

KEY ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTING CLT IN EST

إشكاليات دمج المقاربة التواصلية في تدريس المنطوق باللغة الإنجليزية

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submission date: 01/10/2020 acceptance date: 20/10/2020 published date 15/03/2021

Abstract:

This study attempts to identify the reasons behind the failure of communicative language teaching (CLT) in developing a high level of EL oral proficiency among EFL learners in oral expression classes. Through investigating the key issues of implementing its techniques and strategies in English speaking teaching (EST), it highlights the deficiencies of this method in effectuating an effective didactical oral experience; whereby, EFL learners are able to acquire English speaking skills and develop an independent EL communicative competence (CC) so as to meet their needs in communicating more efficiently using EL. In this respect, it also seeks to reduce the effects of these deficiencies via suggesting alternative implications for English speaking skills didactics in oral expression classes. As well as increasing its efficiency in order that a higher English oral proficiency would be available for EFL learners in oral expression classes, eventually.

key words: CLT; EST; English Speaking Skills; Oral Expression Lessons.

ملخص باللغة العربية:

تهدف هذه الدراسة للكشف عن الأسباب الكامنة وراء فشل ممارسات تلقين اللغة الأجنبية في تطوير مهارات النطق باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الناطقين بها. وذلك من خلال تسليط الضوء على تقنياتها واستراتيجيات تعليمية المقاربة التواصلية، التي هيمنت على الممارسات البيداغوجية بصرفها عن التعبير الشفوي مؤخرًا. أين تم تصحيح أوجه القصور بها والتي لا تتيح للمتعلم فرص اكتساب الكفاءة التواصلية اللفظية للمنطوق.

و قدراته شفوية كافية لتلبية حاجته للتواصل بشكل أكثر فعالية باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية. وبناءا على هذا الأساس، فقد صيبت هذه الورقة البحثية تركيزها على أهم صعوبات تدريس التعبير الشفوي في ظل المقاربة التواصلية وذلك سعيًا منها لتقليل آثارها السلبية في مثل هذه الدروس من جهة. ومن جهة أخرى، لتحسين أسسها البيداغوجية عبر اقتراح بعض البدائل التي من شأنها زيادة مستويات مهارة النطق باللغة الإنجليزية اعتمادا على مشاكل تدريس النطق في ظل المقاربة التواصلية بحد ذاتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المقاربة التواصلية؛ تدريس النطق؛ مهارات النطق باللغة الإنجليزية؛ دروس التعبير الشفوي.

Introduction

In spite of its predominance in ELT practices, CLT method fails to develop high level of English speaking skills among EFL learners in oral expression classes. Hence, an investigation to CLT is conducted in this article so as to determine the reasons behind its failure in satisfying these oral needs as well as the extent to which it contributes to improve English speaking skills in these classes. By reflecting the most common implementations of CLT method's strategies and techniques which are currently used in oral classes, it attempts to identify the reasons behind learners' failure in acquiring appropriate and adequate English speaking skills in oral expression classes. And, through the means of analysis, illustration and comparison between (L1) and (L2), the negative effects of these factors are highlighted and demonstrated for reducing its damaging impacts inside the classroom. Moreover, it seeks to improve the quality of English speaking teaching through proposing alternative solutions to create a better classroom environment to learn and teach how to speak English appropriately and adequately. Eventually, raising awareness in the use of CLT for teaching English speaking to the speakers of other languages help them to craft and design a more effective lesson plan with specific content, attainable objectives and equilibrium roles of both learners and teacher during the lesson. In other words, this article is further step towards the journey of English oral proficiency in ELT through providing new insights to the organization and management of communicative EL oral expression classes.

I. CLT in EST: Meaning and Prospects

Since its emergence in 1980's, CLT predominated ELT practices as the most effective method for developing EL proficiency in EFL classes. Giving the facts that it does not only proclaim resolutions to the unresolved common issues of EFL didactics with the currently available approaches

and methods of ELT (Richard, 2006). Particularly, EFL learners disability in using language beyond the classroom borders where neither memorized stretches of language are incompatible to the linguistic norms and social conventions of human language communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Nor L1 experience and habits are convenient to develop a communicative repertoire for communicating successfully in EL. But it also claims EL communicative competence (CC) as major focus and ultimate goal for its proposed approach of ELT that eventually satisfy the learners needs in mastering the ability to communicate with EL successfully (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Thus, it was not too long until CLT joins forces with EST that finds sanctuary in these communicative prospects for satisfying the needs of EFL learners in mastering an English oral proficiency through developing their CC rather than constraining itself to EL linguistic competence alone. On this premise, improving English speaking skills becomes eventually associated to CLT methods; whereby, EST practices, factuality and interpretations are adopted to the communicative teaching theory, assumptions and implications, accordingly.

