Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Indonesian Teaching Context: the Implementation and the Obstacles

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Abstract: This study aims to see the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and factors that hinder teachers from implementing it in senior high schools in Padang. The data is obtained through online questionnaire and interview with 29 teachers who are teaching at Senior High School in Padang, West Sumatera. In this research, the data collection was grouped into four. They are the teachers' perception towards CLT, factors that inherent teachers to implement CLT in their class and also to know the difficulties in implementing CLT in Indonesia. The findings show that most teachers understand the concept of CLT well. However, problems like limited knowledge about the appropriate use of language in CLT, limited access to the target language's culture, and limited time to develop materials for CLT are also become the main factors that hinder teachers to implement CLT in their teaching context. Finally, it is suggested that teachers are actually very willing to implement CLT in their classroom but they need to be trained and skilled to apply Communicative Language Teaching properly in their classroom.

Key Words: teaching methods, communicative language teaching

*All **HEADINGS, SUB HEADINGS** in bold, font size 14, text font size 12 and single-spaced, between paragraphs double-spaced.

Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been acknowledged as one of the most popular teaching methods across English Language Practitioner globally, including Indonesia. This approach came as a response to the old and conventional teaching method that merely focused on language accuracy, particularly grammar. At the same time, CLT also answered the global society demand of active English speakers. If we look back to the history, the journey of teaching and learning English have meet several changes. The teaching method was first started with traditional teaching method called grammar translation method. Then, it was continued by direct method, audiolingualism, until it finally met CLT as the most efficient method to cope with the global era (Long, 2015). Nowadays, many ELT experts have been working seriously till they finally find CLT that can accommodate society demand regarding competent English speakers. To confirm this, Richards (2006) adds that a huge demand for good communication skills in

English occurred in society around the world. In fact, millions of people nowadays want to improve their command of English for themselves and for their generations in the future.

However, in the implementation, there is always pros and cons coming up about ELT in general (Ellis, 1996). For example, Indonesia's government has proposed this teaching approach since 11 years ago through its national curriculum but it still met some obstacles along the way but in practice, the grammar-translation method still becoming teachers' favorite. It was not because the teachers are unmotivated to implement it, but due to the obstacles coming from students and teaching materials as well. Therefore, in this study, I would like to see and analyze to what extent CLT is implemented in Indonesian teaching context along with some obstacles that teachers' face to do so.

In order to collect the data, a small-scale research lies from both open-ended and close-ended questions given in online questionnaire and the interview. It is hoped that this study will contribute positive insight towards the development of ELT, particularly CLT in Indonesian teaching context. It is also expected that this research will help English teachers in West Sumatera to address the problems that they may come across to within their English teaching pathway. Later on, in the future, it is hoped that the implementation of CLT will more popular within English teachers in all of Indonesia, especially West Sumatera.

Review of Literature

a.   Background of Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is viewed as a "very grounded principles in the notion of communicative competence as the goal of second language teaching" (Richards, 2006: 22). Moreover, Richards (2006) & Littlewood (1981) also add that communicative competence can be understood as goals of language teaching. It is also seen as away of learning language and choices of tasks that could facilitate learning well.

CLT has been broadly implemented as a response to the old approach like audiolingual and grammar-based approach that focuses more on the mastery of grammatical rules. Also, Nunan (2004) agrees that learning language is more than just the act of memorizing grammatical rules and vocabularies. However, it is believed as a process of creating meaning from what is provided by the language. To make the learning meaningful, the best approach that could be applied is the communicative language teaching approach. In this CLT, learning is no longer seen merely as a process of habit formation. Besides, learners and their cognitive process are not seen as a complex learning process (Nunan, 2004). Nunan also argues that rather than just being seen as a set of phonological, lexical and grammatical items to be remembered, language can be taught of as a communication tool. Therefore, the goal of the language learning, later on, is not merely knowing the grammatical rules but also knowing what to do with the grammatical rules.

b.   Definition of Communicative Language Teaching

The concepts of communicative competence were initially explained by Chomsky in 1965. He defined that linguistics deals with the language knowledge of an ideal speaker-hearer in a homogeneous community and unaffected by performance variables (Chomsky, 1965). In 1971, Hymes responded the competence which is discussed by Chomsky previously. He argues that communicative competence does not only include linguistics competence but also other aspects, specifically sociocultural dimensions (Hymes, 1971). Starting from this time, much theorizing has taken place about the social side of language, such as the ways in which different social groups use and manage their language in their daily live (Duranti, 1997).

