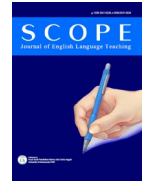




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Research Article

A Communicative Language Teaching Approach in Technology Enhanced English Classrooms: A Linguistic Perspective

Desi Ramadali Hutauruk¹, Sholihatul Hamidah Daulay², Muhammad Dalimunte³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail: sholihatulhamidah@uinsu.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This research aims to gain insights into teachers' perceptions and practices regarding CLT principles and their alignment with linguistic theories of language learning. A qualitative approach was used by involving 10 English teachers from different secondary schools in North Sumatra using purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis and analyzed through inductively using thematic analysis. The findings reveal a strong emphasis on authentic language use, development of communicative competence, student-centered and interactive approaches, and integration of digital technology to facilitate real-time communication and collaborative language learning experiences. Therefore CLT and linguistic perspective in the language classroom and potential role of technology in enhancing effective communicative language teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate in English has become an indispensable skill in today's global world. The field of English language teaching (ELT) has experienced a shift towards a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which emphasizes the development of learners' communicative competence rather than mere grammatical knowledge (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Savignon, 2018). Many linguists and language teachers have considered CLT as a strong ELT approach to English language teaching (Barnaby & Sun, 1989; Ellis, 1996). This means that the teacher is the first facilitator in managing the class and is responsible for the learning process in the language class.

Basically, the implementation of CLT has brought good luck in language teaching this is caused by language teaching that is student-centered and task-oriented by providing opportunities to communicate using English comprehensively (Richards, 2006). The application of CLT in the learning process can motivate students to improve their ability to use English to improve their own ideas in expression and encourage their fluency in communicating so that students are more confident when interacting with other people. (Brown, 2001) In line with that, Richards, (2006) revealed that the focus of CLT is communication skills, thereby enabling students to use language in communicative situations to meet their need for communication in real life.

Although there are potential benefits from combining CLT with linguistics in the communicative learning process. However, there is some criticism of the principles of the communicative approach to teaching, this is because it focuses too much on the meaning of communication rather than grammar or word structure. According to Keithley and Kumm (2013), the danger of CLT is that it places too much emphasis on oral skills over word structure skills in reading or writing. In addition, Hughes (1983) stated that the danger of prioritizing fluency over accuracy will occur even if the learner is fluent in communication. In addition, the CLT approach is only good for intermediate or advanced level students who already have basic English language skills so they can participate orally. Therefore, the teacher's monitoring ability in modifying the learning process must be in accordance with the needs of students.

In addition, the linguistic perspective includes a comprehensive understanding of various language components, including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Fromkin et al., 2018; Yule, 2020). This perspective offers valuable insights into how language works that can be utilized to improve the effectiveness of communicative language teaching in the classroom. By incorporating linguistic principles into CLT, Educators can design activities and materials that not only encourage meaningful communication but also foster a deeper understanding of linguistic structures (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Littlewood, 2011). Therefore, students can balance communication skills with correct word structures.

Beside that, along with digital developments which are widely used in the learning process, they have become a role that supports the implementation of communicative language teaching in language classes. The use of technological tools and resources can enhance the language learning experience, making it more engaging, interactive, and aligned with learners' needs and preferences (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017; Golonka et al., 2014). The demand for effective communication skills in English, which is the lingua franca of the modern era, is becoming increasingly important (Sharifian, 2013). The integration of technological tools and resources into CLT classrooms can facilitate immersive learning experiences, exposing students to a variety of authentic language materials and interactive platforms for practice (Blake, 2016; Chapelle, 2003). From online language exchange programs to multimedia resources and collaborative digital projects, technology enhances communicative approaches by providing rich contexts for language use and cultural exploration (Hung, 2015; Kern, 2014).

In this rapidly evolving landscape, examining the intersection between Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and technology through linguistic word structures has become crucial. Although previous research by R.

Smith & K. Brown (2021) has provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of technology-based language learning tools in developing communicative competence, their study focused on the general effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning tools without exploring specific approaches like CLT in that context. Additionally, the study by J. Lee and M. Chen (2022) identified challenges in implementing CLT in digital classrooms but did not address how linguistic perspectives could offer solutions or improvements to these challenges.