I.1. CLT Between Theory and Practice in EST

In theory, CLT refers to the possibility of acquiring EL through meaningful and purposeful interactions (Richard, 2006). In ELT, respectively, it is “understood as set of assumptions about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that facilitate learning” (ibid, p. 2) to enable learners “to express themselves accurately and appropriately in different situations” (G. Benati, 2013, p. 61)” and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom” (Richard, 2006, p. 2). Whereby, they collaborate to negotiate and discuss meaning in order to reach an agreement basing on feedback and contextual cues in the classroom (Richard, 2006). In EST, however, it refers to learning autonomy which maximizes the role of learners to take full responsibility for developing their English speaking skills. Firstly, via minimizing the roles of teachers to merely accompanying them in oral expression lessons; while, they negotiate meaning in problem solving activities. Secondly, via intensifying EL speech production's quantity, rather than quality, fluency, appropriacy or accuracy which helps them practice speaking before fully mastering it (Christine & Anne, 2012). Essentially, for the assumptions that language skills' development is attributed to language production according to CLT (Dr. Stephen Krashen, 2015).

I.2. CLT Between Assumptions and Factuality in EST

In English speaking didactics, CLT is assumed to improve English speaking skills via reinforcing the use of EL in verbal interactions. Therefore, learners are encouraged to speak using their EL knowledge (i.e. rules of linguistic usage) (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). As they are actively participate in "communicative activities such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks" (ibid, p.161) so as to develop their EL speaking fluency skills, accuracy skills and appropriacy skills (i.e. norms of linguistic use) through peers' discussions and teachers' supervision (Christine & Anne, 2012). However, in oral classes settings these assumptions are scarcely met. First, because it is often reported that English speaking skills are falling behind literacy skills. In addition to their low quality (i.e. learners' speech production) which sound unnatural and nonnative-like. For they do not only violate the common norms of English speaking in use. But they also lack the characteristics and features of English speaking in usage. Furthermore, demotivation, disengagement, discouragement and even lack of interest are often observed during group work discussions. Whereby, only few learners hold responsibility for accomplishing the task to report it eventually to the teacher (Hoge, 2014) who content her/himself with monitoring the lesson of the session after assigning learners to a given topic to talk about. And this is for fulfilling their part drawing upon the implications of CLT.

I.3. CLT between Implications and Interpretations in EST

In spite of its clear sets of methods, assumptions, goals techniques and procedures, the implications of CLT are characterized with ambiguity in EST's pedagogical practices. Giving the fact that, CLT suffices itself with drawing general guideline to determine teachers, learners and language disposition in communicative didactical settings without restricting any to one rigid framework. As well as, its communicative perspectives that justify ends rather than means. In addition to, its tendency in loosen the control of teachers in oral classes where it is preferable not to restrict lessons into a predetermined lesson of action but rather to walk with its flow. For these reasons, EST, in communicative teaching practices, has been always associated with subjectivity rather than objectivity when it comes to its actual implication in teaching practices. Those are gradually unraveled in diverse varieties of CLT due to different interpretations of its advocates who benefit from its flexibility and fuzziness in gaining certain freedom to do what they think serves best the interests of their students (Richards & Theodore S, 1986). Who themselves stills struggle, *autonomously*, to satisfy their needs in mastering English speaking skills, more effectively, in spite of their commitment to the common principles of CLT including intensive oral participations and corporation in the communicative activities. As well as their advanced levels in literacy skills that fail to meet the claims of CLT

concerning learners' autonomous ability in transferring their linguistic knowledge of usage into social experience of use. That stills far behind their reach which rise the question about the effectiveness of these implications in developing English speaking skills in EST.

