

EMERGING FACTORS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) AND ITS APPLICATION IN INDONESIAN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been adopted in many countries and has influenced the foreign and second language learning and teaching. This article aims to explore the emerging factors of CLT and how CLT is practised in Indonesian EFL classroom. This study finds that there are three main phases of the development of CLT started from the works of Hymes, Canale and Swain and Bachman. Moreover, recent theories in second language acquisition and globalization are two main factors which lead to the widespread of CLT. Finally, in the EFL context, the application of CLT has faced many challenges. Socio-cultures, grammar and reading-based exam, and teachers' low English proficiency make the application of CLT in Indonesian EFL classroom has not reached its objectives yet.

Keywords: *Communicative language teaching (CLT); English as a foreign language (EFL); Application.*

INTRODUCTION

The history of CLT can be tracked from the end of the 60s to the early of 90s with the three fundamental works of Hymes, Canale & Swain and Bachman. It is a USA linguist called Hymes who first introduced and developed the theory of communicative competence which is the basis of CLT. It comes from sociolinguistics field as the reaction to the concept of 'linguistic competence' proposed by Chomsky (1965). Hymes stated that the concept of Chomsky to focuses on language structures that it tends to eliminate the cultural aspect of languages. The concept of communicative competence he offers sees the language not only as a system of knowledgebut also as a media of communication which people use to express their taught and feeling. Communicative competence enables us to express and interpret the messages in interpersonal communication varied in context. The context means the social and cultural values which can influence the language forms. This contextual knowledge allows the good language learners produce appropriate language in certain real situations and do not just concentrate on producing isolated grammatical rules of language (Hymes, 1972).

Then, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) developed the concept of communicative competence into four components. Firstly, grammatical competence, it is the aspects of communicative competence which covers the knowledge of lexical items, morphological rules, syntaxes, semantic, and phonology (Canale & Swain, 1980). This competence is very familiar among learners since previous or even recent language teaching methods still focus on studying those items. Secondly, Discourse competence, it supports the grammatical competence which relates to our ability to

make connections between the sentences we produce and the discourse representing meanings (Brown & 吳一安, 2000). Next, sociolinguistics competence, it is knowledge of social values and cultures. Contextual factors such as topics, the role of speakers and functions are the core of this competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). For example, in some places such as Indonesia or China the communication will be hugely influenced by the social gap or level. Students to students' conversation will use many idioms/slangs while students to teachers' conversation will be formally and will not accept the use of slangs or other informal languages. Lastly, strategic competence, Canale & Swain (1980) stated that it is "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communications..." (Canale & Swain, 1980). In other words, strategic competence acts as a problem-solving tool for the students when they encounter problems in communication of the target language. This competency will help the students to formulate their learning strategies and formulate the problem solving for any problems occurring in their language learning. Savignon (1983) claimed that the strategic competence is used to counter the limitation of language competency caused, for example, by tiredness, carelessness, and missing the input. However, the application of the strategic competence will be widely varied according to the cultural context. Paraphrasing, simplification, repetition, clarification and the use of body languages will be differently applied by the language learners in different countries. For example, in Indonesia, the learners do not use the body language frequently since it is regarded rude (Savignon, 2007).

However, in the early 1990s, Bachman introduced more comprehensive and systematic schema which he called language competency. Bachman (1990) proposed three components of communicative language ability framework which are based on the idea of Hymes (1972) and Canale & Swain (1980) namely: 1. *Language competence*: "a set of specific knowledge components that are utilised in communication via language"; 2. *Strategic competence*: "the mental capacity for implementing the components of language competence in contextualised communicative language use; 3. *Psycho-physiological mechanism*: "the neurological and psychological processes involved in the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon (Bachman, 1990).

In other words, there are three main phases of the development of CLT started from the works of Hymes, Canale and Swain and Bachman. Although they have the different explanation on how to conceptualize the communicative competence, they share similarities on the foundation of communicative competence namely function of language. It could be said that communication is regarded as a combination of acts which has meanings and purposes. Communication is not simply a set of events, but it is designed to convey the thought and feeling to provide response. The communicative competence in CLT is presented to assist the language learners to identify and convey the information in the target language. The components of communicative competence not only provide us information about the knowledge of the language but also explain the process of acquiring and using it.