More models of communicative competence have been highlighted by ELT researchers and become widely accepted by language teachers. One of the models is the one that is proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), as well as the most recent model provided by Bachman (1990). They state that having language competence, whether first or subsequent, means a lot than just knowing how to form accurate sentences syntactically. It suggests that even though modern teaching methods are still failing to address the sociocultural aspects of language and the complexities of language in use, it is still the one that is relevant to the concept of communicative competence (Corbett 2003).

Talking specifically about Communicative Language Teaching, Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain that CLT is a communicative approach which has a goal to develop learners' communicative competence. Communicative competence is considered to be the primary conception of CLT. This includes knowing what to say and how to say something appropriately based on the situation, the participants, the roles of the speakers. The old grammatical and vocabulary teaching approach did not include these kinds of information.

In addition, Howatt suggests that it is possible to take a 'strong' and a 'weak' line in communicative language teaching. He states that "the weak version, which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching" (Howatt 1984:279). Littlewood (1981), a proponent of the 'weak' approach, tries to adjust non-communicative and communicative activities by suggesting that such way of learning like a drill and controlled practice have a valid place in the language class as pre-communicative activities which provide learners with the necessary prerequisite skills for more communicative language work. Another scholar like Brown (2001), describes key points of CLT as follows:

> 1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals, therefore, must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic.

2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but the aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must, therefore, equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.

5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.

6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others. (p. 43)

Furthermore, Richards (2006) also adds that in planning language courses within a communicative approach, grammar was no longer become the focus of the learning. However, it is the meaningful communication that becomes the focus of the learning now. Richards concludes the overarching principles of CLT 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 students are building up their 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 so in the real world.
6. Let students induce or discover grammar rules.

Methodology

a. Instruments

The research instruments used in this research were online questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire consists of three parts; personal information of the teacher, school information of the teachers and questions asking related to the teachers' and students difficulties in implementing CLT in their classrooms. Online questionnaire is used because it can help the

researchers to collect data borderless (Krathwohl, 1998). The questions consist of close-ended (in scales) and open-ended (in short paragraph). The close-ended questions were used to collect information in scales and short information, while the open-ended questions were addressed to collect complex information from the participants (Zohrabi, 2013). Nunan (1999) confirmed that the open-ended questions will enable respondents to accurately reflect what they want to convey.

To confirm information gained from questionnaire, the researcher conducted online interview. The participants were interviewed individually through voice call and video call platform. First of all, they were asked about their background as an English teacher. Then, the questions followed by several questions regarding the implementation of CLT in their classrooms in Padang. Through the interview, the researcher can obtain some additional information that might not collected merely by using online questionnaire. At the end of the data collection, teachers are welcomed to give input and constructive feedback towards the betterment of CLT implementation in the future.

b. Participants

This research's participants were 29 teachers who are currently teaching at Senior High School in Padang. In this data collection, teachers are required to complete the online questionnaire and then nine proceeded to the interview session. The selected participants were teachers who agreed to give further explanations related to their experience in implementing CLT in their classroom.

This research's participants mostly came from different gender, different age, different location, various educational background and various teaching experience. In brief, there were 73% female respondents and 27% male respondents. Then, the participants' age is ranging from 20-49 years old. In term of educational background, they hold bachelor and master degree from several universities in Indonesia. The teachers have various teaching experience too. Some of them are newbie and some are senior teachers who have been teaching for almost ten years. Talking about location, 38% of them work in the suburb area, and the rest are working in the capital city of West Sumatera, Padang. The teachers are commonly responsible for 1 class up to 12 classes in a week and their average teaching duty is 17 hours of teaching per week per teachers.

