

THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: REVIEW ON OWN EXPERIENCE IN ELT AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, SRIWIJAYA STATE POLYTECHNIC, PALEMBANG

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Abstrak

Pengetahuan tentang metode/pendekatan dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (English Language Teaching/ELT) akan memandu kegiatan guru bahasa Inggris di kelas. Alasan menggunakan metode/pendekatan terbaik dalam ELT tergantung pada berbagai faktor. Namun, metode itu sendiri seharusnya memfasilitasi siswa untuk menjadi kompeten dalam Bahasa Inggris. Menggunakan metode Pengajaran Bahasa Komunikatif (Communicative Language Teaching /CLT) ditujukan untuk memenuhi kebutuhan siswa akan kompetensi komunikatif. Kurikulum, kebutuhan mahasiswa dan fasilitas adalah beberapa alasan untuk menggunakan CLT dalam ELT pada Jurusan Bahasa Inggris konsentrasi pariwisata dan industri perhotelan, Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya.

Kata Kunci: Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, Pengajaran Bahasa Komunikatif.

Abstract

The knowledge about English Language Teaching (ELT) methods/approaches will guide the action of teachers of English in classroom. The reasons in choosing the best ELT method/approach will be depended on various factors. However, the ELT method/approach is supposed to facilitate the students to be competence in English. Using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is aimed to carter the students' need in communicative competence. Curriculum, students' needs and facilities are extents to call CLT in ELT at of English Department concentration in tourism and hospitality industry.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Communicative Language Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers of language always work out the various methods or approaches to make their students learn and able to communicate using the target language their taught. It is done to find the best way to make the students competence in the subjects they taught. Teachers of language come to teacher training to know the ideas about methods or approaches in teaching language. They become clearer about what and why they do when they are exposed to the methods/approaches. By knowing their position in a teaching and

learning class, they will be able to see why they choose a certain method informed, not conditioned. There are many possible methods or approaches could be applied in teaching and learning classroom. One of the most popular approaches is The Communicative Language Teaching approach or abbreviated as CLT. In fact, there were also some factors led to the emergence of CLT in language teaching, especially English Language Teaching (ELT). This article, first, discusses what CLT is, definition, characteristics and some

factors of its emergence. Second, it also discusses some extents that appropriate to my teaching contexts, teaching English at English Department concentration in tourism and hospitality industry at Sriwijaya State Polytechnic, and problems in implementing CLT in my English language teaching classes.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Definition

The Communicative Language Teaching is defined as an approach of teaching a second or a foreign language that focuses on learners' interaction whether as the means or the ultimate goal of learning a target language. Interaction here means an activity in which two or more parties affect upon one another. CLT refers to communicative approach to the teaching a second or a foreign language as well. Doubtlessly, it is believed as the most effective approach focuses on the communicative competence of the learners in many countries (Kaisheng, 2007).

Some Characteristics of CLT

There are some characteristics of CLT in Language Teaching classroom. They are syllabus, classroom activities, materials and tasks, and roles of teacher and student.

1. Syllabus

Syllabus is an outline of a plan that will be achieved in a big process of teaching. A syllabus, which contains CLT approach, provides space for teachers of language to develop learning materials and activities in a lesson plan about a target language. As cited in Qinghong (2009), Van EK (1980) says six basic functions in the form of CLT approach syllabus: (1) imparting and seeking factual information; (2) expressing and

finding out intellectual attitudes; (3) expressing and finding out emotional attitudes; (4) expressing and finding out moral attitudes; (5) getting things done; and (6) socialising. Those all functions in the syllabus will create CLT in language teaching by different realisation based on the form of specific role within a specific situation.

2. Classroom Activities

There are many communicative activities could be applied in CLT, but particularly, some typical communicative activities in CLT, which facilitate the interaction among learners of the target language in classroom, are group discussion, simulation and role-play. First, *discussion* can be carried out in pairs, group or whole class discussion. Students' collaboration and communication skills will be enhanced by the activities working in pairs, groups or whole class. Second, *simulation* equips the learners with the real-life situation in the classroom so they can stimulate the real world in using the target language. Third, *role-play* is similar to simulation; the difference is role-play may use adopted identity, pretend to be someone else. Communicating in different social contexts and different social roles gives an opportunity to the target language learners to learn socio cultures of the target language because communicating needs cultures involved.

3. Tasks and Materials

Communicative tasks give opportunities for the learners of target language to express and use the target language. By using students' communicative materials, the learners are set into the atmosphere when the language used according to the context, time and situation of real life. Richard and Rogers (1986) argue that there are three kinds of materials which bring CLT approach in language teaching:

- Authentic materials transfer what the learners cannot learn from outside world to the classroom and exposes natural language to learners in a variety of situations.
- Task-based materials give chances to the target language learners to use target language through certain roles.
- Text-based materials provide a theme, a task analysis, or practice situation description in the communication among the users of target language.

