Applying Communicative Language Teaching in Teaching English for Foreign language Learners.

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Abstract

Teaching second or foreign language is not easy. Many researchers believe that the teachers should know several methods and teaching strategies in teaching language; such as, communicative language teaching, the grammar-translation method, the direct method, the audio-lingual method, the silent way, the suggestopedia, communicative language learning, total physical response, natural approach, and many more. In early 1980s, many educators assumed that communicative approach is a better way to teach second language to the students and this approach incorporated into the classroom (Brown, 2001). This essay will explore what communicative language teaching is and describe the factors led to its emergence in English language teaching.

Key words: *methods, communicative approach*

1. Introduction

Becoming an English teacher might be a wonderful job, especially when the teacher is able to transfer their knowledge to the students whose English is the second language successfully. The problem is transferring knowledge is not easy. The teacher should determine strategies, approaches and methods to help students developing English skills. Today, many teachers of English emphasize communicative competence in and out the classroom. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach in teaching language that emphasizes authentic communication from beginning of class (Horwitz, 2008). This essay will explore what communicative language teaching is and describe the factors led to its emergence in English language teaching. Although there are at least nine common methods of teaching English to second language learners, this essay will only discuss in detail the benefit and consequences of communicative language teaching.

Methods are beneficial in connecting thoughts and actions since teaching is about teachers, subject matter, language, culture, who the learners and how the learners learn (Freeman, 2000). The teachers have known several methods in teaching language besides communicative language teaching. Those methods are the grammar-translation method, the direct method, the audio-lingual method, the silent way, the suggestopedia, communicative language learning, total physical response, natural approach, and many more.

2. Discussion

According to Freeman (2000), the grammar-translation method is used to help students read and recognize foreign language literature. This method emphasizes the grammar

of the target language. The students might be familiar with in both grammar of their native language and the teachers help the students by explaining in their native language. On the other hand, the direct method becomes popular because this method does not translate the words but the meaning in the target language. Diller (1978) stated that translation is not allowed in using direct method; the method received the meaning directly from the use of visual aids and demonstration without recourse to the students' language (as cited in Freeman, 2000, p. 23). The other method is audio-lingual that stresses listening and speaking (Horwitz, 2008). Different from audio-lingual method, the silent way promotes cognitive approach to master language and communicate in outside class (Freeman, 2008). The suggestopedia is one of method, which relates to "effective-humanistic approach (Horwitz, 2008). The two other methods are communicative language learning and total physical response. According to Berlin (2005) the communicative language learning covers not only students' feeling but also physical reaction and motivation to learn, whereas total physical response focuses on giving commands in target language and follows the commands actively (Horwitz, 2008).

These methods are necessary to improve teaching and learning English. These methods are intended to focus on the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, Brown (2001) suggested that the teachers do not need a new methods but they need language teaching approach that design effective tasks and techniques to achieve communicative competence. Berlin (2005) claimed that communicative approach is underpinning to take on variety of forms, communicative approach is considered as "an umbrella" because it cover four English skills; listening speaking, reading and writing.

In early 1980s, many researchers believed that communicative approach is a better way to teach second language to the students and this approach incorporated into the classroom (Brown, 2001). Until 1990s, communicative approach developed and increased by promoting authentic communication, real world simulation and effective task (Brown, 2001).

The teachers have used CLT since much observation shows that many students do not achieve communicative competence to the target language (Taylor, 1987). The teachers appreciate this method because CLT focuses on communicative language. Horwitz (2008) states that CLT class uses "authentic communication" from the beginning class. This means conversation might be important part of CLT. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is different from other methods, particularly the direct method and natural approach. Horwitz (2008) states that CLT teachers tend to communicate in target language and the teachers do not accept the students' answer by using the students' first language, while direct method and natural approach teachers emphasize listening and reading.
Brown (2001) offered six characteristics of CLT;

> the first, classroom goals apply the component of communicative competence, the second, language technique is used to motivate students to use language for meaningful purposes, the third, complementary principles are fluency and accuracy even though fluency is more crucial in language use. The fourth, students are obligated to use the language productively and receptively in the classroom, the fifth, teachers give much opportunities to students to focus on their learning process and the sixth, teachers as a facilitator

and guide students by keeping interaction between teachers and students or students and students.

According to Breen (2001), before the use of CLT in the late 1970s, the syllabus design should emphasize linguistic knowledge and the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. In fact, many learners failed to use the linguistic knowledge outside the class. Because of this, functional syllabuses focus on specific purpose of language and the ways to express language linguistically (Breen 2001). At the beginning of 1980s, the syllabus design moved to become challenge from two directions; firstly, specific purpose language is considered by limitation of learner's potential and is fixed with communicative situation. Secondly, language-focus activities might come before applying knowledge as "typically synthesized" in real communication (Breen, 2001). Therefore, CLT develop two new directions which based on "how linguistic describe language" and the awareness of using language naturally in social situation (Carter & Nunan, 2001).

