Lecture 8

**COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING**

1. Communicative competence
2. Communicative techniques

English language teaching has gone through a rapid change of transitions in its methodology, from grammar translation method to direct method, to audiolingualism, and to other variations (Leung, 2005). In other words, this change takes places in order to accommodate various needs of learners. Additionally, the most important transition in English language teaching has taken place through a collection of practices, materials, and belief about teaching and learning that are known by many different names, for instance, communicative methodology, communicative language teaching, and communicative approach (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

The communicative approach is the theory that language is communication. Therefore the final aim of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) is communicative competence. Thus, concerning to accommodating learners’ needs many language experts and English educators have been working seriously in finding the best way to teach English. That is why until now English teaching methodology is still going through another transition. Above all, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been accepted as an effective approach by many language educators due to the major focus on developing learner ability to use the language appropriately in context. Among all methods used and practiced so far, CLT has been considered as the best practice in English language teaching (ELT) because it offers ‘communication’ means enabling learners to develop their communicative ability (Power, 2003). Similarly, according to Nunan (1999) “Communicative language teaching has brought the most significant change into the practice of English language teaching”.

1. **Communicative competence**

The first belief of teaching in CLT is learners are taught to be able to communicate in target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Based on this first belief, students should be accommodated with five components of communicative language ability, that is, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence includes learners’ ability in spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, word formation, and grammatical structure. Discourse competence requires learners to have the knowledge in dealing with the structure of longer texts in speech and a piece of writing. Sociolinguistic competence is the ability that learners should have in choosing the appropriate words or expressions in spoken or written context of situation. For instance, when learn how to write formal or informal ways of writing a letter and greeting someone.

Strategic competence is the strategy of learners to keep the communication going on, even the language production is not perfect, for example, when learners unable to express what they want to say or they want to clarify misunderstanding. Generally speaking, this principle suggests that in teaching, teachers should not teach learners with one competence only, for instance, to master grammatical competence but also to apply the competence to communicate in the real context of life.

This avoidance of teaching such competence is due to several factors. One of possible factors is teachers’ lack of communicative competence in English. As a result, for teachers who do not have adequate communicative competence, there are two options offered.

The first option is excluding teaching grammar in their lesson plan. In other words, teachers only emphasize on communicative activities without touching grammar at all. Another option is teaching grammar as separate part of lesson; for example, teaching imperative sentence then continues teaching the function of giving instruction such as making recipe. In this case, teachers can modify the imperative sentence with its function to give instruction in making recipe in meaning-based approach if only they had sufficient communicative competence and eagerness to put more effort in designing the lesson plan. Another reason is the lack of adequate teacher preparation. In this point, teachers do not want to spend more time to prepare the strategies or appropriate methods in teaching that competence. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) stated that most teachers agree that communicative language teaching should be taught in a fun way and the preparation to make it fun is really time-consuming. In other words, teaching grammar in communicative way needs to be prepared and requires lots of efforts. It is therefore, it is hard for school or language institutions that only has one teacher but has to teach many classes, because the teacher might think that this can be additional burden for him/her.

***The role of teachers in communicative activities***

In CLT, teacher is facilitator and guide, not the one who knows everything in classroom. This principle has replaced the traditional role of teacher as an information provider. Learners not only receive the knowledge transmitted by teachers but they should construct their own knowledge facilitated by teachers. The construction of meaning in getting knowledge is done through linguistic interaction with others. Thus, despite of facilitating and guiding students, teacher’s role also has to supervise or monitor her/his students’ activities in class. Furthermore, some teachers also believe that they succeed in designing activities if students participate cheerfully and happily in completing all activities. Consequently, they use the noise in class as an indicator for the success of their activities they have created. The fact that if learners are interested in the activities they will engage in activities and leads to the achievement of the purpose of giving the opportunity to practice the communicative skills in classroom. In this case, teachers should eliminate their belief that the more noisy the class, the more interesting the activities.

Fluency vs Accuracy. According to Brown (2001) “sometimes fluency is more emphasized than accuracy in order to encourage learners to speak in the language expressively and naturally”. Teachers understand fluency as learners’ capability in engaging themselves in communicative activities. Since teachers’ understanding is to make learners engaged in communicative activities, teachers always try to motivate learners to use the language, especially in beginner English class.