METHOD

The study is a narrative literature review aimed to fill the gap in the area of English as a foreign language learning (EFL). Cronin, et al., acknowledges that a

narrative literature review is an effort to gather literature on a particular issue, summarize and synthesizing it (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008). This study has four main procedures in data collection namely selecting the issue, searching literature, analyzing and synthesizing the literature, and writing the review. In analyzing the literature, the writers employ qualitative content analysis to analyze the collected data. Bryman points out that qualitative content analysis are "probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents" because it "comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed" (Bryman, 2015).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. *What Factors led to the emergence of CLT?*

It is claimed that the development of second language acquisition theories has led to the appearance of CLT. Nunan stated that just before the 1970s, language was regarded as a collection of rules and the language learners were obliged to master the rules before they produced the language (Nunan, 1999). It can be assumed that the focus of language teaching at that period was the form of the language as the language learners spent their time and energy to study the language features. In the 1970s, the perspective to focus on language form changed since language was no longer regarded as one unit of knowledge which did not relate to the context. The language was seen as a system of conveying messages and meaningful units (Nunan, 1999). The following theories of second language acquisition such as Halliday (1976) in systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1976) and Krashan (1987) in his Four Hypotheses hugely change the perspective of how to acquire the second language to be more concerned on the nature of language as a communication tool (Krashen, 1987). The new theoretical basis of language acquisition promotes language as a product of social interaction. Nunan wrote that "the realization the language could be analyzed described and taught as a system for expressing meanings had a profound effect on language teaching. At least it had a profound effect on the level of syllabus design and textbook writing" (Nunan, 1999).

However, it is globalization which mostly leads to the emergence of CLT. The development of technology and global connection which is encouraged by social and economic ties changes the context of English to be more important in global communication. The change of status and function of English results in new perspective on English language teaching (ELT). People realize the importance of learning English as a tool of communication. The previous methods such grammar translation and audio-lingual method are assumed to be failed to help the learners to achieve the communication skill. That invites all the stakeholders (government, linguists, teachers, and practitioners) to conceptualize the method of teaching English to be more communicative as the impact of global needs of English communication. Warschauer(2000) reported:

"Global economic development has profoundly change the use of English since non-native speakers will need to use the language daily for presentation of complex ideas, international collaboration and negotiation, and location and critical interpretation of rapidly changing information" One of its consequences is the dominance of the communicative approach within the field of ELT (at least in theory, if not in practice" (Warschauer, 2000).

Brown asserted that when many educational institutions especially in developing countries demand the teaching foreign languages for communicative purposes and no longer see the foreign language teaching and learning as a requirement for passing a test, the CLT, then, becomes more relevant (Brown, 2004). In Indonesia, for example, along with its economic growth, the need of having good English proficiency increases. Millions of Indonesian people from elementary level to higher education are learning English. It is the direct impact of the economic growth and globalization which demand the Indonesian people especially the job seekers to have high communication skill in English. This phenomenon invites the government to change the foreign language policies to be more concern on communicative competence. The government realizes that the previous approaches such grammatical translation methods and audio-lingual method are no longer relevant to the students' need of communication skill. It was until 2004 when the government revised the curriculum of teaching English to be more focus on communication skill (Emilia, Hermawan, & Tati, 2008). For example, school syllabus and materials follow the principle of CLT approaches the focus of EFL classroom activities is to assist the language learners to use the target language in the real communication.

2. The application of CLT in Indonesia

Rigorous theoretical and empirical evidence of the success of CLT especially in the Europe and USA influence the foreign language teaching policies in many developing countries. Many people have nurtured the belief that the CLT approach should be applied totally in all schools to gain high communication skill of English. For instance, the government of Indonesia through Curriculum 2004, 2006 and 2013 started to implement CLT in EFL classrooms. It is believed that by applying CLT, the students will be able to develop the communicative competence allowing them actively use the target language (Emilia et al., 2008). However, the application of CLT in Indonesia is still far to achieve the communicative goals as Indonesia education system is not ready to apply the CLT approach in EFL classes for the following reasons.

