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COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH SPEAKING ACTIVITIES DESIGNED IN A TEXTBOOK

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Abstract
In pursuing the alignment between the goal of communication purpose and communicative approach, six new textbooks were designed to facilitate teaching-learning activities in Center of English for International Communication (CEIC) at Language Institute. Only an impressionistic overview was conducted as a pre-use evaluation due to limitation of time and resources. Thus, the writer attempted to do an in-depth pre-use evaluation of the recently revised textbook. This research aimed at investigating the activity variations and types of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) activities presented in the revised textbook used for teaching Level 1 students. The speaking activities in the textbook were analyzed using Littlewood's (1981) theoretical framework on suggested communicative activities. The results showed that the textbook has various learning activities accommodating CLT activities, pre-communicative activities, structural activities, listening activities, vocabulary building activities, and reading activities. The CLT activities found in the textbook were differentiated between functional communication and social interaction activities. Functional communication activities specifically sharing information with restricted cooperation, in the form of class surveys and information gaps were dominant compared to other activities.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), pre-use textbook evaluation, functional communication activities, social interaction activitiesa

Introduction

Materials development is one of the most important skills in teachers' professional development. It is an essential part of teachers' tasks at the Language Institute of Sanata Dharma University (LISDU). Teachers are expected to not only develop their own materials but also understand the underlying principle of language learning and put these theories into practice (Tomlinson, 1998; Schon, 1981 as cited in Nahrkhalaji, 2012; cf. Lelita, 2016).

During the project of curriculum reform in the Center of English for International Communication (CEIC) at LISDU, a pre-use evaluation of the revised materials aims at making the best use of the textbook that is going to be piloted next year. The rationale to conduct such an evaluation is to pursue the match between the CEIC name, goal, approach, materials and evaluation. The

goal of the CEIC course is to enable students to communicate actively in English through integrated skills for the purposes of daily communication, interaction with the global community and for professional purposes (CEIC curriculum and syllabus document, 2017). In an attempt to achieve that communication goal, communicative approach or communicate language teaching (CLT) is highlighted. CLT proposes the goal of communicative competence is achieved through the principles of communication, task-based and meaningfulness (Richards, 2001). Curriculums should provide opportunities to engage students in meaningful language use when they are learning (Hayes, 2014).

Amid the curriculum reform, it is necessary to align the goal of the course with the learning activities and assessment. The term "alignment" refers to creating coherence between the essential components of an educational system: intended learning outcomes (i.e., curriculum objectives), assessment, and learning activities through a mechanism to address the teaching as a whole process (Jiang, 2013). One possible practical way to achieve that alignment is through assessing the learning activities or the method and content (Jiang, 2013). Reflecting on that point, further analysis is needed to report how CLT is accommodated through the new revised textbook.

An impressionistic overview of the textbook in order to find general strengths and weaknesses of the textbook (Cunningsworth, 1995) has already been completed. However, there is limited in-depth research on textbook content, particularly analysis scrutinizing the approach and the learning activities. This research was aimed at examining learning-activity variations and what kinds of CLT activities were found through speaking activities in the new revised textbook designed for Level 1 students. The purpose of this research was to contribute significant data for materials development projects at CEIC as well as to provide empirical consideration in designing the teachers' book or for further revision. The research question was: What types of CLT speaking activities were found in the textbook?

Textbook evaluation

Practicality consideration is one of the benefits that teachers derive when they use textbooks to teach (Gebhard, 1996; Graves, 2000; Richards, 2001). It introduces teachers and students to the subject contents and the methodology (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2004). Thus, through analyzing the textbook, teachers can actually gain insight into the approach used in the learning. Teachers' dependency on textbooks (Skierso, 1991) provides the rationale to conduct textbook analysis in order to make the best use of it, or to provide suggestions for further revision of the textbook (Mukundan, 2007).