Therefore, there remains a gap to be explored from previous research. To address this gap, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of technology and multimedia in applying communicative language teaching with a linguistic perspective in English language classrooms.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative case study design to explore linguistic perspectives and the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in English classes. Qualitative methods were selected to obtain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and the contextual factors influencing the implementation of CLT (Dörnyei, 2007). This study uses purposive sampling, selecting 10 English teachers from various secondary schools in North Sumatra. The selection criteria included: (a) having at least 3 years of English teaching experience, (b) currently implementing CLT in their classrooms, and (c) a willingness to participate in the research.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, designed to gain detailed insights into teachers' understanding and implementation of CLT principles, including classroom strategies, the challenges they encountered, the role of technology in CLT practices, and the alignment of their methods with linguistic theories of language learning. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to observe actual CLT practices and the integration of technology. Finally, document analysis was carried out to corroborate the interview data and classroom observations. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data collected by researchers from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, several main themes related to linguistic perspectives and communicative language teaching (CLT) practices in English classes were revealed. This research uses five main indicators: Emphasis on the Use of Native Language to support students' understanding of the target language through familiar contexts,

strengthening language acquisition (Krashen (1985), Communicative Competence is the core of CLT which emphasizes students' ability to communicate effectively in various contexts social (Canale & Swain (1980). Student-Centered and Interactive Approaches reflect the principles of constructivism that place students at the center of learning, which is important in building language skills dynamically (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978), Digital Technology Integration enables richer and more interactive learning experiences, in line with technological developments in language education (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017; Warschauer & Healey, 1998), Lastly, Challenges in Grammar Teaching highlights the need to balance grammar teaching with communication practices, which is important in ensuring that students are not only fluent, but also accurate in their use of language (Ellis, 2001). Therefore, these Indicators holistically cover the key elements necessary to optimize CLT-based English teaching through the lens of a linguistic perspective.

1. Emphasis on the Use of Native Languages

Teachers often incorporate authentic materials such as news articles, social media, podcasts, and online videos into their lessons. As one teacher stated that:

"Using authentic materials helps students understand how language is used in the real world, outside the classroom". (T.6)

In this case it can be seen that the teacher also applies the native language to students to make it easier for students to learn the language. The focus on exposing students to authentic language use in real-life contexts is in line with CLT principles (Richards, 2006) and the view of language as an authentic communication tool (Savignon, 2018). Previous research has demonstrated the benefits of using authentic materials in the language classroom, as they provide exposure to natural language use and encourage engagement (Gilmore, 2007; Peacock, 1997).

2. Development of Communicative Competence

Lesson plans and teaching materials highlight activities that encourage negotiation of meaning, appropriate use of language in different contexts, and effective communication strategies. As one teacher explained that:

"CLT is more than just grammar and vocabulary; it is about providing students with the skills to communicate effectively in any situation". (T.1)

"CLT is very useful for improving students' speaking skills". (T.5)

"I focus more on students' communicative practice compared to theory because practice can follow theory more often than not". (T.10)

This is in line with the opinion of Canale & Swain, (1980) who expressed a focus on developing students' communicative competence, which includes linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language use. Previous research has shown that CLT can effectively foster communicative competence and prepare students for real-world language use (Savignon, 2002; Spada, 2007).

3. Student-Centered and Interactive Approach

Classroom observations revealed frequent use of pair and group work, role-playing, and collaborative projects that encouraged students to actively engage in negotiation of meaning and language production. As one teacher put it,

"CLT is about creating opportunities for students to interact and use language meaningfully". (T.9)

"Providing opportunities for students by giving projects for them to think and express their own ideas orally is one of the CLT methods that I use in class". (T.10)

This shows that teachers use CLT in ELT classes by emphasizing students to be involved in developing their communication and ideas. The data demonstrate a strong commitment to student-centered and interactive pedagogy, in line with the linguistic perspective of language as a dynamic and co-constructed phenomenon (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Previous research has highlighted the effectiveness of interactive and collaborative activities in enhancing language learning and negotiation of meaning (Long, 1996; Swain, 2000).

