as well and therefore the lack of language laboratory is not necessarily regarded as a shortcoming. In fact, classroom setting "may help to create more authentic speaking activities and encourage the teacher to apply communicative teaching techniques" (Tergujeff, 2012a, p.37). Teaching of phonetic symbols was also addressed in Tergujeff's study, but for the objective of this thesis, it is not relevant information.

Another interesting finding in Tergujeff's (2012a) study is the amount of ear training used by Finnish EFL teachers. In the context of pronunciation teaching, "ear training" is listening tasks that focus on pronunciation. Sound discrimination exercises are traditional examples of ear training, but Tergujeff adds that Morley (1991) suggests learners could also benefit from listening foci of wider range, an example of this is concentrating on suprasegmental features such as stress or intonation instead of individual sounds (p.39). However, less than half of the respondents claimed to have used ear training in pronunciation and approximately one-fourth indicated not knowing whether they have used it (Tergujeff, 2012a, pp. 39-40). To the teachers' defence, this result is debatable since Tergujeff (2012a) mentions that the concept of ear training was apparently unfamiliar to some of the teachers and the question could have been formulated in a clearer fashion. After all, listening tasks focusing on contents are common in foreign language teaching in Finland, one of the reasons being the matriculation examination in upper secondary schools which includes listening comprehension test with the same concept (p.40). Considering this, Tergujeff (2012a) speculates the possibility of bringing pronunciation-oriented listening tasks in to the foreign language (FL) teaching, since the speech samples already exist and the teacher could merely add questions concerning a pronunciation issue (p.40).

When it comes to teacher training, Tergujeff (2012a) speculates that in Finland teacher training regarding the teaching of English pronunciation has possibly changed for the worse. Tergujeff suggests three different explanatory factors for this:

Firstly, the rise of English as a global language, secondly, the rise of the communicative approach of language teaching, and thirdly, the overall decrease of the teaching of phonetics in Finnish universities (p.33).

The second reason indicates again that communicative approach is problematic when it comes to pronunciation teaching – this issue is discussed in more detail later in the text – and hence its rise is one element in the decline of teaching of English pronunciation. Furthermore, the study suggests that Finnish EFL teachers themselves have received considerable amount English pronunciation training during their studies, but only little training on *how to teach* pronunciation. The style of their training

was mentioned to be "very traditional pronunciation teaching methods: phonetics and transcription, repetition and drills, discussion exercises, reading out loud, and listening tasks" (Tergujeff, 2012a, p.34). Tergujeff (2012a) offers a possible explanation for this in the Finnish educational system where departments of foreign languages are responsible for training foreign language teachers for a Master's degree in the language(s) they are intended to teach. However, departments of education offers didactics and teacher training as a minor subject which is included in the degree of foreign language teachers. Therefore, language teacher education consists of two parts instead of being a single unit. In this system it would be crucial to address properly both didactics and substance, but according to Tergujeff's study, it does not appear to be like this in Finland when it comes to English pronunciation and teaching of it (p.34).

To add an ethnographical observation, I, the author of this thesis, have worked as a substitute teacher in a primary school I used to go myself. One instance I was teaching English for two classes on the 6th grade over the period of 3 weeks. The textbook used in class had some pronunciation exercises in it, mostly dealing with the differences of individual sounds close to each other and especially the sounds which are difficult for Finnish EFL learners to separate from each other. The method in the exercises was to listen and repeat after the tape. However, when I suggested these exercises to the classes, the students in both classes protested by saying that they have never done these exercises before and hence why should they do them now. In my opinion this was an alarming finding on how one area of language production was practically neglected entirely by the teacher, even though it was presented in the textbook. In this case, one possible explanation is that the teacher majored in Swedish when in teacher training, leaving English as their minor subject and hence perhaps they did not feel confident enough in going into detail with English pronunciation teaching. However, this is another example on how pronunciation teaching is easily disregarded depending on the teacher, in this case even when the textbook would have had the tools for it.