Impressionistic overview and in-depth evaluation are two suggested general approaches for textbook evaluation (Cunningsworth, 1995). Impressionistic overview is commonly done by teachers to see the general content of the textbook, but it is a less reliable method to see the match between the content and the requirement of the teaching or learning situation (Cunningsworth, 1995). In the context of the Language Institute, an impressionistic overview was already completed through several meetings of material revision, in which some teachers quickly evaluated the revised content through discussion. However, the ideal

approach is the combination of both an impressionistic overview and an in-depth evaluation (Cunningsworth, 1995).

Using a checklist is common in textbook evaluation. Various areas of evaluation can be covered on the checklist. Brown (2007) for instance, provides criteria including the goals of the course, the background of the students, approach, language skills, general content, quality of practice materials, sequencing, vocabulary, general sociolinguistics factors, format, accompanying materials, and teachers' guide. Other checklists, such as Cunningsworth's checklist (1995), cover the areas of aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, skill, topic, methodology, teachers' book, and practical consideration for evaluation. The presence of approach and speaking skill criteria in both Brown's (2007) and Cunningsworth's (1995) checklist indicates the significance of conducting an evaluation of these aspects.

Communicative language teaching

The goal of communicative language teaching is to develop students' communicative competence in the target language. The target language is both the means and the goal (Littlewood, 1981; Kumar, Philip & Kalaiselvi, 2013). Common characteristics of CLT include information gap, choice, and feedback (Johnson & Morrow, 1981 as cited in Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Information gap refers to situations of sharing information in which someone knows particular information whereas the interlocutor does not know this information. Choice means that the speaker has options in what to say and how to say it. Meanwhile, feedback refers to a purposeful information exchange, in which the speaker gets her expected feedback from the listener. Other characteristics of CLT activities according to Nunan (1989) are rehearsal to the real world, skill use, and fluency/accuracy. Three principles underlying activities in CLT are communication, task-based and meaningfulness (Littlewood, 1981). In other words, CLT activities must engage students to interact and use the language form they learnt for meaningful communicative purpose.

There are various types of teaching and learning activities in CLT. However, each type should involve students in the communicative process with information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It can include text-based materials which enact pair work or role play, task-based materials such as jigsaws, cue cards, activity cards, authentic materials (Richards and Rodgers, 2001), scrambled sentences, language games, and picture strip stories (Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Littlewood's (1981) book provides a practical guideline for teachers to apply CLT techniques. Major activity types in CLT are differentiated between functional communication activities and social interaction activities. Functional communication activities are based on the principle that teachers should create situation in which students can practice how to deal with information gaps and problem solving. The functional communication activities are classified into four categories: sharing information with restricted cooperation, sharing information with unrestricted cooperation, sharing and processing information, and processing information. Examples of these activities include identifying pictures, discovering identical pairs, discovering sequences or locations, discovering missing

information, discovering missing features, discovering secrets, discovering differences, following directions, reconstructing story-sequences, or pooling information to solve a problem. Social interaction activities can be in the forms of conversation or discussion sessions, dialogues and role-play, simulation, or debate. These activities put the emphasis on the social context in which students are expected to consider their choice of language and social acceptability of the language produced.

Method

This research aimed to contribute to material development as well as to promote in-depth pre-use analysis on a particular aspect in the recently revised textbook. The data was taken from the revised materials used for teaching Level 1 students in CEIC. Level 1 is equivalent to A1 Level in CEFR, in which the students are on the level of understanding and using familiar everyday expressions to interact with others if they speak slowly and clearly. Level 1 students have a lack of linguistic competence in terms of vocabulary and grammar. After the course is finished, they are expected to be able to communicate in basic familiar daily expressions such as asking and answering question related to personal details.