Findings

1. Teachers' perception towards CLT

The first group of questions ask about the teachers' perspective and understanding towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). From this section, it is found that teachers have pretty good understanding towards CLT. They said that CLT goal's is to enable students to communicate actively in their context. The most frequent answer is communicative competence

is the ability to use English as a communicative communication skill but the speaker or teacher and students do not neglect grammar. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

> *"CLT is bassicly one of teaching methode in English that focus on the English communication here to them that focus more on the functional and more functional and practical users of language. So in CLT the teachers are not supposed to see many grammar rules to the students because the concentration on the teaching itself is on the interaction between teachers and student and student among students and it should be happened in English. But just like, you know making the language become more functional and become more actually its users because yes, the point of language in communicative language teaching is to develop social relationship to develop social relationship and by developing communication in English. And yeah CLT all about communication and interaction and how their language is used functionally in the actual use not in the like teoritical use but it more practical is CLT (Asri, August 29 th 2019)"*

To support this, another respondent also says that the existence of grammar in conducting communicative skill cannot be ignored. This is what she said:

> *"I think is the ability to always using english as communication communicative skill but the speakers or the teacher and the student do not ignore grammar. Grammar still exits, but in comunicative way (Opi , August 24 th 2019)"*

2. Applying CLT in the class

The second question on the interview is about the respondent's experience when applying CLT in class. Five respondents said that when implementing CLT in class, students became very active and more motivated because they do not need to meet the standards, all they need to do is to talk about what they think. Students are very interested when given the freedom to use English without fear. However, CLT implementation does not challenge everyone, most students still look shy and scared. Some respondents also said that when applying CLT there were limited time for learning in the classroom so that the ability of students did not really explored well. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

> *"The student here all active and communicative. but in term applying CLT the problem is not to primary ideas, but here the big problem that I practice the very limited tim. So the student are active but because of the very limited time that we have so the student ability its not really explored well (Opi , August 24 th 2019)"*

Thus, the learning process will be more effective if the school can allocate more time for English subject. Given the fact that the current learning time for english is only once a week (with 100 minutes per meeting)

3. Students' responses about CLT

When respondents apply CLT in class, it seems like they enjoy it a lot. For them it is like a breakthrough after having grammar-based and textbook-based llearning previously. With CLT, students can express what they want to say and discuss. Moreover, if teachers give them great freedom to speak, they will automatically become more confident and to be more motivated in speaking English. However, CLT is not always interesting for students to listen to because of the limited vocabulary they have. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

> *"I think that student love CLT activities but there are some time not really some moment they think that studying English needs like being quiet or listening to the teacher and they dont want to talk because they have like a vocabulary barrier. Yes, I think it's just fifty fifty sometimes they are really happy with that, but sometimes they are not. But mostly, I found that they were really happy with speaking english especially if the teachers give big freedom for them to spea..k they will automatically become more confident and become more motivated in speaking english (Asri , August 29 th 2019)"*

4. Indonesia teacher are encouraged to use CLT

The questionnaire said that teachers in Indonesia are encouraged to use CLT. The use of CLT will give students more variety in learning because improving students' speaking skills in English is more important than just focusing on grammar. Learning English commonly conducted by having explanation of the material delivered by the teacher and then, at the end of the class, the students are asked to do assignments on the worksheet. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

> *"...The teacher sometime just make what we call just like.. yeah just like as usual I mean the situation of the class is a bit passive because for example my tutor in the world, she just give the explanation all about the material and then after that the student have to answer the question of the worksheet. So yeah, maybe they students and the teacher has to learn more about the method... (Ayu, August 23 th 2019)"*

Therefore, teachers are very encouraged to implement this approach so that the learning process can be more active and engaging than before.

5. The difficulties when implementing CLT in the classroom

The difficulty faced by the teacher when implementing the first CLT is firstly because the teacher does not really understand the CLT so the CLT application in the class has no reference. The teacher must get more understanding about CLT. Second, students experience difficulties because students mostly feel embarrassed to speak in front of their peers. Students consider speaking English as something new to them because they are not used to it. When implementing CLT, students understand the instructions delivered by the teacher but because of limited vocabulary knowledge, students have difficulty applying teacher instructions to speak. Moreoever, the data was also collected from vacational school. Some students are less concerned

with English since it is not their main subjects. For example students majoring in accounting prioritize subjects related to their majors over other students such as English. So when learning English it doesn't really matter to them. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

> *"I think the problem is with the student because I think in indonesian specially personal for Vocatioanl High School. They don't like to learn English because their wn they have focus subject like a tourism, automotive, accounting, etc. So they only focus on the major.. they don't care things other than that. So that's the problem I think (Risa, August 23 th 2019)"*

It might happen because students do not have enough vision on why they need to learn English and how English can contribute to their future life. This finding encourages us to also tell the students what is the benefit of learning English for their future as well as to their career later on.