On these premises, the current manifestations of CLT in EST fail in meeting the anticipated results of high oral proficiency among EFL learners in oral expressions classes. Nonetheless, this failure has not been exclusive to the invalidity of this communicative didactical settings in developing their English speaking skills or their CC. But it also extends to the entire pedagogical process of EST by which the like of these communicative EST practices hinder the acquisition of EL speaking appropriacy skills, EL speaking accuracy skills and EL speaking fluency skills more effectively. And this is due to their tendency in violating the norms of English speaking skills' acquisition process and the mechanism of speech production that naturally developed through receiving and producing speech simultaneously. Eventually, these defilements of the nature of EL speaking with implying the CLT in EST leads to the emergence of different issues that restrict the improvement of English speaking skills in oral expression classes.

II. Issues in Teaching of English Speaking skills through CLT

Speaking skills are subdue with psychological, sociological and pragmatic factors which create different dimensions of characteristics and features to the spoken language. Hence, it takes more than manifesting EL competence into oral performance to acquire English oral proficiency. Giving the reason that, they are associated primarily with context's and speech events' norms and conventions of use that reinforce the use of language as mean of communication, ultimately, so as to improve gradually with its constant use in authentic interactions. Those altogether are represented in CLT to make it the last sanctuary for English proficiency for many EFL classes around the globe. However, the controversial views about the meaning and content of CLT lessons as well as the absence of clear principled pedagogical techniques, strategies and method in practice (Goh & Burns, 2012) hinder the learners ' improvement instead of scaffolding it due to the non-effective implications of CLT in practice including: lack of pedagogical basis in action, verbal inputs' low quality, teachers' passiveness and feedback's inefficiency.

II.1. Lack of Pedagogical Basis in Action

Affected by the views of communicative theory of language, EFL oral classes adapt the CLT methods in EST on the hope of improving their learners' oral proficiency. On this basis, communicating and interacting in EL becomes the first priority of oral expression lessons (Jack.C.Richard, 2006) those are realized through engaging learners in an extensive verbal communications and oral interactions where they negotiate meaning (G.Benati, 2013) through talking about a given topic. However, these new trends in EST are achieved at the expense of ELT pedagogy. Those have been sacrifices in EST practices in terms of lesson planning and classroom management (Goh & Burns, 2012).

Accordingly, the absence of didactical and pedagogical basis in designing English speaking lessons diminishes its efficiency in improving learners' proficiency in many ways. To start with, neglecting the learners' needs while selecting lessons' topics do not only establish lack of interest among them, but it may also demotivate and discourage them to speak in using the target language. Furthermore, the randomly selected topics that mainly serve as stimulators for speaking production do not suffice in improving their speaking skills any further. In other words, speaking skills-focused tendency causes lack of language-focused and content-focused activities in oral lesson that are necessary for helping learners in building their propositional knowledge, situational knowledge and syntactic lema (Levelt, 1989) in order to speak more naturally and fluently in English. Last but not least, poor planning of speaking lessons, which does not differentiate the lesson's stages, specify its objectives, evaluate learners' performance or provide constant feedback concerning their speaking performance, lower both the quality and quantity of the learning process(Hedge, 2000). Eventually, the accumulation of these effects of the weakness in pedagogy of teaching will devalue the oral lesson significance in the process of learning English speaking skills.

To sum up, setting pedagogical principles within didactical framework for English speaking lessons enhance the acquisition of English oral proficiency in many ways. Firstly, it contributes to the diversity of topics, tasks and aims that are attributed into the learners' needs and the lesson specific needs. Secondly, it escalates the level of learning autonomy among learners by encouraging self-awareness and self-evaluation due to the explicitness of the speaking lessons' framework. Thirdly, preparation of

English speaking layout helps teachers in reaching their objectives and presenting lessons as well as managing classes in more systematic way for better feedback. Eventually, by establishing cooperation between the lesson, teacher and learners it is likely for creating better environment for improvement.

II.2. Verbal inputs' low quality

The autonomy of learning in CLT make oral classes and lessons flow under the control of learners' own choices, decisions and orientations of the verbal inputs during the English speaking lesson. In order to increase learners' talking time and establish student-centered classroom environment, teacher step down on their instructional and elucidative roles for the sake of enhancing the exploratory and experiential roles of their learners . As result, the English speaking lesson verbal inputs are confined to learners' background, speaking proficiency and linguistic knowledge those are visualized in their competence and performance in accomplishing the required communicative and interactive tasks, which were designed for motivating the negotiation of meaning in order to realize learners' communicative goals through oral productions (Levelt, 1989) in the first place, of the speaking lesson.