The analyzed sample materials consisted of fourteen lessons designed for fourteen meetings. This research focused only on analyzing revised materials for one out of six levels as the preliminary study. In order to get richer data, this research was also limited to a analysis of the types of CLT activities based on suggested activities by Littlewood (1981). The data was obtained from the syllabus and revised materials documents. In analyzing the data, a checklist was used to classify the types of CLT speaking activities found in the textbook into functional communication and social interaction activities. If the activities did not belong to these classifications, they would be classified into pre-communicative, structural practices (Littlewood, 1981), or skill-based activities in order to find the most and least recurring activities. In order to achieve validation of the data analysis, academic coordinators with authority over the academic program in CEIC were invited to conduct and discuss the data analysis through the same checklist and method.

Findings and Discussion

The sequence of each lesson of the analyzed textbook is established through a title mostly followed by objectives, Snapshot, Language Focus, Word Power, a series of practices, and Hotshot. The title represents the topic that is going to be discussed. In Lesson 1 for example, the title “Hi, my name is Sean” introduces the topic, covering greetings and self-introduction. Then the objectives of the lesson were presented in points. The learning-activities for each lesson begin with the Snapshot part as warming up activity to introduce students with the topic. Language Focus is a section containing explanations of the grammar or expressions in each lesson, while word power is a section specialized in vocabulary building activities. Learning activities, including the main activity for each lesson, are presented through a series of practices named Practice One,

Practice Two etc. The last part of each lesson is named Hotshot, and functions as the post-activity. Each lesson contains six to nine activities. The analysis was focused on Snapshot, series of practices, and Hotshot, which contain integrated speaking, listening and reading activities.

The sample of the new revised textbook contains 102 activities in total. Table 1 showed types of activities found in the textbook. Functional communication activities were dominant, with the highest percentage of 23.5%, followed by structural and listening activities with 20.6% for each activity. Social interaction activities got 14.7%. Less dominant activities were vocabulary building activities with 12.7% followed by pre-communicative activities with 4.9%. Reading activities had the lowest percentage of 2.9%.

Table 1. The Percentage of Activity Variations Found on the Revised Textbook

Kinds of Activities	Total of Activity	Percentage
Functional communication activities	24	23.5%
Social interaction activities	15	14.7%
Pre-communicative activities	5	4.9%
Structural activities	21	20.6%
Listening activities	21	20.6%
Vocabulary building activities	13	12.7%
Reading activities	3	2.9%
Total	102	100%

It was noteworthy to notice the activity variations found in the textbook. Listening activities were a big proportion of this revised textbook. The writer found the distribution of exercises needs to be consider. Lesson 2 for example has four listening activities, whereas there are not any listening activities found in Lesson 11. Vocabulary building activities in the textbook refer to activities that focus on developing students' vocabulary. Although there is already a section that discusses vocabulary in Word Power, the percentage for these activities was slightly under as that of social interaction activities. Eight out of thirteen vocabulary exercises were found in the Snapshot part. It indicated that teachers might start most lessons by vocabulary exercise, even though these activities consisted of many variations, such as asking students to explore vocabulary from the first letter of their nicknames, listing things in their bags, competitive games in which students explore as many words starting with a particular letter as possible, and matching pictures with their vocabulary. Decaricco (as cited in Ketabi and Shahraki, 2011) mentions that in CLT vocabulary is not a primary concern due to emphasize on fluency over accuracy. Vocabulary is not taught separately, but serve only as a support for functional language use. Reading exercises had the smallest portion in this textbook. Only three out of 102 reading activities were found. The elaboration for pre-communicative and structural activities was discussed further in the Discussion session.

From the perspective of CLT, learning activities should accommodate both students' linguistic and communicative competence (Littlewood, 1981). Table 2

specifically explained the types of functional communication activities found in the textbook. The results as presented in Table 2 showed that the recurring information gap activities found in the textbook were sharing information with restricted cooperation. The most activities included class surveys, discovering locations, and discovering secrets. Class surveys were dominant. In total, there were nine activities asking students to interview their friends and write the results. One example was taken from Practice Three of Lesson 1. After reading a dialogue and practicing it with their friends, the students are asked to interview their friends and write the results of the interview in the provided table. Restricted cooperation was made by showing an example of what questions need to be asked and what the expected answer should be. The other example was found in Practice Six of Lesson Four. Similar to the previous example, after having a dialogue practice followed by a listening and reading exercise, the students are asked to interview their classmates and write the results in the provided table.