3 Communicative language teaching (CLT) and pronunciation

This section introduces CLT as a methodology and explains its theoretical background. Later on the challenges of implementing CLT into pronunciation teaching are discussed.

3.1 The theory of CLT

Communicative language teaching has evolved on the base of multidisciplinary perspectives that include, but are not limited to linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research. The core of CLT is developing learner's functional language abilities through participation in communicative events (S. J. Savignon, 2002 , p. 1). Savignon (2002) continues that according to Habermas (1970), Hymes (1971), Jakobovits (1970) and Savignon (1971) in communicative language teaching, the central theoretical concept is "communicative competence" (p. 1) . Savignon (1972; 1997) in Savignon (2002) lists the terms to define competence as *expression, interpretation and negotiation* (p. 1). This means that in classroom environment learners are able to interact with each other to make meaning instead of merely reciting dialogues or performing on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge. In this method, teachers are constantly encouraging learners to take risks and to go beyond memorised patterns. The learners are encouraged to use any linguistic or non-linguistic resources to negotiate meaning and to concentrate on the communicative task at hand. The learners can for example ask for information, search for clarifications and use circumlocutions (S. Savignon, 1971) in (S. J. Savignon, 2002, p. 3). According to Savignon (2002), the main findings of Savignon's (1971) study on communicative language teaching are that with the method mentioned above, the learners did not score any lower on discrete-point test of grammatical knowledge and on top of that, their communicative competence in fluency, comprehensibility, effort and the amount of communication in unrehearsed communicative task was significantly better than of those learners, who had not had the same practice (p.3). Savignon (2002) summarises Communicative Language Teaching as follows:

By definition, CLT puts the focus on the learner. Learners' communicative need provides a framework for elaborating program goals with regard to functional

competence. Functional goals imply global, qualitative evaluation of learner achievement as opposed to quantitative assessment of discrete linguistic features (p.4).

Even though CLT seems to achieve good results in learners' communicative competence, Savignon (2002) also points out, that teachers' opinions on it vary. Some feel frustrated because CLT is ambiguous when it comes to discussion of communicative ability; negotiation of meaning lacks precision as a view of language behaviour and there is no universal scale of assessment of individual learner. On the other hand, some teachers embrace the opportunity to select their own materials or to develop them (p. 5).

However, Savignon (2002) concludes that CLT in fact, cannot be appropriately addressed as a teaching "method", instead Savignon describes it as an approach in which language cannot be separated from individual identity and social behaviour. This relies on the idea that community defines the uses and forms of language as well in a similar fashion as language is thought to define community. Those involved set the appropriate norms and goals in the given setting for the learner and also give the tools to reach these goals (p. 210).

3.1.1 Learner autonomy, motivation and CLT

Macaro (1997) defines autonomous learning in Farren (2012) "as an ability that is learned through knowing how to make decisions about the self as well as being allowed to make those decisions" (p. 390). This idea is strongly related to CLT. The communicative aspect emphasizes the authentic production of content in language tasks and this may introduce the learner to the meta learning aspect of communicative tasks. This means that perhaps it can be speculated that the learner becomes aware on how learning can happen through their independent decision making while they communicate and use the language. When the emphasis in classroom learning tasks is on production of language in free form, the learner is allowed to make those decisions. Furthermore, Farren (2012) suggests that there is strong discourse of the opinion that cognitive development and social interaction are linked and hence language learners can achieve language proficiency only by "making

use of the target language to express their own meanings or messages that imply a social context" (pp. 390-391). Considering the theory of CLT earlier in the text, this appears to be the core of CLT as well and the rationale on how CLT promotes learner autonomy.

However, language learning includes an important attitudinal aspect as well, because expressing one's meaning in the target language requires acceptance of responsibility in doing so which implies further that there is motivation behind it (Farren, 2012, p.390). In other words, when CLT requires the learner to produce their own content in learning situations and the learner is willing to do so, the learner automatically motivates themselves because the form and the content of the learning task's final result is on their own responsibility. In non-communicative language tasks the content and the form of the final result is set and hence the learner has no other responsibility than to finish the task in the expected form and with the expected content.