One of the key factors of CLT is promoting the effective use of English for second language learners in social interactions. According to Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983), in CLT class, teachers expect students to interact with other people through pair and group work or even in their writing (as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 45). Because the teachers' roles are facilitators and guide, the teachers might attempt to encourage students to use language communicatively, such as; role-play.

Role-play is the role, which is taken on in comfortable environment in which students practice to become individual variation, initiative and imagination (Ladousse, 1987). Role-play is useful in the application of social interaction. Ladousse (1987) explained the special reasons to use role play; they are students experiences can be brought into classroom, students can develop their form of language, students learn how to interact in several situations, role play help students to minimize self inferior, role play is fun and role play can develop fluency in language. Related to reason that role-play is one of strategy used in CLT. Role-play might motivate students who are shy or silence in learning process.

However, before using role-play, there is some suggestion for the English teachers. According to Ladousse (1987) there are points to remember when using role-play in the classroom:

1. Avoiding noise because it makes the teacher next door complain.
2. Starting with pair work rather than group work, because pair work is easier than group work without disturbing the classroom situation.
3. Keeping the activity from short until students get ready to do a long activity.
4. Giving a clear explanation before starting the lesson because it makes easy to students in understanding the situation and the role cards.
5. Using an easy role-play. If teachers use a very difficult or a very emotional word, it will make students speak with their native language.
6. Setting up the task more progressively, when the students use their native language.
7. Following up the role-play activity for the students who finish the role-play before the others.
8. Setting a strict time limitation and giving positive feed-back to the students.

Another key factor of CLT is teachers do not control students and prevent them from doing mistake in using language, but teachers help students and motivate them to work with language (Brown, 2001). Teachers may know students' backgrounds related to students learning styles and students' motivation because students have different goals in learning language. For example;

Student A learns English because it is one of compulsory subject at his/her school. He/she learn English at the day when English is taught. This student does not have motivation to learn more and use this language in communication activity. In contrast, student B learns English because he/she is going to use it in communication. He/she learns much not only from the teacher but also from the other resources, such as; magazines, books and television. Environment and social life influence students' motivation (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Sometimes, students motivate to learn other languages because one of their families has bilingual languages or the students have friends from different culture and language.

Horwitz (2008) gave four ideas to the teachers how to encourage unmotivated students; helping students improve personal goals, discussing students' idea related to their language and culture, helping students to have new community and giving support. The students should be motivated in learning language but teachers and parents must not force them. Brown (2002) stated that motivation is the most important factor to learn English due to motivation means a real purpose in learning English and a reason to continue learning. The teachers cannot measure students' motivation and change from unmotivated to motivated students easier. The most important thing that teacher should know teaching methodologies in teaching language. Particularly, for the students who learn English as a second language.

An important factor of CLT is to promote the fluent use of English for students who learn this language through tasks. According to Bygate (2001), the communicative approach intends to provide tasks to give students opportunities using language to communicate meaning without looking at accuracy. This activity starts from oral task. For example:

The teachers ask students to discuss the weather to their peer. Then teachers give opportunity to students standing in front of the class one by one. However, teachers do not expect students' accuracy, so that students may express their ideas without worry about error (Bygate, 2001). Repetition is necessary in this activity. Bygate (1996) suggested that repetition is beneficial in expecting fluency, accuracy and complexity because this might make students becoming familiar with the meaning and content (cited in Bygate, 2001, p. 18).

According to Skehan (1998), task is an activity that focuses on meaning, solves communication problem, connects with real word activities, completes task and assesses the task to know the outcome (as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 50). The task may similar with problem solving activity whereas CLT has types including discussion; problem solving and role-play (Horwitz, 2008). So that, CLT contain the activities in which encourage students' fluency, accuracy and expression to solve the problems. There are two main types of tasks related to task-based syllabus design; communicative task and meta-communicative task (Breen, 2001). According to Breen (2001), communicative task refers to target like task that learners involve in communicative whereas meta-communicative refers to how the language works or when learners share meaning about their own learning process, such as; narrative and scientific reports.

Brown (2001) gave another key important factor related to CLT is less attention to discussion of grammatical rules because CLT attempts learners to use authentic language. This factor shows that teachers would better to apply discussion, dialogue, drill and exercises in teaching and learning process. Sometimes, this is not easy for teachers. Most teachers recognize that grammatical rule is simple, particularly for nonnative speaker of English teachers (Brown, 2001). This is because; teachers need many facilities to support this activity such as, computer, tape recorder, DVDs, etc. However, grammar has important role in communicative language teaching. According to Lee & Vanpatten (1995), the teachers can apply grammar instruction in language teaching class by focusing on not only input but also out-put. This means that teachers attempt to give information or message to the students and assess them while teaching and learning are processing. For example: The teachers give examples of sentences, but they give difference subject and verb. The students might understand the rule from the examples;

a. She writes
b. Last night, I slept at nine
c. You have three pens.