4. The Roles of Teacher and Learners

The concept of CLT approach is learner-centred and the role of the teacher here is expected as a facilitator who can bring learners of the target language into a communicative learning atmosphere. Teacher makes communicative teaching plan and apply it in classroom activities that make all the students interact in the classroom communicatively.

The learners' role in CLT is the most important because they are the communicators of the language teaching process. As communicators, they are in charge in negotiating the meaning of their communication, trying to understand and gain the meaning of others' messages in the communication using their competence in target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 129).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Led to CLT Emergence in ELT

Actually, the emergence of CLT in English Language Teaching (ELT) causes by many factors, but this article will restrict its discussion in two: the limitation of previous approaches and new concepts of being competence in language:

1. Limitation of Previous Approaches

There were some methods or approaches created and used in language

teaching process. In fact, the process of implementing those methods or approaches in language teaching classes resulted some criticisms or limitation because of their failure in meeting the learners' needs.

Below some criticisms or limitation summarised from Larsen-Freeman (1986); Hadley (1993); Brown (2007); Flick (1999); and Richard and Rogers (1986): *The Grammar Translation Method's* limitation is that learner's lack of active role in the classroom, fail at speaking and writing in target language; *The Direct Method's* criticism is that this method is hard to gain in classroom because classroom situation is not a realistic situation and teacher's limited skill causes impairment to this method; Some critics of *The Audio-Lingual Method* (ALM) assert that learners' communicative competence in target language was not achieved by accuracy and repetition of the errors, the opportunity for the learners to use their creativity in using target language is very limited; and *The Community Language Learning* (CLL) is insufficient in control the language grammar system due to more focus on fluency rather than accuracy.

In short, educators and linguists felt that those methods or approach were not effective enough for language learner to gain language competence in a target language. Learners did not have any knowledge how to use appropriate social language in communication, gestures, expression and idea to communicate in the culture of the target language they learned (Galloway, 1993). This new approach provides communicative competence as well as linguistic competence in real communication, the learners know how and when to say what to whom (Hymes, 1971 cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 121) and eventually CLT is found as the most effective way to teach a second or a foreign language.

2. The New Concepts of Being Competent in Language

The concept of being competence in a language has tremendous changes from time to time including English as target language. Previously, in 17th and 18th centuries, the English language competence was the ability to reading English literature. Later, in 19th century, it was the ability to master the forms or grammar of English mainly to pass in school exams. Nowadays, the concepts of being competence in English as a target language are more than one. First, the competence is to communicate using English effectively. This competence requires teachers of English to use CLT approach in which they shift mechanistic approach to meaningful one (Hayati, 2008). The learners' need of mastering English as an effective means of communication is not gained separately from four macro skills. In CLT approach all the macro-skills are integrated in English Language Teaching to meet the learners' need of being competence communicate effectively.

Second, the competence in English language may be seen from Standard English Exam Scores. Many education institutions have set the scores of Standard English Exam like TOEIC, TOEFL or IELTS as their students' competence in English. The four macro-skills are really needed to enable the students to pass the exam of English proficiency. CLT approach with the characteristic of its activities really supports to improve students' mastery of Standard English. Moreover, a good score of Standard English Exams will also give opportunity for the students' to continue their study abroad or work in foreign companies.

Third, the competence of flexibility in receiving the meanings of English as target language. English has spread widely all over the world and creates a lot of dialects among the users. Teachers of English should equip their

students with the information of different dialects among English users. This information can be gained in CLT approach through negotiation in meaning activities. Their flexibility in negotiating the meaning in the real situation is an example of information gap activity in CLT approach.

Extents to which CLT is appropriate to My Teaching Context

As Nunan (1999, p. 9) says, CLT is the most widespread teaching practice during the last two decades. Particularly, CLT is seen as communicative approach by making communicative competence as the goal of language teaching, including English Language Teaching. This communicative approach is suited to my teaching context as a teacher of English Department concentration in tourism and hospitality industry at Sriwijaya State Polytechnic in some areas. They are curriculum, students' needs, and facilities.

1. Curriculum

Doubtlessly, English is needed in specific occupations causes calling for theme known as English for Specific Purposes. The learners learn English as their target language in certain roles such as waiter/waitress, tour guide, nurses, secretaries, executives, engineers, etc. (Richard, 2006). It is more efficient to teach them specific English using communicative skills rather than general English. To carry out this specific English, an appropriate curriculum is needed as the basic of determining the goals and objectives of the course. As a vocational school, the curriculum has been set in the form of institutional curriculum.

It is stated as the goals of the English Department concentration in tourism and hospitality industry that the students will have both competence and professionalism in tourism and in

communication using English (Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya, 2010, translation: mine). Moreover, Graves (2005, p. 5) says that a curriculum and an institution is a large system of an important collaboration of students, teachers and administrators. This curriculum perfectly suited to the typical syllabus of CLT. A syllabus of English Language Teaching should include CLT approach to meet the English learners' need, to communicate effectively. Moreover, the goals of the syllabus using CLT approach will support the emergence of CLT in ELT. The learners are expected to be able to communicate in English as the target language by having knowledge of functions, meaning and linguistics form, able to use certain functions in appropriate social context and to other users, and able to succeed in negotiating the meaning to other users (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 128).