3.2 Challenges of CLT in English pronunciation teaching

This chapter first explains the challenges of CLT in English pronunciation teaching on a general level and then from the viewpoint of Finnish EFL teachers and Finnish national core curriculum. To begin with, Seidlhofer (2001) states that CLT is challenging with pronunciation because it takes the attention away from language form, though teaching of the segmental and suprasegmental levels of pronunciation is a necessity. In CLT, the learning of language items is difficult because the use of language in communicative activities should be communicatively as authentic as possible instead of highlighting the language items, which is the goal in language drills and exercises. To support her claim, Seidlhofer also cites Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) who claim that proponents of CLT have not developed fixed strategies for teaching pronunciation communicatively nor have they dealt sufficiently with the role of pronunciation in language teaching (p.57). What is more, Lintunen (2004) suggests as well that the standard of pronunciation in Finland has not improved during the last decades though EFL teaching is more learner-centred and spoken language oriented than before. Lintunen believes that this is due to the negligence in the accuracy aspect even though the willingness

of producing oral language has improved due to the communicative approach. He states that "A good learner is *both* fluent *and* accurate" (p. 220).

When it comes to English pronunciation teaching in Finnish schools today, Tergujeff's (2012b) findings coordinates with Seidlhofer and Celce-Murcia et al. Tergujeff characterises the pronunciation teaching practices in Finnish schools as teacher-led and not in line with the principles of CLT, which promotes learner autonomy and being learner-centred (p.606). According to Tergujeff (2012a) previous studies by Lintunen (2004), Tergujeff et al. (2011) and Tergujeff (2012b) on EFL teaching in Finland have produced similar results. These previous studies found EFL teaching to be teacher-centred and concentrating quite rarely on the training of intonation and rhythm (p.30). In addition, the teachers in Tergujeff's (2012b) study used hardly any communicative pronunciation tasks in their lessons. The teachers also worked on the segmental level though, and Tergujeff cites, Pennington & Richards (1986) claim that for intelligibility, suprasegmental features of speech are more crucial than segmental features, and Derwing et al. (1998) also mention that in pronunciation teaching, concentrating on suprasegmentals is more effective than concentrating on segmentals (p.606).

On explanation why pronunciation teaching in Finnish schools is not in line with the principles of CLT, could possibly be traced back to the Finnish national core curriculum. Sauvignon (2002) mentions that with CLT the understanding of language learning is not only an educational, but also a political issue. Sauvignon explains this as follows:

Language teaching is inextricably linked with language policy. Viewed from a multicultural intranational as well as international perspective, diverse sociopolitical contexts mandate not only a diverse set of language-learning goals but a diverse set of teaching strategies. Program design and implementation depend on negotiation between policy makers, linguists, researchers, and teachers (p.4).

This means that any teaching method, whether CLT or other, requires not only the teachers' investment in it in classroom, but also the support of higher level policymakers who regulate the national teaching policies, and therefore deployment of a teaching method is dependent on the

political atmosphere and hence a political issue as well. As mentioned in chapter 3.1., the Finnish national core curriculum mentions pronunciation in the English language learning objectives very briefly. This could be a contributing factor to the varying, yet generally quite limited amount of English pronunciation teaching in Finnish EFL classrooms. Furthermore, if English pronunciation overall receives only little attention in the core curriculum, the curriculum can hardly be expected to encourage and advance the implementations of CLT in pronunciation teaching either. Savignon (2002) continues that the collaboration of the parties mentioned in the quote above is required also when evaluating the success of the programs. This is important, because the failure of many curricular innovations is due to the incapability of making corresponding changes in evaluation. For example currently more holistic assessments of learner competence are favoured, such as essay writing and in-class presentations, but assessment initiatives in a form of portfolios and collections of learner's poems, reports, stories, videotapes and similar projects representing and encouraging learner achievement do not go unopposed by schools boards, parents and governmental funding agencies (p.4). CLT assumingly faces these policy-related problems as well, since it lacks universal scale of assessment of individual learner, which is frustrating for the teachers as well, as mentioned earlier in the text. Thus it is perhaps reasonable to contemplate whether the universal scale of assessment is always necessary. An alternative assessment method could be based on the individual development, especially when it comes to pronunciation. This could benefit especially those struggling to meet the universal assessment criterion and on the other hand those as well who feel the teaching is not challenging enough for them. Obviously this type of assessment would require greater investment of teacher resources, since the assessment would have to be planned individually for each student.

