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An Investigation of The Application of Communicative Language Teaching in a Speaking Class at MAN Lubuk Alung

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ABSTRACT

This research was a case study research that aimed to investigate the application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in a speaking class at MAN Lubuk Alung. The subject of the study was a certified High School English teacher in Lubuk Alung who has 25 years teaching experience. The teacher's speaking class was observed whether or not matched with the principles of CLT. The data were analyzed through some steps of qualitative data analysis, they are data managing, reading, describing, classifying, and interpreting. The result of the research revealed that the process of teaching speaking were not appropriate with CLT principles. Conversely, she seemed still to apply the characteristics of conventional teaching method.

1. Introduction

The old perception in language teaching –the focus on the grammatical competence as the goal of language teaching which aims to produce the students who are able to make the correct sentences and utterances grammatically has been replaced by CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). At a glimpse, that old assumption which is employed in traditional teaching methods is teacher-centered. On the contrary, CLT is student-centered. The students are emphasized to involve in real and meaningful communication activities in order to develop the communicative competence. For all this, the teacher is as the facilitator and organizer in learning.

Regarding the above notion, CLT is considered as the most preferred method to apply in English language teaching to help students acquire communicative competence. They will not use English limitedly because of a shallow reason, i.e. learning English as the compulsory subject so that they just use and practice English in the classroom. The expectation is more than that; they can

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communicate in English everywhere and every time for every purpose communicatively. Related to this, some previous mentioned the principles of CLT are also have been implemented in our high school's curriculum. Various purposeful genres and language functions such as stating, requesting, responding, greeting, and many more are the contents of English syllabus. In other words, they are designed to make the students have the ability to communicate well in English.

Methods in teaching English consist of two, i.e. traditional teaching methods and progressive teaching method (McCoy, 2006). The division is derived from the perspective of instructivists and constructivists about learning and language. Instructivists believe firmly in the value and efficacy of direct and explicit teaching, particularly for achieving certain goals in education. In learning language, grammatical competence is believed as the basis of language proficiency. Teaching grammar explicitly is the best way to make the students having language proficiency. This idea is employed into traditional teaching methods practice that centers on the teacher. The type of classroom activities are controlled activity such as memorization of dialogs, question –and– answer practice, substitution drills, and various forms of guided speaking and writing practices. Errors are avoided since it was assumed that error will be permanent (Richards, 2006).

On the other hand, constructivists believe that the very nature of human learning requires that each individual creates his or her own understanding of the world from firsthand experience, action, and reflection, not from having predigested information and skills presented by a teacher and textbook (Westwood, 2008). Similar with their point of view, language is seen as communication across individual (Brown, 1994). This belief is presented in progressive teaching methods that centers on students in which various activities in form of learning by doing or experiential learning are designed. In addition, a Russian psychologist and constructivist follower, Lev Vygotsky viewed that learning is greatly enhanced by collaborative social interaction and communication –in other words, discussion, feedback, and sharing of ideas are powerful influences on learning (Westwood, 2008). Pair work activities, role plays, group works activities and project work which are far from controlled activities are best suitable to be employed (Richards, 2006). All of those activities are enable the students to conduct communicative activities. It is expected that through those activities the students can negotiate meaning and interact meaningfully in using language without getting much ‘intervention’ from the teachers. The main goal of these notions is to develop students’ communicative competence in language. Hymes in Brown (2000) defines communicative competence as competence that enables one to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meaning interpersonally within specific contexts. The realization for all this is poured in CLT application.

The approach of CLT starts from a theory of language as communication. Hymes in Brown (2000) defined that knowing a language involves more than knowing a set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules in order to use language effectively learners need to develop communicative competence.