1. **Communicative techniques**

A technique is a way for teacher to organize a learner activity. The purpose of communicative techniques is to teach communication.

Communicative techniques can develop in learners productive, receptive and interactive skills that are necessary for effective communication. Activities with listening and reading aim at developing in learners skills of receiving information. Activities with speaking and writing develop in learners skills of producing information. Both can be learner interactive and thus promote communication.

Some activities are more associated with reading and listening (receptive skills), while others are more often used with speaking and writing (productive skills).

There are two types of communicative activities that is ‘functional communicative activity’ and ‘social interaction activity’. Functional communication activity means the completion of task such as comparing sets of pictures and finding similarities and differences etc. Social interaction activity refers to a social context that takes in conversation and discussion, dialogues, role-plays etc.

So, in classroom, for example, teachers use an activity that can be done in pairs such as transactional task where there is **information gap** between two learners and they have to fill in that information gap. Liao (1996) asserted, “Information gap is the essence of communication”. An information gap is organized to promote speaking activities. An information gap is a situation in which a participant or a group possesses information which others do not have, while others command information that the first part is missing. E.g. a student in a pair with another student might have the train timetable for odd numbers, while her partner might have the train timetable for even numbers. Their task is to use communication for finding out complete information on how the train runs. An information gap can take the format of an opinion gap when the participants differ in their opinions. The gap is filled in the course of active communication.

Any activity with an information gap can be turned into a communicative game if there are rules to name the winner. The information gap is a frequent technique used in order to organize a communicative game. E.g. you have new neighbors. They can tell you about themselves only what is given on their role cards. Try to guess their professions. Ask any questions. Direct questions about professions are excluded.

Another activity can be used is **group work**. Learners can work together to solve a problem, to analyze the new language structures in a text, and to give them a chosen topic from the authentic material for instance, newspaper article to be discussed. It is believed that using pair work and group work to promote communicative activities in class are more useful and flexible for learners.

A popular speaking activity is ***reading from cues***. It is organized when the participants write information about themselves on sticky labels in the form of separate words, dates, names, etc. Other students ask questions trying to find as much as possible about person. To achieve this goal they have to think first what a date on the sticky label might mean and ask a questions like “Were you married in 1991? ”, “Maybe you got your first job in 1991? “ etc.

Reading and speaking processes can be boosted by a ***“matching”*** activity, in which the participants are to match pictures and texts, pictures and pictures, texts and texts (both oral and written) by using questions.

***Jigsaw reading*** activity is organized most often with the texts that are meant for reading or listening (“jigsaw” reading and “jigsaw” listening). A text is divided into several parts. Every participant has access to only one part of the oral or written text. They ask each other questions and provide information to pool the parts of the text together and to know the contents of the whole text. Another variant is jigsaw listening when each participant or a small group listens to only some information as part of the whole. These pieces can be brought together only in the course of active communication efforts.

Another activity for reading is sequencing (re-ordering). The task consists in asking the learners to restore the logical order between parts of the text. This can produce an “opinion gap” and boost communication.

Productive skills of speaking and writing are developed in simulations. A simulation means that an episode of the real world is reproduced in the classroom environment in the form of a role-play, discussion (problem solving), piece of writing or project work.

An important aspect of communicative teaching is classroom interaction. This form of communication develops between the learners and the teacher. Learners’ interaction is organized in pairs, small groups, moving circles, parallel lines of pairs, etc. Classroom interaction promotes a communicative classroom atmosphere and successful communicative teaching.

Communicative teaching is often organized in the three-phase framework. Three-phase framework means subdivision of the teaching process into three phases: pre-activity, while-activity and post-activity. Pre-activity is organized to arouse interest in the learners towards the main task, to motivate performance, to activate in learners their prior knowledge and to prepare them for the language that may be necessary to perform the main task. While-activity is organized as oral or written communication and is based on engaging the learners in the communicative tasks. Post-activity is reflection on the ideas and language that was produced during the main activity. This phase also includes additional language drills and integration with other skills.

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