3.3 Examples of communicative language tasks

In this chapter an article about CLT application in language teaching is briefly presented. This application is not directly pronunciation oriented task but rather related only. However, this task is an illustrative example of CLT in practice. The article by Danan (2010) introduces communicative language tasks in form of producing dubbings for student selected video clips. The fact that the materials focused on "well-known American excerpts" was a key factor in heightening student

interest among other things (p.447). The students also preferred selecting the materials themselves, though teacher's input would have been needed in cases where the chosen materials included too fast and colloquial verbal exchange for the students (p.450). In the article, the results of one project including 11 participants state that over 72% of the participants felt that the dubbing task helped them in their speaking including fluency, pronunciation and expressiveness; and in language skills including new vocabulary, sentence structure, and knowledge of colloquial terms. The students also emphasised the motivational aspect of the project by commenting for example that it was fun, restored the excitement in the language, and increased involvement in the task. However, the importance of choosing appropriate materials came into display as well. The students who felt the exercise was not beneficial to their learning had chosen a text which was, even to teacher "often nonsensical and hard to contextualise and, therefore, difficult to translate into the target language" (p.450).

These are certainly important aspects to take into consideration with the exercise design of this thesis as well. Especially when it comes to the selection of materials, which has to balance between teacher input to assure the appropriateness of the materials, and students' own selections in order to maintain high student interest. What is more, Danan (2010) also mentions that the students' computer literacy related skills should not be overestimated especially in tasks such as the ones described in the study, because they may require specialised skills in order to be undertaken in an efficient manner. The technological training of the teachers would also be desirable (p.453). This notion is important yet easily overlooked today because technology has become such a big part of people's everyday lives, however, it should not be taken for granted when planning language tasks that require use of technology.

4 Analysis: Communicative pronunciation tasks (CPTs)

The purpose of this analysis along with the thesis is to present strategies for teaching pronunciation communicatively. These strategies are displayed in the form of three exemplary practical pronunciation exercises that realise the main principles of CLT in other words are communicative

pronunciation tasks (CPTs). The CPTs are reviewed later on in the discussion section in order to examine how well they achieved the goal set for them.

As mentioned earlier in the text, the principles of CLT include promoting learner autonomy and heightening learner motivation, in practice this means that the exercises encourage student interaction, negotiation of meaning, asking for information, searching clarification, using circumlocutions, expressing oneself, and interpreting and concentrating on the communicative task. The communicative needs of students provide the framework for the project goals. This is in line with community defining the use and forms of language. Community can perhaps be seen not only as the physical community around the student, but also as a community in the Internet for example. Those involved in the community define the appropriate norms and goals and also define the tools to reach the goals. For example, when designing CPTs, narrowing down the community may be a useful place to begin. The Internet as a community is for example a very fruitful ground, but it may require narrowing down as well. It can be narrowed down to for example an individual website such as Youtube, or even more into a one category of Youtube videos, like video blogs or even to the videos of one individual user.