4. Integration of Digital Technology

The analysis highlighted the integration of digital technology as a means to support CLT implementation and align with linguistic perspectives on language learning. Teachers utilized various digital tools, such as language learning apps, online platforms for virtual exchanges, multimedia creation software, and collaborative digital workspaces.

"Technology allows us to bring authentic language contexts into the classroom and facilitate real-time communication with speakers from diverse backgrounds". (T.4)

"I use several applications for them to download such as ELSA to improve their speaking". (T.2)

"I often play English videos from YouTube in class and then ask for their opinions using English". (T.3)

"I utilize technology in the classroom in using the CLT method so that the learning process is more interesting and students are more enthusiastic about learning". (T.7)

In this case it can be concluded that communicative learning in English classes has implemented several digital technologies that can help the learning process be more interesting, this is in line with the opinion. However, some concerns were raised about the potential for technology to be a distraction or a substitute for face-to-face interaction (Golonka et al., 2014).

5. Challenges with Grammar Instruction

While the data showed a strong emphasis on communicative activities and authentic language use, the analysis also revealed challenges in effectively integrating explicit grammar instruction within the CLT framework. Some teachers expressed uncertainty about the best approaches to balance grammar teaching with communicative practice, as one teacher stated,

"I sometimes struggle to find the right balance between explicit grammar instruction and communicative activities". (T.3)

"I give a light theme for students to avoid grammar even though sometimes I still find some incorrect grammar when they speak". (T.4)

"I emphasize communicativeness accompanied by correcting students' grammar when speaking". (T.10)

"I usually ignore grammar and focus on their comics and then correct grammar mistakes". (T.7)

It shows that teachers put more emphasis on students' communicativeness compared to the word structure or grammar that students master because teachers feel that grammar can be mastered as students' speaking level becomes more fluent. These findings highlight teachers' efforts to create communicative and student-centered learning environments, encourage authentic language use, develop communicative competence, and integrate digital technologies to enhance language learning experiences.

By examining the intersection between CLT, linguistic perspectives, and technology integration, this research offers valuable insights for language educators, curriculum developers, and researchers in their efforts to create engaging and effective language learning environments that prepare students for real-world communication in the 20th century 21.

Therefore, the findings of this research are in line with CLT principles and a linguistic perspective that emphasizes language as a tool for genuine communication and negotiation of meaning (Savignon, 2018; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Teacher practices reflect a commitment to exposing students to authentic language use, developing communicative competence, and fostering student-centered and interactive learning environments.

The integration of digital technology into CLT classrooms aligns with technology's affordances in providing access to authentic language resources, facilitating real-time communication, and encouraging collaborative language learning experiences (Blake, 2016; Kern, 2014). However, emerging concerns regarding the potential for technology to become a distraction or substitute for face-to-face interactions highlight the need for a balanced approach that leverages technology to enhance communicative learning while maintaining opportunities for meaningful human interaction (Golonka et al., 2014).

The challenges related to teaching grammar within a CLT framework are in line with ongoing debates in the field of language teaching (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Shintani et al., 2013). Although CLT emphasizes meaningful communication and language use, the role of explicit grammar teaching is still a matter of discussion. This study suggests the need for further exploration of effective strategies for integrating grammar teaching within communicative approaches in a way that supports the development of overall communicative competence.

Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of how CLT principles and linguistic perspectives in language learning are realized in the English classroom. These findings highlight the synergy between CLT, linguistic theory, and the use of digital technology in creating engaging and communicative language learning environments, while identifying areas for further exploration and refinement.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) in English classes through a linguistic perspective. The integration of digital technology in CLT classrooms is emerging as an effective approach to align linguistic perspectives in language learning. By making judicious use of digital tools, such as language learning apps, online platforms for virtual exchanges, and collaborative digital workspaces, CLT classrooms can effectively promote interactive, student-centered pedagogy that aligns with linguistic theories that view language as a dynamic means for communicating. Ongoing research and professional development efforts are essential to explore best practices in integrating technology in ways that enhance communicative language teaching while supporting the development of overall communicative competence. Addressing the challenges associated with effectively integrating explicit grammar teaching into a CLT framework is also an area that requires further investigation.

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