Richards and Theodore (2001) state that some of characteristics of communicative view of language are (1) language is a system for expression of meaning, (2) the primary function of language is for interaction and communication, (3) the structure of language reflects its functional and communication uses, (4) the primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

Then, Brown (2000) proposes that communication is likely to occur in classroom when (1) a significant amount of pair work and group work is conducted, the students can share information, opinion, and also ideas with their friends, (2) authentic language input in real life context is provided. Students need to listen the language as native speakers use it in order to learn a language, (3) students are encouraged to produce language for genuine, meaningful communication to convey information, (4) classroom tasks are conducted to prepare students for actual; language use outside the classroom. The teacher prepares the students not only to be able to speak in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

In addition, Nunan (1991) describes five features of CLT as (1) an emphasis on learning to communicate through in the target language. The students collaborate to develop a work plan, thus they will use language in such ways and learn each other, (2) the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situations. In learning and teaching process, the teacher uses the text that relate to the students real life and experience, (3) the provision of opportunities for learner to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself, (4) an enhancement of the learner's own experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning, (5) an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom. The teacher prepares their students to be able to speak in the classroom and outside the classroom.

Richards (2006) describes kind of activity in CLT as follow:

- 1) **Task-completion activities:** puzzle, games, map-reading and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus was on using one's language resources to complete a task.
 - 2) **Information gathering activities:** students conducted survey, interview, and searches in which students were required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.
 - 3) **Opinion-sharing activities:** activities where students compare values, opinions, beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities in order of importance which they might consider in choosing a date or spouse.
 - 4) **Information-transfer activities:** this requires learners to take information that is presented in one form, and represent it in a different form. For example they may read instructions on how to get from A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.
 - 5) **Reasoning gap-activities:** these involve deriving some information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. For
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example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.

- 6) **Role-plays:** activities in which students are assigned roles improvised a scene or exchange based on given information or clues.

As far as the previous explanation about CLT, the researcher infers some principles of CLT as below:

a. Communicative Competence

Communicative language teaching replaces the goal of language teaching from building grammatical competence to communicative competence. Grammatical competence refers to knowledge of building blocks of sentences (e.g. parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses, sentences patterns) and how sentences are formed. What needed by one in communication is not grammatical competence. The most important thing is when she or he is involved in communication, she or he are communicating meaningfully. What is uttered can be understood.

According to Nunan (1987) communicative competence constitutes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is the ability to recognize morphological, syntactic, and phonological features of language. Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to understand the appropriate meaning in social and cultural context. Discourse competence is the ability to interpret communication of a series of sentences or utterances. Finally, strategic competence is the ability to use the strategies to compensate an imperfect communication such as doing repetition, avoidance, guessing, or shifts in register and style, in sustaining communication.

This grammatical competence is just a part of communicative competence that should be built as the goal of CLT. One can master the rules of sentence formation in a language and still not very successful at being able to use the language for meaningful communication. Hence, the other aspects of communicative competence –discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence– should be employed. The manifestation of this notion is teachers and materials writers should treat language classroom as a locus of meaningful, authentic exchanges among users of a language (Brown, 1994). Therefore, to build students communicative competence, the teachers should carry out the activities that make the students communicate the language meaningfully on communication because grammatical system of language is not the real use of language on communication and speaking (Kapurani, 2016).

In addition, grammar should not be taught explicitly: the teachers should let the students induce or discover grammar rules by themselves. All of this is derived from one of communicative views of language as the basic theory of CLT cited from Richards and Theodore (2001), i.e. the primary units of language are not

merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

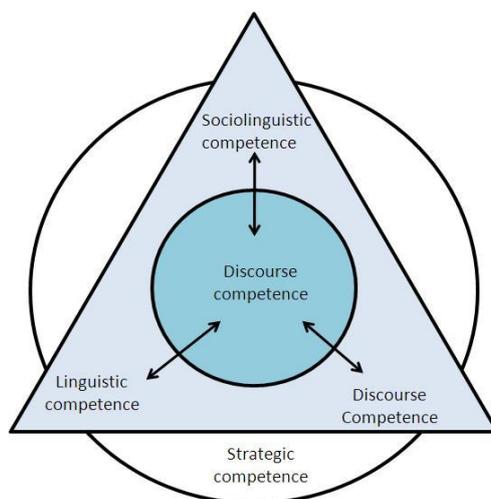


Figure 1. Four Dimensions of Communicative Competence

Furthermore, the communicative competence, as explained above, is dynamic, interpersonal, context specific, and relative. It depends on the negotiation meaning between the communicators. It applies to spoken, written, and other symbolic systems of languages. Therefore, the students' communicative competence must be developed.