The target group of the CPTs in this thesis are Finnish EFL students on primary school grades 7-9. Today students of this age use the Internet, especially social media and video-sharing websites, and watch films and TV-series extensively for their entertainment. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that incorporating content from these sources into teaching, and into CPTs in this case, increases students' interest towards the teaching content and therefore motivates them further in learning. The three CPTs presented here aim each to emphasize somewhat different aspects of CLT in order to together form a body of tasks which covers the benefits of CLT as comprehensively as possible. Therefore neither of CPTs are purely communicative without any reference to more traditional teacher-based pronunciation tasks. This arrangement is a compromise and one alternative solution to meet the challenges of combining CLT to pronunciation teaching. Also, the focus in the CPTs will be on suprasegmental features of pronunciation such as intonation, rhythm and stress patterns instead of segmentals which are individual sounds or phonemes. This top-down approach is selected because it

is more suitable to the nature of CLT, and some studies suggest that teaching suprasegmentals is more effective than concentrating on segmentals (Derwing et al., 1998) in (Tergujeff, 2012b) and that suprasegmental features are also more crucial than segmentals when it comes to intelligibility (Pennington & Richards, 1986) in (Tergujeff, 2012b). Achieving intelligibility is one main goal of pronunciation overall and therefore concentrating on the aspects that support intelligibility the most is justified. Also to support the chosen top-down approach is an idea that after learning to detect and produce suprasegmental features of pronunciation in speech, perhaps it is easier for the learner then to begin recognizing and developing the production of the segmental features of speech more efficiently as well. However, this is only an idea and further research should be conducted in order to prove its validity.

4.1 CPT 1: *Vlog Stock*

In *Vlog Stock* the students are asked to choose a video blog or *vlog* which includes certain clause type with its own distinctive intonation pattern and then reproduce that particular intonation pattern in their own video or audio recording with self-produced content. For a beginner in this type of pronunciation training it is perhaps most accessible to commence with the most simple and common intonation patterns in English language. The most common intonation patterns in English language are falling intonation, rising intonation and fall-rise intonation. Falling intonation is common with *wh*-questions and statements, rising intonation with *yes-no* questions, and fall-rise intonation with statements that end with a notion of not being sure or when there is something to add to the end of the statement. Fall-rise intonation is also used in questions that request for more information or invite somebody to have or do something (Carter, McCarthy, Mark, & O'Keeffe, 2011) in (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2015). Fall-rise intonation may be rather complicated for the purpose of the task and thus concentrating on falling and rising intonation patterns is perhaps enough to begin with.

When it comes to the selection and the content of the source material, teacher input is required. A set of guide lines are introduced for the selection of materials and the teacher ensures that the guide lines are followed. The guide lines include at least the following: the language of the source materials

is native or near-native English, the materials are age appropriate, politically correct and they do not include strong language or strong sexual references. In short, the source materials are suitable for school environment and reflect the students' age group and skill level. In borderline cases the teacher uses their judgement to decide on the appropriateness of the materials.

After the students have been familiarized with the intonation patterns and they have chosen the materials containing the pattern of their choice, they may begin practising the pattern first only by repeating and imitating the source materials. This part represents the traditional listen and repeat form of pronunciation exercise in this task. However, this only serves to clarify the learning goal of this task for the students which is the intonation pattern. When the students internalise the intonation pattern, they can move to the next stage of the task which is to change the original content of the clauses to the students' self-produced content. This content derives from the students' own interests and content goals. The self-produced content is then videoed — or only recorded if a student insists for any reason — to create a video blog entry of their own as the concrete final result of this task. This also enables the students to review the material they produced and assess their own performance, and even perhaps compare their own production to the original source material.

4.2 CPT 2. *Phrase Phase*

Phrase Phase is a CPT where students again choose their own source materials and incorporate elements from it to their own speech production. This task can be performed in pairs completely or from the actual dialogue phase onwards. To begin with, the students are asked to gather source material, this time from any auditory or audiovisual source. These can include for example films, TV-series, Internet videos, video games, pod casts, and radio shows, as long as the material meets the same requirements as the source material in *Vlog Stock*. The source material is selected in the form of individual quotes or lines. Again, the teacher advises the students to pay particular attention to the suprasegmental features of the pronunciation in the quotes when selecting them. The quotes can be as straightforward as "The name is Bond. James Bond" (Campbell, 2006) and "I see dead people" (Shyamalan, 1999), or more complex depending on the proficiency level of the student. After

selecting the quotes the students practice them and then move to the next phase of the task which is the dialogue phase.

