

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRAK

Communicative Language Teaching merupakan pendekatan pembelajaran yang merupakan reaksi terhadap metode-metode sebelumnya yang dianggap tidak komunikatif dalam hal bahan ajar maupun teknik mengajar, terutama GTM dan ALM yang populer pada masa sebelum 1970an. Dua komponen yang dirombak oleh CLT adalah bahan ajar yang diganti menjadi bahasa yang sebenarnya dipakai dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, di samping kegiatan belajar menjadi kegiatan berbahasa yang dilakukan oleh siswa di dalam kelas, sebagai pengganti pengajaran dan pembelajaran tata bahasa pada metode-metode sebelumnya.

Kata Kunci: *Communicative, Language, Teaching, Communication, Real Life*

A. BACKGROUND

Historically, CLT originated from the dissatisfaction of the linguist to the traditional methods which emphasis on grammar: GTM, ALM and SLT, emerged in 1970s. The centrality of grammar in language teaching (emphasized in these three methods) was questioned, since it was argued that language ability involved much more than grammatical competence¹. Linguists began to look at language, not as interlocking sets of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules, but as a tool of expressing meaning². Language was no longer seen as abstract grammatical rules, but of having applications in social contexts and as such it is not just about 'grammar' but also about functions and notions³. Nowadays, it is difficult to imagine any practitioner, anywhere, arguing against this. Generally stated that the emergence of CLT signed the major change of the view on language philosophy from grammar rules to communication rules.

¹Jack C. Richards, *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006), p. 9.

²David Nunan, *Methodology*, in David Nunan (Ed): *Practical English Language Teaching*, (McGraw Hill: Singapore), 2003), p. 6.

³H. Jarvis and S.Atsilarat, *Shifting Paradigms: from a Communicative to a Context-Based Approach*, (Asian EFL Journal, 2006), p. 3.

The teaching of language in the previous methods was seen to be error. It was argued that their practices not quite useful to make students able to communicate due to the lost of contexts. The students were not learning enough realistic, whole language, even without appropriate social norms, gestures or expressions⁴, because the traditional practices did include information of this kind⁵. In short, it is strongly suggested that context must present in teaching of language.

Therefore, to make learners able to communicate in a language, the advocates of CLT propose that teaching language must be to develop students' 'Communicative Competence'. Other than defining what language to be targeted in the classroom, communicative competence suggests the teaching of language integrated with all the complete components of communication. The common components of communicative components in the field of language teaching today are: linguistic, sociocultural, actional, strategic and discourse competence. This shift requires the teaching of language change from the presentation of grammatical rules of a language towards performing communication activities in the classroom: listening, speaking, reading and writing performances. The five components of communicative competence will be embedded in every performance communication activities.

The philosophy of CLT was very soon spread and accepted by linguists and practitioners worldwide. It has been the most dominating paradigm in the world of language teaching ever since. Even though many other methods emerged at the same time such as The Silent Way and Suggestopedia got fame at that time, they soon lost popularity. CLT keeps the most domination in language teaching until today. The other emerging approaches remaining such as CBI, CBLT, TBLT and the GBLT are actually those which adopt the same paradigm but take different directions in developing communication ability in part of students. This is what Richards identified as '*The Current Trends in Communicative Language Teaching*'.⁶ They are grouped upon an umbrella called '*The Communicative*

⁴Richards, J. and W.A. Renandya, *Methodology in Language Teaching*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002), p. 22.

⁵Jack C. Richards, *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

⁶*Ibid.*

*Approaches*⁷. Therefore, this paper presents theoretical description of the communicative language teaching as itself.

B. DISCUSSION

Lexically the term ‘communicative’ is derived from the word ‘communicate’, which means to express ideas, feelings or information from one to another. Therefore, the addition of affix ‘ive’ changes the verb to be adjective, that is to make something possess certain characteristic. Accordingly, the term ‘communicative’ should mean ‘to make students communicate’ or ‘to make students express ideas, feelings or information each other’ in the classroom.