It could be argued that CLT should be adopted in every EFL classes in Indonesia since it provides opportunities for the students to communicate and base the language to its context. Saleh stated CLT encourages the students to express their ideas and messages in various meaningful contexts (Saleh, 2013). However, CLT has failed to cope with the context of learners such as cultural background and socio-economic status of EFL learners in Indonesia. In CLT, besides language itself the aspect of socio-cultural should be the main concern. For example, CLT emphasizes the creativity along with critical thinking of the students in producing appropriate English in certain real situations, but building the creativity and critical thinking among Indonesia learners will be challenging. In the EFL context, the students are lack of critical thinking since most students have grown under local cultures where arguing is not accepted while "harmony" is proposed (Widodo, 2012). Moreover, CLT requires the students to use a real-life conversation in English, but the authentic language conversation is hard to find in Indonesia. English is just spoken by a small group of people in very rare situations. Regardless of the school curriculum, English is only learned in schools two hours a week, but not used in real daily lives. This is certainly contrary to the principles of CLT which encourage the language learners to use the target language in meaningful situations.

Furthermore, it could also be argued that the government has spent many funds on teacher training to support the application of CLT. In 2005 the government released the *Teacher Certification Program* which covers training, evaluation and greater income to update the qualification and the competency of teachers especially in applying the new curriculum (Constitution of RI No. 14, 2005). However, these policies have not reached the goals yet. Whether the lack of experience in using authentic language or inadequate knowledge on the application of CLT hinders the teachers to adapt CLT in their teaching activities. Anderson illustrated that factors such as teachers' low proficiency in English, lack of adequate teacher training, and over job desks make the application of communicative or "meaning-based" in EFL context is difficult if not impossible (Anderson, 1993). Among these three hindering factors described by Anderson, EFL teachers' low proficiency skill in English is believed to be the most hindering one (Anderson, 1993). Moreover, it is suspected that shifting from translation and audio-lingual method to CLT is not easy since the teachers have been accustomed to learning and teaching by using those two previous methods in a very long time. It has become a belief that translation and audio-lingual method are the best ways to improve the students' English proficiency. Thompson described that many non-native English teachers have a high proficiency in communicative English and they have abundant resources and practical textbooks to apply CLT approach in their classrooms, so the only reason if they have not applied the CLT is the unwillingness to change their current teaching practices (Thompson, 1996).

Finally, it might be claimed that the application of CLT has gained its success in Indonesia since the average English grade of EFL learners in national examination or *Ujian Nasional* (UN) is high (Ministry of Education RI, 2015). However, the result of the national examination could not be the indicator of the success of CLT since its assessment format is doubted especially regarding validity. Its format is very grammatical and reading-based, which does not represent the skills to be achieved. It assesses skills which are not relevant to the students' communicative competence as it only examines the receptive skills, not the productive ones. Also, the existence of UN has neglected both the teachers and the students in achieving the communicative competence. To assist their students to pass the exam, teachers tend to focus more on language forms emphasizing on grammar and reading comprehension than on communicative abilities such as speaking and writing. In other words, the existence of UN has resulted in the gap between what is designed in the syllabus and what is implemented in classrooms. Orafi and Borg reported that the real activities in many ELT classrooms do not always represent what curriculum makers have designed (Orafi & Borg, 2009).

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the development of the theory of communicative competence has resulted in CLT approach. Besides the recent theories in second language acquisition, globalization is still the main factor which leads to the widespread of CLT. CLT has been examined by many researchers and show how effective is CLT in developing students' English proficiency. However, in the EFL context, the application of CLT has not been effective yet. Issues such socio-cultures, grammar and reading-based exam, and teachers' low English proficiency make the application of CLT has not reached its objectives yet. It could be concluded that the popularity of CLT in some places

Abd. Rahman: Emerging Factors of Communicative Language Teaching...

especially where English is officially used will not guarantee its effectiveness in countries where English is just used as a foreign language. Therefore, it is better to reanalyze the practicality of CLT, especially in EFL context to promote the more effective English language teaching and learning.

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