In the dialogue phase the students work in pairs to create dialogues with the quotes incorporated in them. The students can and are actually encouraged to change words in the quotes to suit their communicational needs in order to create flowing, logical and meaningful dialogue with another student. However, the emphasis in each individual line of speech is in repeating the intonation and stress pattern of the original quote. At the beginning the dialogues can be very short and rely heavily on the original content of the quotes, but as the students proceed further and develop their technique, the dialogues potentially develop into more complex and meaningful conversations with diverse intonation and stress patterns.

4.3 CPT 3. *Mixed Patterns*

Mixed Patterns is a simple CPT which requires no technology. The aim of *Mixed Patterns* is to combine a stress pattern with a suitable sentence. To begin with, the concept of stress pattern is explained to students. This includes a demonstration on the written form of stress patterns, and an explanation that a vertical line on top of a word or syllable means a stressed syllable and a horizontal line means unstressed syllable. After this the teacher divides the class into two groups and hands out two different types of clauses written onto a piece of paper to each group. Each group member receives one piece of paper with a clause written on it. For the first group the clauses are in regular writing and their content is something simple like "My name is Lisa.", "How are you?", "I'm fine.", and "Thank you." For the second group the clauses are equivalent to the first ones except that they are written only in stress pattern form: "_ I _ I _", "I I _", " _ I", and "I _". Now the teacher speaks out loud each of the clauses and asks the students to pay attention to the stress pattern of the clause. After this it is the students' task to match a clause in regular writing with a stress pattern clause. During the task the students may ask the teacher to repeat the clauses out loud as many times as they wish to. To achieve the goal of this task the students have to work together and interact with each other in English preferably. The ones with regular writing may imitate the teacher's interpretation on their own clause

to form an idea of the suitable stress pattern and the ones with stress patterns may experiment by inserting different regular writing clauses into their stress pattern. Together the holders of different clauses can compare the two and arrive to a conclusion whether the clauses match or not. The task is complete once all the clauses have been matched successfully.

This task can also be performed as a pair activity. In that case both members of the pair are given several clauses of the same type and then they will work together to match all the clauses instead of working with several people in order to find a match to only one clause.

5 Discussion and assessment of the CPTs

This chapter discusses the results of the analysis in other words the communicative pronunciation tasks. The discussion will include deliberation on how the CPTs realise the principles of CLT. Each of the CPTs are addressed individually in their own sections, however they do share common features as well, which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

First of all, all of the CPTs face a challenge in their degree of difficulty. These tasks can be challenging even for an accomplished learner and variations between the students' language proficiency can be significant already within one classroom. However, assessing the students on the basis of their individual development rather than using universal scales of assessment, and by allowing them to choose apprehensible materials themselves may assist in adjusting the degree of difficulty to an appropriate level for each student in some of the tasks.

All of the CPTs also face the challenges of ensuring accuracy, and authenticity of the content, which are both the core challenges in applying CLT to pronunciation. How can the learner become aware of the features that make pronunciation intelligible if they produce the content of the pronunciation tasks themselves instead of listening and repeating material of significant intelligibility? And how can the content be authentic if the learner merely reproduces given pronunciation models? The natural answer to this would be to have the learner to converse and communicate only with a native or near-

native speakers of English. However, due to resource issues it is not possible to offer each student a native or near-native speaker of English as a conversation partner in classroom. In the CPTs this issue is approached by replacing the conversation partner with auditory or audiovisual source material where the producer of the material is native or near-native speaker of English or by having the teacher to pronounce the example. However, the auditory and audiovisual source materials in the CPTs are often scripted materials and hence not genuinely authentic and spontaneous communication either. These solutions are compromises which are necessary in the process of developing entirely new learning tasks. Perhaps in the future these challenges can be met without compromising the principles of the teaching method which the learning tasks represent.