When the students' performance of English is natural, their communicative competence for that performance is already developed. Developing their communicative competence of English is faster and better if they are exposed in maximum natural communication. Consequently, the teacher must speak and teach English communicatively and naturally.

Rouf and Sultana (2015) state that to create the communicative activity, the teacher should not dictate what specific language forms the student use since it can result poor learning outcomes. Some activities that can empower students' communicative competence like discussion, pair or small group, role play, simulation, jigsaw, and many more (Ahmad and Rao, 2013). Furthermore, according to Manulallaili (2015), one of the ways to accommodate the implementation of CLT in the classroom is by using facilities like visual aids, video, and tape recording. These facilities are necessary to help teaching language communicatively.

Communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge (Richards, 2006):

- 1) Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions.
- 2) Knowing to vary our use of language according to the setting and participants (e.g. knowing when to use formal and informal speech or

when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication)

- 3) Knowing how to produce and understand different types text (e.g. narratives, reports, interviews, conversations)
- 4) Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g. through using different kinds of communications strategies)

b. Authentic and Meaningful Communication

Richards (2006) states that second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication. The students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts (Brown, 2000). It will help them to achieve the goal of language teaching itself, i.e. to have the communicative competence. Dealing with it, many classroom activities like task-completion activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, information transfer activities, reasoning gap activities, role play, and others game are best to be employed in the classroom. All of them promote the students to be involved in communication activities.

Furthermore, the use of authentic materials also will support the students to communicate meaningfully for class activity. Authentic materials refer to the materials that close to the real life. Clarke and Silberstein in Richards (2006) argue that:

“Classroom activities should parallel the ‘real world’ as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message and not the medium. The purposes of reading should be the same in class as they are in real life.”

c. Student-centered

It has been discussed before that in communicative approach; the teacher plays the role as the facilitator. In this role, one of the teacher's major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication (Freeman, 2000). Contrastively, the students are given the greater chance to communicate and to use the target language during learning process through various designed activities by the teacher since the students are expected to have the ability to use the language in meaningfully and communicatively after passing the process. Hurley et al. (2009) propose that the teacher must pay attention to these several things below in order to employ student-centered atmosphere in the classroom:

- 1) Students should be actively involved in the learning process and intrinsically motivated
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- 2) Topic, issues, or subject matter should be interesting, relevant, and intrinsically motivating
- 3) Learning experiences should take place in real-life situations where the relevant knowledge and skills will really be needed and used

d. Integration of Language Skills

CLT emphasizes on teaching integrated skills since in real life the skills often occur together (Richards, 2006). The four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) can be divided into two, they are written and oral. Since language is viewed as communication tool and to use the language communicatively whether in written or oral is the expectation for students, the classroom activities are designed to employ integrations skills.

e. Accuracy as well as fluency

Fluency practice can be contrasted with accuracy practice, which focuses on creating correct examples of language use. Differences between activities that focus on accuracy and fluency can be summarized as given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Comparison Between Fluency And Accuracy Activities

NO	Activities Focusing on Fluency	Activities Focusing on Accuracy
1	Reflect natural use of language	Reflect classroom use of language
2	Focus on achieving communication	Focus on the formation of correct examples of language
3	Require meaningful use of language	Practice language out of context
4	Require the use of communication strategies	Practice small samples of language
5	Produce language that may not be predictable	Do not require meaningful communication
6	Seek to link language use to context	Choice of language is controlled

Teachers are recommended to use a balance of fluency activities and accuracy and to use accuracy activities to support fluency activities (Yang, 2014). Accuracy work could either come before or after fluency work. For example, based on students' performance on a fluency task, the teacher could assign accuracy work to deal grammatical or pronunciation problems the teacher observed while students were carrying out the task. The reason for this is the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently.

f. Meaningful Interaction in the Language

Meaningful interaction in language refers to communicative practice where practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable. Specifically, the students have to be involved in opportunity of target language use (Astuti and Lammers, 2017).