2. Students' Needs

As students of English Department concentration in tourism and hospitality industry, the learners of English as a foreign language need English in specific purposes for two reasons. First, they need it for their academic purposes. The characteristics of English for specific purposes have different analysis in vocabulary, grammar, texts, functions and skills of specific field. Learners are expected to gain knowledge from informative sources whether printed or non-printed materials published in English using appropriate analysis in their field. Furthermore, the activities such as pair or group work, simulation and discussion in classroom facilitate them with language functions in the form of macro skills. This macro skills competence is required to pass the exam in proving their proficiency, for example the TOEIC, the IETLS or the TOEFL.

3. Facilities

As a vocational school, the institution is equipped with many facilities to prepare the students to the real situation of working world including English Department concentration in tourism and hospitality industry. The facilities such as reception corner, mini bars, kitchens, and hotel-room-like support the simulation or role-play activities in CLT. Students have chance to learn English in the real situation by interacting among them and to learn socio cultures by different social contexts and social roles. They have opportunity to practice their English as if they were waiters/waitress, receptionists, operators, bar-tenders, bell-boys, room-boys, or chefs. Using CLT in this activities which supported by the facilities, focuses language learning in real communication, makes learners tolerant to other learners' error, develops accuracy and fluency, and links language functions since they take place in the real situation.

Using CLT in ELT at English Department means trying to get students to develop their linguistic fluency not only the accuracy. The students are equipped with tools for generating spontaneous language performance for working-world when they graduate. They are facilitated with the lifelong language learning not just with the immediate classroom task. The classroom practices using CLT encourage the students intrinsically to pull their fullest potential in ELT (Brown, 2007, p. 46).

Implementing CLT in My Context: Problems and Anticipation

Although CLT is considered as the most effective and efficient approach to meet target language learners' needs in language teaching, it has critics as well. Since its basic goal is to achieve communicative competency, the learners are required to possess the rules knowledge of how to use the language

they produced in certain situation and strategies to use the language in effective communication. However, Kaisheng (2007) says that critics believe in this approach the functional aspects and the formal structures of the language need a strong link in order to make language learning effective. It is an understanding about the cultures of the target language and the learners' and these remains as a great challenge for some language teachers.

In implementing CLT approach in my classes, four main problems arise. First, *the classes are too large* in number for language learning condition. To anticipate this problem, worksheet can be given so that it can cover all students at the same time, the use of group work and pair work is also important to maximise students' participation. Group leaders can also be used in class to assist in delivering the teaching instruction. On the other hand, an eclectic approach, which combines CLT and other methods like Grammar-Translation method, could help managing a large class.

Second, *students have various level of competence*. Students with different levels of competence can be anticipated by giving the same tasks from different material, or giving a different task from the same material according to their levels of competence. Moreover, various levels of competence lead to the various speeds of finishing the task. For high-levelled competence students who able to finish their task earlier, providing them with extra reading or simple puzzle can overcome their boredom in waiting for others students completing their tasks. However, the extra activity should be stimulating. If it is boring, the students will avoid finishing early.

Third, *students are reluctant in using English*. For students who always use their mother tongue in class, the anticipation is by giving response in English to them. This can create English atmosphere and encourage them to use

English in the learning process, and give necessary feedback. Furthermore, it can be done by encouraging them to think about the benefits of using English.

Fourth, *the local culture does not support to use of English* inside or even outside the classroom. People are considered showing off their English competence if they speak English in inappropriate situation. English teachers must bring their students into the atmosphere that the language competence is used in communicating to deliver news with appropriate form or grammar to gain their fluency and accuracy in English, not mainly the mastery of the form or grammar. So that students will be more willing to express his idea or opinion using English inside or outside classroom. This culture problem is also can be anticipated by giving motivation to students, that the most important part of learning a language is the ability to convey the news with target language, rather than the ability to use the correct form. Furthermore, encouraging students to be more aware of the essence of learning a language is how the language can be used, so students should not feel strange if their friends use English inside or outside classroom to communicate.

CONCLUSION

The Communicative Language Learning approach is a product created in response to the need of appropriate approach in language teaching process. By understanding the definition, the characteristic and the emergence factors of CLT in ELT, hopefully this approach could meet the English learners' needs. However, the knowledge of methods/approaches in ELT helps the English language teachers expand their repertoire of techniques in teaching. In this process of finding the best method/approach in their ELT class, teachers of English will gain additional avenue for professional growth.

Obviously, some teachers will consolidate their position in ELT, not by entertaining new principles, but rather by trying out the best method/approach for their students. In contrast, judging from its criticisms and problems implementation in classroom, some new approaches, such as Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) are establish to the new direction in English Language Teaching. Educators and linguists always evolve to find appropriate approach according to the time.

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