Even though all of these CPTs face challenges in realising the principles of CLT, they serve the students also on the level of meta learning. These type of language tasks can help students to become aware of potential learning situations outside classroom and even more importantly, become aware of their own potential as language learners through their interests. In short, these tasks show how versatile language learning can be. Furthermore, seeing learning as a mechanism potentially occurring continually in everyday life surroundings and not just in school, can perhaps change possible unfavourable attitudes towards institutionalised learning as well.

Finally, all of these tasks, especially *Vlog Stock* and *Phrase Phase*, require creativity, self-expression and even the ability to act. For some students these requirements may prove to be the most challenging aspect of the these tasks. However, that is a pedagogical challenge that is perhaps not relevant to be discussed for the purpose of this thesis.

5.1 CPT 1. *Vlog Stock*

The communicative goal of *Vlog Stock* is for the students to express themselves and bring forth their own views in a form of a video blog. If this were the only goal of the task, it would be purely a communicative task. However, combining requirements of pronunciation task to it complicates the matter. First of all, when students select the source material and are asked to imitate the

suprasegmental features in the material, the risk of imitating the content as well instead of producing their own, increases. If this were the case, the task would become merely ordinary listen and repeat exercise with the addition of recording it. Another possible challenge is related to accuracy, which is an important aspect, if not the primary goal in pronunciation teaching. How to make sure the students do reproduce the suprasegmental features as they are in the source material, if teacher corrections are against the principals of CLT? One possible solution is to not to do corrections, but to emphasize the practicing of suprasegmental features before recording. However, this is also a step away from CLT in another respect because it is the listen and repeat part of the task, and because it does not encourage for example risk taking and going beyond memorized patterns. In fact, this part does quite the contrary and promotes memorizing certain, perhaps even strict patterns. Another solution would be to take action after the recordings are done and for the teacher to ask the students to compare their own production to the source material, find differences and then perhaps produce a new version of their own video blog. Nonetheless this solution defies CLT as well, since it resembles sound discrimination tasks with the distinctions of contrasting two different intonation, stress, and rhythm patterns instead of individual sounds, and of trying to bring the two contrasting features closer to each other instead of making a clearer difference between them.

One more challenge to mention is the social aspect of this task. Communicative language tasks should be communicative events including interaction. This task is an individual task with no interaction to for example other students. The students have both roles of receiving and producing communication, but it can hardly be described interactive, since these roles are not combined or they do not even rotate. A solution to this could be transforming the task from individual to pair work. If the structure of the video blog were dialogue, interaction between the two students would occur. However, would it be authentic interaction since the clause structures were imitated from the source materials? This is one challenge to be dealt with in this solution.

Be as it may, *Vlog Stock* also supports several aspects of CLT. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the task encourages students to create their own content and embraces the chance to select their own materials. These features promote learner autonomy and it should increase learner

motivation. Increased learner motivation further provokes the students to concentrate on reaching the goal of the CPT. For example, if a student idolizes the creator of the source material, the aspiration to act like them is likely to motivate the student to perform the task with greater consideration for accuracy. In conclusion, as a CPT *Vlog Stock* concentrates on increasing learner autonomy and motivation through the students' freedom in material selection while also maintaining pronunciation learning goals by focusing on the production of suprasegmental features in the final result of the task.

5.2 CPT 2. *Phrase Phase*

Phrase Phase aims to teach the suprasegmental features of pronunciation through engaging and memorable examples as the source of inspiration and as communication building blocks. When it comes to realising the principals of CLT, *Phrase Phase* shares with *Vlog Stock* the challenges of excessive imitation of content instead of creation of authentic content, and the lack of attention to accuracy. However, the social aspect is taken into consideration better. The dialogue phase supports interaction with other students. Whether the interaction is authentic is a concern, again. *Phrase Phase* directs this concern by expecting the students to eventually develop authentic content as they become familiar with this technique. However, this may require considerable amount of time and repetition and thus it may become an issue of resources as well.