As bilingual users of language, their English use in this classes will be affected with their first language habits of use and due to their identical linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds SEL learners will easily interpret and understand one another despite the fact whether their talking violate the target language speaking norms or no which hinder them from acquiring English communicative competence's appropriacy and adequacy. On this basis, EFL learners are deprived from exploring the cultural and social aspects of the EL verbal interaction rules and taboos, for instance, unlike English speakers, Arabic learners of English will use thank you and please less frequently in their speaking and will be more direct and straightforward in expressing their opinions and thoughts. Furthermore, the fact that the only source of oral lesson inputs is the immature learners' outputs the efficiency and effectiveness of the oral skills acquisition is at the stake because pair and group verbal exchanges will transfer and transmit the random, flaw and nonnative speaking skills incomes from one learner to another. Last but not least, by relaying only on the learners pace, manner and style of oral production they will not have the opportunity to encounter with the prosodic features of EL like the intonation, rhythm and pitch which play crucial role in verbal interaction in formulating and interpreting the native speakers' utterances rather than the surface structure and literal connotations or

functions. This also will negatively affect the learners' fluency development, as neither the speed nor the utterances of English spoken language could be attainable without their exposure to the native speakers' actual talk.

In spite of its efficiency in encouraging the oral production of English learners by opening more opportunities for verbal interaction where learners are less judged about the accuracy of their language use, the absence of the spoken English inputs in oral classes create a mechanical, bookish and unnatural language speaker who can form infinite number of sentences not utterances. Therefore, applying the CLT methods and strategies not on the expenses of the teachers' interactive role in oral classes would not only decrease the poor quality and quantity of the oral classes' inputs but also increase their irrelevance to the native-like speaking skills.

II.3. Teachers' passiveness

In addition to their complete absence in the process of English speaking skills acquisition in CLT oral lessons, teachers do not play any significant role in the development of their learners' English speaking skills development in this approach. In such lesson planning, nothing new is learned to further develop EFL learners' speaking skills because there are only few activities to focus their attention on specific speaking skills, language or genre (Goh & Burns, 2012). Bringing a topic to the classroom to make learners talk as much as they can about it through engaging them in negotiating of meaning with means of description, explanation, narration or debating does not suffice to raise awareness and develop sense of responsibility among learners to find their way towards mastering English speaking skills appropriately and adequately. By contrast, confusion and boredom lurk amongst them because of their ignorance to the purpose of these random selective topics to be talking about. The absence of clear pedagogical scaffolding to the speaking lesson plan and classroom management in CLT prevents teachers from improving any actual speaking skills or communicative strategies from one hand. And, it increases their passive practices in managing the oral lessons.

Because the effectiveness of the speaking lesson depends largely on the efficiency of the EFL learners in managing the communicative interactions and producing verbal outputs on their own without the interruption of their teachers, oral teachers in CLT classes have passive and inefficacious roles in such didactical context. This tendency of restricting the role of the teacher in the learning process of their learners come with

huge cost in the long term due to the accumulation of the inefficiencies of CLT strategies and techniques in language lesson. (Goh & Burns, 2012) argued that the principles of the communicative language approach are not effective without the integration of the teachers with their learners due to the following factors:

1. Nothing new is learned apart from what learners are already know;
2. Learners are not encourage to self-regulate their learning by planning , monitoring and evaluating their performance;
3. Teachers do not encourage their learners to understand the various demands of these speaking tasks;
4. Non-use of effective speaking strategies due to the absence of the guidance and correctness during the whole speaking session;
5. Absence of teachers' feedback.

In other words, the trend of seeking the ends of the communicative speaking tasks do not justify means that do not serve the main goal of the CLT oral lesson (i.e. improving the verbal communicative competence of EFL learners). (Goh & Burns, 2012)

Hence, handing learners a randomly selected topic to talk about is not going to help them to develop their English speaking skills any further. As, they have limited chance to acquire English speaking skills by simply associating certain words in string of spoken sounds to depict a given topic. Additionally, they never have the opportunity of acquiring the so called sub-speaking skills (e.g. clarifying and checking understanding, giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing(The Teachers' Room, 2018) which consider very important strategic skills that keep the flow and help by keeping the channels of communication open. As result, their strategic competence remains inefficient along with their pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence due to linguistic competence orientation of the speaking lesson in CLT lesson. Thus, EFL teachers ought to vary their strategies, techniques and activities in order to cover all the English speaking skills to familiarize and awareness of their learners to the significance of these skills in the process of speaking.