As opposed to the grammar based approaches, in planning language courses within a communicative paradigm, grammar is no longer the starting point of language teaching program. It shifts to communication ability covering all possibilities of situation and purposes that we can encounter in real world; from daily life to work places, from monolog to dialog, from interpersonal to transactional communication and so on. Aspects of materials should include factors which gives meaning to language at the time happening (contexts), besides provisioned with abilities required to express and to understand language being used (the communicative competence). Therefore, the goal of language teaching shifts from mastery of grammar to the development of communicative competence in part of students. In general term, the goal of CLT is argued to develop students’ communicative competence.

To arrive at the goal, Alexander in Richards requires CLT material development to cover the following features:

1. As detailed consideration as possible of the purposes for which the learner wishes to acquire the target language. For example, using English for business purposes, in the hotel industry of travel.
2. Some idea of the setting in which they will want to use the target language. For example in office, on an airplane, or in a store.

⁷Jack C. Richards and T. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001), p. 233.

3. The socially defined role the learner will assume in the target language, as well as the role of their interlocutors. For example as a traveler, as a sales person talking to a client, or as a student in a school setting.
4. The communicative events in which the learners will participate: everyday situations, vocational or professional situations, academic situations, and so on. For example making telephone calls, engaging in casual conversation, or taking part in a meeting.
5. The language functions involved in those events, or what the learner will be able to do with or through the language. For example making introductions, giving explanations, or describing plans.
6. The notions or concepts involved, or what the learner will need to be able to talk about. For example leisure, finance, history, religion.
7. The skills involved in the "knitting together" of discourse: discourse and rhetorical skills. For example story telling, giving an effective business presentation.
8. The variety or varieties of the target language that will be needed, such as American, Australian, or British English, and the levels in the spoken and written language which the learners will need to reach.
9. The grammatical content that will be needed.
10. The lexical content or vocabulary that will be needed⁸

This characterization leads to composing appropriate syllabus in 1970s and 1980s. Richards⁹ identifies the two major syllabus proposed to advocate CLT in that era: 1) Skill Based Syllabus which focus on the four communicative skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking, and breaks each skill down into its components microskills, and 2) Functional Syllabus which organized according to the functions the learner should be able to carry out in English, such as expressing likes and dislikes, greetings, thanking, introducing and giving explanations.

In addition to making the appropriate syllabus, communicative language teaching encouraged to classroom methodology. The principles derived from the arguments that learners should learn language through the process of communicating in it, and that meaningful communication provides better

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 11.

opportunity to learn than the grammar based approach. Richards summarizes the principles of CLT at this time as follows:

1. Make real communication the focus of language learning
2. Provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know
3. Be tolerant of learners' errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence
4. Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy, and fluency
5. Link the different skills such as speaking, reading and listening, together, since they usually occur together in the real world
6. Let students induce or discover grammar rules¹⁰

1. Language Theory

In the view of CLT, language is perceived as communication¹¹, which, in one side is argued to be attached with all surrounding situations—event, participants, purposes, location and so on—at the time it happens. Consequently, the teaching of language should be the teaching of communication provisioned with contextual elements which influence the way people express and perceive meaning of the messages.

The other important belief about language upon communicative language teaching is ‘the language use’ which means that language should be taught and or used as it is. It is contrast to the other view called ‘language usage’ which means grammatical language. Advocates of CLT believe that language should be taught in form which the native speakers use when they communicate in reality. Grammatical incompleteness rising in the communication is not viewed as mistakes, they are perceived rather as surface structure resulted by the surrounding contexts keeping the deeper structure, which is understood by the communication participants. In spite of the ‘incomplete forms’, language that are used at the situations fulfills the purpose of message transfer and perception.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹Richards and Rodgers, *Op. Cit.*, 159

2. Learning theory

One of the best known learning theory of CLT is ‘people learn language best when using it to do things rather than through studying how language works and practicing rules¹²’. It signs the reaction to the previous learning practices which focused on learning grammatical rules but the students failed in oral communication. An interesting statement relating to this principle is from Brown¹³, who reminds that teacher should not expose students to learn grammar too much, because students are to be English communicator, not grammarians.