The aspects of CLT that *Phrase Phase* supports strongly are encouragement to social behaviour or participation in communicative event and interaction with others — though the event and interaction are not thoroughly authentic —, focusing on the learner by allowing them to shape the content of the task themselves, and promotion of learner autonomy and motivation by allowing the learner to make decisions on the content and to take responsibility for it. However, the main challenges with this CPT remain the ensuring of accuracy and authenticity.

5.3 CPT 3. *Mixed Patterns*

Mixed Patterns emphasizes communication and interaction, and it encourages the learner to ask for information and to search for clarifications. The focus is not on the learner as much as it is in the other two CPTs since the material used for learning of stress patterns is not produced by the learner. However, when searching for the matching clause the learner has to rely on their own speech production even though it may not focus on pronunciation but rather on getting a message through. In other words the content of the task is not authentic but speech required in order to complete the task is authentic. In conclusion this task may be a communicative task combined with an application of listen and repeat type of pronunciation task instead of a communicative pronunciation task.

However, *Mixed Patterns* accomplishes accuracy rather well since the learners are required to pay attention to a specific stress pattern and even to reproduce it. The interaction aspect is also considerable because not only do the students interact with each other, they also interact with the teacher who gives them the oral examples of the clauses. This task is also a prime example on the difficulties which arise when attempting to combine the accuracy aspect to a communicative language task. Accuracy and its development are difficult to monitor in communicative language tasks from outside and thus the learner is left responsible ensuring accuracy in their language production, whether it is about pronunciation or any other aspects of language learning. To advanced and motivated learners this is probably not a problem, but learners requiring more support may not have the proficiency to do so independently.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to apply the theory of communicative language teaching to English pronunciation teaching in the context of Finnish school grades 7-9 and present the results in a form of exemplary pronunciation tasks which follow the theory of CLT. These pronunciation tasks are called communicative pronunciation tasks (CPTs) and each of them have features which realise the principles of CLT.

The development of these CPTs was a challenging process which included balancing between the requirements of CLT, accuracy in pronunciation teaching, and classroom resources. This balancing resulted in compromises when it came to realising the principles of CLT in the CPTs. Essentially the two main challenge were a) when communicative features were added to the pronunciation tasks, it removed the concentration on accuracy and the technical features of pronunciation, and the change for the teacher to estimate and give feedback or corrective suggestions on those features, and b) when adding features to ensure accuracy (pronunciation models from an outside source), the task began to lack in the authenticity of its content, which is one of the most important aspects of CLT. Nevertheless, the CPTs did manage to focus on the learner by emphasizing their role in the selection of the teaching materials, and by allowing them to shape the content of the tasks according to their own interests, at least in CPT 1 and 2. This is a major merit for the tasks, since these features support learner autonomy and increase motivation, which are fundamentals goals of CLT.

Even though the CPTs did not entirely meet the requirements of CLT and they have not been tested in a classroom environment, they present a new view point in one area of language teaching and are thus a valuable and fascinating basis for new ideas and further development. This thesis is a beginning of CPT development and thus the exploration of the possibilities of CPTs may continue in the future. Further research should be conducted in order to proof the functionality of the CPTs and to measure their effectiveness. The CPTs presented in this thesis have the potential to be developed on Pro Gradu stage as well, as then they could be tested in classroom environment and put into practice with actual students. Gathering feedback on the exercises from the students would then help to develop the exercises and the theory behind them even further. Future development is an interesting prospect also because in retrospect the ideation of the CPTs could have been more versatile since CPT 1 and CPT 2 resemble each other a great deal. The ideation process perhaps fixated to a certain perspective which was abandoned only in the ideation of CPT 3.

In conclusion, this thesis is an example of the development of new teaching applications on one area of English language teaching, and of an open-minded approach towards a theory applied into practice

that has been considered challenging almost to the point of not worth exploring. Though this thesis does not overcome all the challenges related to CLT and English pronunciation teaching, it represents an important aspect of research process on any topic: taking the first steps.

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