Discovering missing information or locations were the other purposes in information gap activities found in the textbook. For instance, in Practice Five of Lesson Three, Student A and Student B have different information concerning certain numbers. The students then take turns to mention the number, and then write it down on the provided crossword in order to find the hidden message revealed if they finish the task. In Lesson Eight, discussing the topic of telling locations of public buildings or places, students are involved in three practices in which they have to locate a certain building based on the information from their partner. Students work in pairs, and each student has information that the other does not know.

The other variation of this information gap activity was discovering secrets which was presented in the form of games. One example was the Hotshot activity of Lesson Six. Students are asked to work in pairs and hide something in their pocket. They are asked to guess what the thing hidden by their friend is through asking yes-or-no questions. Here the cooperation between the two students would be restricted through only asking and responding to yes-or-no questions. Five out of six activities of this type were presented as Hotshot activities, which functions as post activities.

Table 2. The Percentage of Functional Communication Activities

Kinds of Activities	Total of Activity	Percentage
Sharing information with restricted cooperation: class survey/discovering missing information	9	18.6%
discovering locations	4	
discovering secrets	6	
Sharing information with unrestricted cooperation	2	2%
sharing and processing information	3	2.9%
Total	24	23.5%

The next activity found was sharing information with unrestricted cooperation. In this type of activity, teachers have less control over the information and responses that students produce. An example of this activity was found in Practice Five in Lesson One, in which students are asked to make a conversation without any cues. The students have the freedom to structure the conversation and give responses to what is said. This is in line with natural communication outside the class, in which the questions and the responses are more spontaneous and less predictable (Littlewood, 1981).

The other activities found were sharing and processing information. Through this type of activity, the students are expected to not only share the information but also analyze or evaluate the information they get. An example was found in Practice One of Lesson Three. In this activity, students are asked to form a single line based on their age. The students not only use the language to communicate in questioning and answering questions, but also process the information and then make physical movements in order to complete the task. Two other activities of this type were presented as communicative games in the Hotshot section in Lesson Seven and Lesson Ten.

Social interaction activities were also found in the textbook. Table 3 showed the percentage of each activity type.

Table 3. The Percentage Of Social Interaction Activities

Kinds of Activities	Total of Activity	Percentage
Dialogue and role play	7	6.9%
Conversation and discussion session	8	7.8%
Total	15	14.7%

The recurring activities of this type were conversation and discussion sessions followed by dialogue and role play. An example was found in Practice Four of Lesson Ten, in which students are asked to play the role of a reporter working at red carpet event and interview an artist to discuss the attire they are wearing. The other activities found under the underlying approach of social interaction activities were conversation and discussion sessions. Although these activities do not involve any information gap, they fulfill the criteria of providing students with opportunities to express their self and experiences by using the foreign language they learn. An example of this activity type was in Practice Two of Lesson Seven in which students describe their house and furniture and then share the information with the class.

The results showed that this revised textbook provided various activities that include functional communication activities, social interaction activities, pre-communicative activities, listening activities, vocabulary building activities, reading activities, and structural activities. Variation of activities was beneficial to keep students motivated to go through the lessons. The activities that were not CLT activities were classified based on the focus of the activities.

Five activities found were pre-communicative activities. Littlewood (1981) used the term pre-communicative to refer to activities such as cued dialogue,

drills, or question and answer activities that have a purpose to prepare students with the required skills for communication but do not necessarily require students to perform communicative arts. Thus, the focus of this activity is to produce an acceptable piece of language production. Similarly with example mentioned in Littelewood's (1981) book, an example of a pre-communicative activity found in this textbook was Practice Four of Lesson Seven. In this activity students work in pairs. Student A asks "Where are the crayons?" and Student B answers "They are in the drawer." There is no structured situation provided by teachers and both students have already known the location of the things. Therefore this kind of activity is considered artificial and not functional (Littlewood, 1981). Nonetheless, this activity can serve as a drill practice that can prepare students to produce grammatically correct information and to use this linguistic competence when communicating.