A rather comprehensive package of learning theory in CLT is summarized by Richards and Rodgers¹⁴, as follows:

- a. Activities that involve real communication promote learning.
- b. Activities in which language used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning, and
- c. Language that is meaningful to the learners supports the learning process.

Consequently, Richards and Rodgers¹⁵ add that learning activities should be selected according to how well they engage learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns). They must involve real communication, have students carry out meaningful tasks and use meaningful language.

3. Principles

The basic features of CLT was described by Nunan¹⁶ (2000: 279), in which he list five features that are generally accepted by most linguists and practitioners in their explanation about CLT today. These features are:

- a. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- b. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.

¹²Jack C. Richards, *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

¹³Brown, D. H., *Teaching By Principles*. Prentice Hall Regents: New Jersey, 1994., p. 114.

¹⁴Richards, J. and T. Rodgers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 161.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶David Nunan, *Language Teaching Methodology*, (Newman: London), p. 279.

- c. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on the language but also on the learning process itself.
- d. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
- e. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

Richards¹⁷ underlines the core assumptions or variants in practices of CLT as follows:

- a. Second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication.
- b. Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful intrapersonal exchange.
- c. Meaningful communication results from students processing content that is relevant, purposeful, interesting and engaging
- d. Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills or modalities
- e. Language learning is facilitated both by activities that involve inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization, as well as by those involving language analysis and reflection
- f. Language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language and trial and error. Although errors are a normal product of learning the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently
- g. Learners develop their own routes to language learning, progress at different rates, and have different needs and motivations for language learning
- h. Successful language learning involves the use of effective learning and communication strategies
- i. The role of the teacher in the language classroom is that of a facilitator, who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on

¹⁷Jack C. Richards, *Op. Cit.*, p. 23.

language use and language learning

- j. The classroom is a community where learners learn through collaboration and sharing

4. Goal

As having been described above, the goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence in part of students. There have been a number of theories about it, but the best known elements of the competence in communication are as follows:

- a. Linguistic competence. It is also commonly acknowledged as grammatical competence, which concerns with mastery of language elements: grammar, vocabulary and morphology.
- b. Sociocultural competence. It also known as sociolinguistic competence, which demands the appropriate use of language toward social values and system.
- c. Strategic competence. It concerns with strategies which can be used to maintain communication and or to communicate effectively.
- d. Actional competence. It concerns with physical performance of communication when one does speaking, for example: pronunciation.
- e. Discourse competence. It is also known as pragmatic competence, which refers to shaping language and communicating purposively in different genres, using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationship in language) elements appropriately.

Therefore, every language teaching material is considered to be as means to develop the five components of communicative competence above. Materials designed to involve all the elements above in activities that are to be conducted in the classroom.

5. Techniques and Procedure

Technique for teaching language in CLT is actually open to varieties as far as they fulfill the CLT principles. However a number of them which are very common in the classroom summarized from Richards¹⁸ as follows:

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 14-20

a. Fluency versus accuracy activities

Fluency activities are those which expose students to use language naturally by engaging them in meaningful interaction and maintain comprehensible and ongoing communication despite the limitation in their communicative competence. To acquire fluency the students are required to use communication strategies, correct misunderstanding and work to avoid communication breakdown. While fluency focus on natural production of language, accuracy activities engage students to use language accurately in term of grammar and pronunciation.

b. Mechanical, Meaningful and Communicative Practice

- 1) Mechanical practices are those which expose students to use language successfully although without understanding of it. This is the common practice used in ALM or Army Method.
- 2) Meaningful practices engage students to communicate by involving meaningful choices to a contextual set of communication. At this activity, a teacher is required to create the context and task of communication, from which students explore language to express ideas.
- 3) Communicative practices are those which engage students to use language freely from their own source and their own real life situation and experience. At this activity the teacher is expected to use students' knowledge and experience as integral part of learning activities.