From the three examples, the students may distinguish these sentences and practice these sentences in a real communication.

The key factor of CLT related to teaching listening is starting from the term input hypothesis. Helgesen (2003) stated that Stephen Krashen's input hypothesis is an important factor in teaching language, including teaching listening because input hypothesis means learners understand input language that contains linguistic items and the way to use language in particular situation. The teachers may use bottom-up or top-down in teaching listening. Bottom-up means students begin with component parts whereas top-down based on students' general knowledge or prior experience (Helgesen, 2003). Since the CLT goal is communicative competence, teachers attempt to apply it into teaching listening. Teachers might give several listening tasks and different listening types depending on students' level. Helgesen (2003) suggested that listening task is necessary to know what students need to improve their listening skill. The teachers might give pre-listening task before the students listen to tape recording or film. For example: The teacher is going to tell the story about animal from tape recording. Before listening class, the teacher asks the students to do brainstorming. The students may say many examples of animals and many words related to animal. This activity maybe makes listening activity easier.

Reading and writing are needed to achieve communicative competence (Lee & Vanpatten, 1995). The key factor in teaching reading and writing is emphasizing the communicative function. According to Lee & Vanpatten, reading in CLT is focused on a lesson framework to surround the text and beyond the text. Reading is useful for mental activity and for learners of English as a second language (Anderson, 2003). Many teachers consider that oral reading is the best approach in teaching language. Anderson (2003) argued that reading is a silent activity, which emphasizes the silent skill and avoid oral reading because the aim of reading is finding meaning from the text. The teaching strategies of reading might be necessary to develop communicative ability. According to Anderson (2003), the teachers should increase students' skill in reading such as; scanning, skimming and predicting, then teachers determine appropriate strategies. Through reading, students are able to improve their vocabularies and practice words pronunciation. Because of this, teachers should write the lesson plans and goals of

teaching reading to assess whether or not they improve students' communicative ability (Anderson, 2003).

Writing in CLT is transferring ideas to paper. Dvorak (1986) stated that writing is an activity that transfer thought to paper, which focus on language form; grammatical and lexical structure (as cited in Lee & Vanpatten, 1995, p. 214). Since writing transfers ideas, teachers might encourage students to write. Sokolik (2003) suggested teachers attempt to give opportunities to students to write starting from a short paragraph. Sokolik (2003) added that writing is not only need product but also need process of writing, the teachers might give chances to brainstorming, drafting and revision and explain the purpose of writing assignment. Teachers' feedback is important to develop students' communicative ability; because when teachers give negative feedback, students are going to give up writing. Sokolik (2003) offered a positive feedback by using summary comment to students about what they should do in writing and give suggestion for students' next writing.

The final significant factor of CLT in English language teaching is learner-centered instruction. Brown (2001) stated that learner-centered instruction is beneficial in teaching language because the techniques focus on students' style, need and goal. A learner-centered instruction might help students to be more responsibility and creativity. The other characteristic of learner-centered instruction is curriculum tends to be cooperative not competitive (Brown, 2001). For example: the teacher shows a picture and asks the students to describe about the picture. Before starting the class, the teacher divides students into four groups, then students work together while the teacher is as guidance. The learners-centered instruction links with interactive learning. The students are motivated to speak spontaneously without worrying about errors. According to Taylor (1987), learners-centered instruction makes students feel secure and free to do exercises in their own initiative in communication. The teachers might provide many opportunities to students practicing languages naturally. Assessment is important to measure students' achievement in learners-centered instruction. Brown (2001) stated that CLT has structures tasks that are useful for learners to improve their language skills. The most important thing, teachers give repetitions and immersion while learning and teaching processes are happening (Noble, 2007).

Conclusion

In conclusion, many researchers believed that a communicative approach is a better approach to teach English language, especially for second language learners. The communicative approach is developed and increased by promoting authentic communication and natural language. The teachers have applied CLT since they realize that many students do not achieve communicative competence. In addition, many teachers consider that CLT focuses on communicative language for four English skills. CLT is different from the other methods, for example; direct method and natural approach. Two of the characteristics are CLT emphasizes fluency and accuracy in using language and the teachers are as facilitators and guidance in the classroom. There are many important factors leading to its emergence in English language teaching such as; promoting social interaction, creating authentic language, making communicative language teaching in teaching four English skills and building learner-centered instruction.

However, applying CLT in English language teaching is not easy. Commonly, teachers find it difficulty to use CLT in the classroom, especially for a nonnative speaker of English.

One of the problems is many teachers are not very proficient in teaching English. The teachers need competence skills knowledge in using this approach and must be a proficient user of English. The other problem is lack of facilities such as; visual aids, video and tape recording. These facilities are essential to support teaching language communicatively. In my opinion, English teachers do no stop learning, because knowledge develops quickly and governments have responsibility to facilitate education need.

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