The success of CLT had been proved by Zakaria and Royani. A research entitled *The Effect of CLT Method on Students Speaking Skill at The Second Grade of MTsN Kolaka* (2017) revealed that CLT had improved the students' speaking performance since it could catch the students' attention, create a student-centered activity and motivate them to be more active. The similar research also was done by Saputra (2015). He proved that CLT had positive meaningful effect on improving students' speaking skill. Regarding these facts, the writer was interested to conduct a research in the same context, but it was different methodologically under the title *An Investigation of the Application of CLT in a Speaking Class at MAN Lubuk Alung* that has one research question: how is the application of CLT in a speaking class at MAN Lubuk Alung?

2. Methodology

In this research, the writer used case-study research design. A case study is a study of one case (Johnson, 1992). Moreover, Guy and Airisian (2000) states that case study research is a qualitative research approach in which researchers focus on a unit of study known as bounded system like individual teachers, a classroom, or a school. In this research, the writer focused attention on a case, i.e. the application of CLT in a speaking class at MAN Lubuk Alung.

The subject of the research was an English teacher who has spent her time for about 25 years in teaching. Besides having the longest time in educational world and the richest experience in teaching English among the other English teachers, she also has followed certification program. Therefore, it is not doubted that she knows well how to teach English. In other words, she also knows that CLT is best approach in teaching English today. To get the data dealing with the research purpose, observation was done. Observation is a method of data collection in which the situation of interest is watched and the relevant facts, actions, and behaviors are recorded (Gay and Airisian, 2000).

The writer used observation as instrument because all activities such as the teacher's performance in applying CLT and students' activities could be recorded in field notes and finally the writer could get the data based on addressed research questions; in this research, the observation was done five times. After collecting the data, the data was analyzed through some steps, based on theory proposed by Gay and Airisian (2000), they are:

a. Data managing

Data managing involved creating and organizing the data collected during the study.

b. Reading

The writer read the whole data in order to be familiar with them. In this study, the data were field notes; therefore the writer read and re-read the data.

- c. Describing
Teachers' performance and students' interaction in speaking class were described.
- d. Classifying
After describing the data, they were broken down through the process of classifying; they were classified into four elements of CLT, namely material, activities, students' role, and teacher's role.
- e. Interpreting
The data were interpreted by matching practice of teaching English, focused on teaching speaking with six principles of CLT as described before, namely communicative competence, authentic and meaningful communication, student-centered, integration language skills, accuracy as well as fluency, and meaningful interaction in the language.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of CLT application in a speaking class can be summarized in table 2.

Table 2. The CLT Application in Speaking Class

Observation	Elements of CLT	Result
1	Material	Expression of embarrassment
	Activity (s)	Students memorized the dialogue in <i>Lembar Kerja Siswa</i> (work sheet)
	Students' Role	Students listened to teacher's instruction and did it
	Teachers' role	Teacher controlled students' activity
2	Material	Direct and indirect speech
	Activity (s)	Teacher explained the grammar rule and drilled the students orally
	Students' Role	Students listened to teacher's explanation and they were drilled to change the given sentence one by one
	Teachers' role	Teacher corrected students' mistakes
3	Material	Expression of Agreement and disagreement
	Activity (s)	a. Teacher asked the students to complete dialogue in <i>Lembar Kerja Siswa</i> (work sheet) b. The class discussed the correct answer c. Students memorized the dialogue to be practiced
	Students' Role	Students listened to teacher's instructions and did them
	Teachers' role	Teacher directed and controlled students' activity
4	Material	Hortatory exposition
	Activity (s)	Teacher told students to prepare themselves to deliver hortatory exposition text orally Teacher reviewed the generic structure of hortatory exposition text