At the time of learning in the classroom, experts recommend that those three kinds of activities conducted after a brief grammatical explanation, in the order of mechanical-meaningful-communicative practice.

c. Information Gap Activities

This activity is derived from reality fact in which people often ask for information from other people, which they do not have. This condition is imitated into classroom practice by giving students two or more package of related information, which one students possess different package from the other. Communication occurs as they are requesting information from the

other. This activity usually is facilitated by the use of media, such as list, picture or series of pictures.

d. Jigsaw activities

This activities demand students to be divided into groups. Every group has certain piece of information. Every group is given task to share information they have to the other groups. The process of interaction becomes like jigsaw, at the time they transact information.

e. Task completion activities

This activity make student complete a task, such as puzzles, games, map-reading, by using their own language resource.

f. Information gathering activities

At this activity, students are required to conduct surveys, interviews to collect information.

b. Opinion sharing

This is the activity in which students are engage to compare values, opinions, beliefs. Example, the students are given task to make order of important qualities to choose someone to be wife or husband.

c. Information transfer activities

This activity engage students to take information that is presented in one form, and represent in a different form. For example, students are given task to read a travel experience. After that, they are asked to draw a map of it.

d. Reasoning gap-activities

This activity demands students to derive some new information from source information through process of inference, practical reasoning, and conclusion and so on. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of a given class timetable.

e. Role plays

This is the activity in which students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues. For example, one student is given a task to be a doctor with knowledge about certain disease and the symptoms. The other student is given a task to be a patient with certain symptoms to be talked to the doctor.

Procedure of teaching in CLT is not package as we can find in the previous methods. Many procedures may work. How they are designed, merely depend on the nature of communication activities taken from the real life into practices in the classroom. Different communication activity may need different technique and procedure to make it happen. Last but not least, to apply the recommended practices or teacher-created practices in the classroom, Richards¹⁹ identifies a number of characteristics that they should possess, as follows:

- a. They seek to develop students' communicative competence through linking grammatical development to the ability to communicate. Hence grammar is not taught in isolation but often arises out of a communicative task, thus creating a need for specific items of grammar. Students might carry out a task and then reflect on some of the linguistic characteristics of their performance.
- b. They create the need for communication, interaction, and negotiation of meaning through the use of activities such as problem solving, information sharing, and role play.
- c. They provide opportunities for both inductive as well as deductive learning of grammar.
- d. They make use of content that connects to students' lives and interests
- e. They allow students to personalize learning by applying what they have learned to their own lives.
- f. Classroom materials typically make use of authentic texts to create interest and to provide valid models of language.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

6. Material development

Development of material in CLT is very widely open as far as they fulfill the principles. However, the shape and or media used to make the communication activities happen in the classroom will be very closely bound with the topic and teaching techniques to be applied in the classroom. At this point of view, a teacher must understand the nature of every communication activity, techniques of teaching and to make relevant material and media to perform in the classroom. A simple description of the elements is as follows:

<u>Techniques</u>	<u>Media</u>	<u>Topics</u>
- Role Play	Task sheets for different roles	Any topic
- Interview	Interview guide for interviewer	Any topic
- Information gap	Task sheets with missing information	Any topic
- Information transfer	Reading, listening, video materials	Any topic
- Games	Depends on game type	Any topic

7. Evaluation

Evaluation in CLT focus on covers students' mastery of language and their ability in communication. Since the purpose of teaching is different according to the lessons and proficiency levels, the emphasis and elements of evaluation can be vary broadly. For example: for beginner level, the focus of development is on the fluency rather than accuracy; it should demand the teacher not to take too much attention to grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary choices while they do communication orally or written while the teacher scores the performance. In contrast, the focus will be different if the teacher is to evaluate students in intermediate levels.

C. CONCLUSION

Communicative Language Teaching is a reaction to the GTM and ALM which was considered uncommunicative in term of language and teaching techniques in 1970s. Linguists and practitioners at that age began to view language as what people actually use in real life communication other than what is written in

grammar books. This view was actuated in the slogan 'language as communication', which recommend the teaching of language directed to provide real life language use in the society.

Teaching techniques for classroom use of language was also required to make students use the language in real communication. This principle lead to the creation of language use teaching techniques which can make students use the language features for real communicative purposes, such as role play, games, information gap, and other teacher-created techniques. Thus the evaluation focus should be graded from fluency before accuracy.

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