II.4. Feedback inefficiency

As they are interacting with one another orally, learners need to know how well their speaking production is going and how far their English

speaking is progressing. Usually, these concerns are resolved through teachers' assessment and evaluation of their performance in accomplishing a given task which are addressed to them in different forms of feedback (Harmer, 2007). In EFL classes, feedback can be of different forms that vary in time, in content or in form like formative feedback, corrective feedback, delayed feedback and implicit feedback (Chris & Cummins, 2007). Still, these different forms of feedback are similar in their endeavor in adjusting learners' outcomes towards more native-like language skills. Thus, it plays a vital role for the learners' success through identifying and comparing the actual performance to the desired outcomes as well as "providing guidance to bridge any gap identified" (Gregory, Gregory, & Uys, 2014). However, there have been controversial views about the significance of feedback in developing English speaking skills, in the first place, and whether it is best to provide it directly or indirectly in such advanced EFL English speaking lesson in CLT (Chris & Cummins, 2007).

The environment and nature of oral classes complicate the teachers' tasks concerning feedback timing and type. Still, most of the oral instructors prefer to delay and imply their feedback in order not to interrupt learners' attempts of speaking in the target language because "errors are evidence that the learner is testing hypotheses about the target language" (Chris & Cummins, 2007, p. 277). However, this approach of feedback is less effective in such circumstances, as it violates some of Gibbs and Simpson's seven conditions of influential and efficient feedback. First, it is hard for the teachers to keep track or detect all of the errors and mistakes committed by learners. Secondly, student-centered language classes shorten the teacher talking time to the minimum which is not sufficient for providing the learners with enough feedback about their performance' flaws and the ways of avoiding them. Thirdly, the indirect tendency by implicitly providing learners with feedback may not be interpreted accurately by learners because they are unlikely to keep track of their speaking productions during the whole session. Fourthly, the tendency of emphasizing the forms' errors does not only mislead learners to doubt the meaning of their utterances but also deprive them from being exposed to the other aspects of the spoken language (Olesova, 2013). Subsequently, these shortages reflect negatively on EFL learners in various ways like creating a very little chance to improve their interlanguage into more native-like (Harmer, 2007) English speaking skills, preventing them from developing further speaking forms like figurative speech and idiomatic expressions creating and having no opportunities for correcting and evaluating their performance. Therefore, more attention ought to be given to the significant roles of feedback in the lesson of teaching speaking skills to the speakers of other languages in order

to help them to acquire a neat and legible spoken language during this learning experience.

Feedback is an art that oral instructors ought to master properly in such advanced speaking classes in which it is a necessity for learners in order to master English speaking skills and sub skills for their learning progress. EFL teachers ought to provide their feedback in effective and comprehensible manner for better achieving the desirable effects. And, it is preferable on such advanced level to give an explicit and direct feedback which puts the learners in the picture for making the necessary efforts to adjust and develop their oral outcomes to be target-like verbal language. As, it has been proved that with instance feedback the acquisition of the language skills is most efficient than with a delayed feedback (Hoppe, Verdejo, & Kay, 2003). Thus, when learners receive an immediate input of useful information; as soon as, they have completed a task or committed a mistake to act upon; their chances their chances to acquire an accurate and appropriate speaking skills is increased (Gershon, 2016).

Conclusion

To sum up, EFL speaking lesson should aim to build learners ' ability to use target-like spoken outputs which is crafted on the basis of the needs of learners, learning environment and surrounding circumstances. This implies exposing EFL learners to an authentic spoken language inputs by introducing them in the oral session for enriching their verbal linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competencies. It also implies setting measurable and sustainable goals for each oral session in order to raise awareness and sense of responsibility among learners . In other words, English speaking lesson ought to be scaffold on more scientific basis where its outcomes are measured in concrete results. These results become reference for increasing the quality of the verbal inputs, as they give insights to the efficient and inefficient lessons' strategies and techniques of the oral lesson. As result, teachers will be taken an active role by reflecting constantly on their lesson planning and classroom management during the lesson of the speaking lesson. Centralizing the role of teachers will highlight the significance of feedback in oral lessons which help learners in identifying their strong and weak points of speaking skills. Eventually, oral lessons will be more organized language experienced with clear objectives and specific speaking skills to focus on instead of talking randomly without even realizing if you are correct or wrong. On the long term these improvised implications help learners to improve their English speaking skills in more effective and efficient way.

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