6. How to overcome difficulties faced by the teacher when applying CLT

To overcome these difficulties, respondents answered several ways. The first problem is teachers who do not understand CLT, can find some insight about CLT from CLT application via YouTube or from books. Regarding to the limited time in implementing CLT, it can discussed with the school stake holders internally. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

> *"Difficult.. I need to always gain my knowledge to always read or watch Youtbe about the videos how to apply CLT well in the classroom and from the students side, we as researchers can always encourage them to always pick and not to blame them if they make mistakes. In term of time, school can add so that we have extra time for about 10-15 minutes in one session. Yeah, I think it can help much because more time is good for them. We as the teacher can explore students ability more too (Opi, August 24 th 2019)"*

Another respondent said that because English in Indonesia is a foreign language, ELT practitionair need to suggest students that English is not a difficult subject. Students are expected to be able to speak without worrying and being ridiculed. Here, the teacher can give the opportunity for students to talk more. Then, training for English must be a routine agenda that is held regulary to support teachers development in Padang, West Sumatera.

7. The benefits CLT for students in Indonesia

Applying CLT when learning English, there are several benefits obtained by students. Students are more active and better, especially speaking and communicating. CLT provides opportunities for students to talk in their context. This means that language functions are more inclined to practical use for the daily use that they face everyday in context. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

"CLT actually in my own opinion still see can improve their speaking with because when the situation of the class make them become serious with english. O yeah it's can give them a benefit in order to improve their own English skills, whether person maybe they're still low or still some have troubles English and it can give them a benefit (Ayu, August 23 th 2019)"

8. Suggestions for improving EFL teaching

Respondents gave several suggestions for improving EFL teaching. The first is more training or more explanation of how teachers should apply CLT in class. The two activities must be included in the curriculum with the CLT approach in which the social context is highlighted more than the others. The third one seeks innovations in using learning that can increase interest in communicating in the classroom. Lastly, this CLT teacher often students will communicate using English and of course will be very focused in learning English. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

"I have some suggestion like the first teacher must know alot about CLT because the EFL application their will use. Then look for innovation in learning using the that can be increase the interest in communicating in the class. And the last is the teacher of this CLT frequently student will communicate using english and of course it will very focus in learning english. (Raka, August 29 th 2019)"

9. How to overcome difficulties faced by the teacher when applying CLT

To overcome these difficulties, respondents answered several ways. The first solution is teachers who do not understand CLT learn can from some online sources about CLT. One of the teacher's responses through interview is:

"Difficult I need to always again my knowledge to always read some watch the Youtbe about the videos how to apply CLT well in the classroom and from the students side, we as researchers can always encourage them to always pick and not to blend them if they make mistakes or whatever and also from the school system maybe here for one session of class just only 30 minutes. So I think the school can again the time can add the time so we can have 40 minutes in one 45 minutes in one session. Yeah, I think it can help much because more time is good for the we as the teacher can explore with sudents of speaking (Opi, August 24 th 2019)"

Besides learning from online platform, teachers can also upgrade their their teaching competence through continous training from school. The more intense teachers have training in school, the better their teaching perfomance will be. It is also stated by the previous treacher above that he got weekly teacher training from his school that support him to implemet CLT more effectively in his classroom.

Conclusion

From the analysis above, it can be sum up that most teachers know about the concept of CLT quiet well. It is showed in the result that 85% of the teachers taking part in the interview said that they apply CLT in their classroom. However, those teachers who implement CL their classroom are those who get continues support and training from their schools. Then, teachers who face difficulties in implementing it normally caused by both teachers and students side. From four statements given on the questionnaire, the teachers admitted that they have limited knowledge about the appropriate use of CLT, teachers have limited access to the target language's culture, and they have little time to develop materials for communicative classes. Thus, knowing the theory only is not enough. Teachers need to have special training on how to implement CLT in their classrooms and how to deal with obstacles that is also brought up by their students in their classroom.

Suggestions and Recommendations

From the result above, the writer would like to suggest that teachers mostly have good understanding about CLT but they need stakeholders support to implement it. Moreover, teachers also need to get their students involve more in the activities that they have in the classroom in the future.

Acknowledgement

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