Structural practice in the forms of drilling activity can actually serve as pre-communicative activity if it is done orally related to a certain context (Littlewood, 1981). However, the writer found that structural activities focusing on grammar exercises or sentence creation lack spoken practice. Activities classified into this category were purely written grammar practices such as completing the dialogue and the sentences with grammatical items. Grammatical practices stemmed from structural approach which focused on the students' mastery of the grammatical items. In Mareva & Nyota's (2011) study related to CLT application in Zimbabwe, structural approaches were still dominantly used due to the teachers' lack of knowledge of what CLT is and conservatism, even though the curriculum recommended a CLT approach.

Teachers indeed need to be aware of avoiding structural approaches focusing on memorization of grammatical rules and drills. Nevertheless, the use of structural approaches must not always be avoided. Thompson (2011) mentions that one most persistent and damaging misconception of CLT is that CLT does not teach grammar. According to Littlewood's (1981) underlying principles of CLT, through this approach, teachers should be able to develop both students' linguistic and communicative competence. In designing the activities on the textbook, awareness of to what extent the activities can facilitate students' communicative competence is important, so that the trap of using a fully structural approach is avoided. However, structural activities can serve as an input to prepare students for communicating fluently. In order to response the structural activities found in the textbook, a retrospective approach, in which the grammar rules are discovered by the students after they do communication practices should be used (Thompson, 2011, Kumar, Philip and Kalaiselvi, 2013).

The results indicated that the communication activities most accommodating functional purpose were sharing information with restricted cooperation. Students' limited linguistic competence was the main consideration in choosing such activities. Doing class survey activity is one way to facilitate students to at least interact with their classmates in the context of the classroom. The structural activities and exposure of dialogues serve as scaffolding activities to lead the students to be able to practice their speaking in conversation. Littlewood (1981) suggests that as the linguistic ability of the students improves, the information gap

activities can be extended to processing information activities, in which students are expected to evaluate or analyze information for problem solving activities.

One characteristic of CLT, authentic materials, was absent in the textbook. This might be due to the consideration of the difficulty level of the authentic materials, as well as time and resource limitations. For beginner students, the use of unsimplified authentic materials may lead to students demotivation, whereas the process of simplification itself is another challenge for teachers since it cannot be simply shortened without losing its authenticity (Guariento and Morley , 2001).

Conclusion

Communicative language teaching activities can take many forms. However, in order to understand more about CLT, teachers need to consider to what extent they have accommodated students' need for communicative competence. This can be investigated through scrutinizing activities designed for learning activities. The results of this research showed that the revised textbook already provided a variation of activities such as speaking activities, listening activities, vocabulary building activities and structural activities. Nonetheless, this textbook still needs further improvement in terms of the proportion of structural activities, so that grammar exercises are not dominant. In order to avoid the dominance of grammatical approaches, the writers of the teachers' book should emphasize inductive grammar teaching and modification or variations of the series of practices to make the activities more communicative. It is also noted that several CLT activities found in Hotshot sections should be made the main activity for the lesson.

Although the linguistic ability of the students is still limited, the materials can be designed as more complicated tasks that can give the students more exposure to sharing information with unrestricted cooperation or sharing and processing information. Dialogue practice should also be added with more specific social contexts to make it as similar as possible with real-life conversations.

This research had several limitations. First, there was no interview with the authors of the textbook. Their point of view can provide more insight into the rationale of selecting certain activities in this textbook. Secondly, the sample was only taken from one textbook for one particular level. In order to get a holistic perspective as to what extent the textbook in CEIC has accommodated CLT, five other revised textbooks also need to be analyzed with a broader area of evaluation, including other skills such as listening, reading and writing. Further research especially the post-use textbook evaluation was also strongly recommended.

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