	Students' Role	Students listened to teacher's instructions and did them
	Teachers' role	Teacher directed and controlled students' activity
5	Material	Future perfect tense
	Activity (s)	Teacher explained the grammar rule and drilled the students orally
	Students' Role	Students listened to teacher's explanation and they were drilled to change the given sentence one by one
	Teachers' role	Teacher corrected students' mistakes

Here is the discussion of the finding above based on CLT principles:

a. Communicative competence

From the five times observation which was conducted by the researcher, it was found that grammar was taught explicitly. The English teacher taught direct and indirect speech and future perfect tense as well. It was close to the goal of traditional language learning that focused on the mastery of grammatical competence wherein the English teacher allocated learning hours to teach grammar explicitly.

b. Authentic and meaningful communication

Expressions of apologizing, thanking, embarrassment, agreement, disagreement, anxiety are some examples of functional language that are used in daily life. The finding fact showed that the materials used in teaching Speaking were authentic (the teacher taught material about expression of embarrassment and agreement). However, those authentic materials were not taught appropriately in order to develop students' communicative competence. The students were asked to memorize the existed dialogue in their work sheet and finally they performed what they had memorized in front of the classroom. Hence, they did not get any chance to create their own language to improve their communicative competence..

c. Student-Centered

The existed phenomenon from research findings shows that the classroom activities did not place the students in the right place based on CLT principles. The teacher controlled students' activities by asking them to memorize and to perform the dialogue from work sheet. Another controlled activities were the teacher drilled the students in grammar lesson, the students were asked to change the positive sentence into negative and interrogative sentence. The teacher should create enjoyable atmosphere by applying CLT-based classroom activities like role play, information gap activity, and various games to encourage the students to use target language.

d. Integration language skill

The English teacher had carried out the integration of language skills in teaching speaking. First, when teaching direct speech and indirect speech, indirectly listening and speaking skill had been combined. While the English teacher was mentioning the sentence to be changed, the students listened to her so that they could change the sentence orally. Second, when the English teacher gave the instruction to prepare a spoken hortatory exposition text, the students automatically listened to the instruction. Next, when the students made the draft, their writing skill was applied. Besides, they read what they wrote. Finally, the students delivered the text in front of the classroom.

e. Accuracy as well as fluency

The classroom activities were more focused on accuracy practice. As the evidence, grammar was taught explicitly. It can be concluded that the materials taught were focused on the formation of correct examples of language; the students were demanded to change the given sentences into what was instructed. Ideally, accuracy should be balanced with fluency.

f. Meaningful interaction in the language

Meaningful interaction in language refers to communicative practice where practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is totally not predictable. The context which is carried out in the classroom is the situation that closes to the students' real life and experience. Meanwhile, from the observation, it was found that the teacher used controlled material for the students and they have to memorize the existed dialogue in work sheet. Therefore, the communication was feigned; the teacher's role was as director and the students played role as actors who acted the given script.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the application of CLT in a speaking class at MAN Lubuk Alung did not appropriate with CLT principles yet. Overall, in the speaking class, the teacher did not let the students to create the language creatively. Additionally, the students were not facilitated with various CLT activities or games; every single observed speaking class had the same activities so that it was a monotonous class. The characteristics of teaching speaking are close to conventional language teaching method that does not prioritize communicative activities in classroom activities. Conversely, it puts the accuracy of language use as the main goal of language learning.

Since the English teacher did not apply CLT activities in speaking class, a further research can be done to investigate what makes the teacher did it. Moreover, still in the context of CLT, a research of applying a teaching technique based on CLT principles also can be done to compare the result of students' speaking scores taught by a technique based on CLT and conventional teaching technique.

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