

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Since it was established in the 1970's, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has greatly shaped the way language is taught all over the world today. Previous language teaching methods all emphasized grammatical teaching through habit formation or the mastery of certain linguistic forms. In recent years, however, language teaching was seen more from the perspective of helping students make meaning out of language. More emphasis was placed on social context, functions and the negotiation of meaning. The goal became *communicative competence* or the ability to use language for meaningful purposes (Richards, 2006.). This would ensure that the interlocutors would be able to reach mutual understanding as they are able to create and share meaning.

This shift from structure to meaning in language learning and teaching led to the development of the CLT approach. Under the influence of this approach, grammar-based methodologies have given way to functional and skill-based teaching. This means that there was a shift from simply teaching grammar rules to teaching how to use the language for different purposes and the skills needed to communicate. These skills are what Richards (2006) calls discourse and rhetorical skills such as needed for storytelling or effective business presentations. Moreover, accuracy activities such as drill and grammar practice have been replaced by fluency activities such as interactive small group work. Attention shifted from language structure to the appropriateness of language use in each situation. The principle of this approach is that communicative competence should be the goal of language teaching instead of merely grammatical competence (Richards, 2006). According to Richards, the CLT approach is concerned with the purposes for which communication takes place, the setting, the role of the interlocutors, the communicative events, the language functions, and the notions or concepts involved. Characteristics of the CLT approach will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

With this shift, however, the question remains whether the lack of emphasis on grammatical competence does not take away from the language accuracy desired for learners. To be able to communicate well, grammar is still important, but how to teach grammar in this approach remains to be a challenge.

Spada & Lightbown (1993) as cited in Hussein (2004) agrees that "form-focused instruction ... within the context of communicative interaction can contribute positively to

second language development in both the short and long term" (p.205). Hussein affirms that this is supported by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1997) who suggest that the integration of form and meaning is gaining importance in what they refer to as the 'principled communicative approach.'

Current views on language teaching mostly agree on the importance of some form-focused instruction (FFI) within the communicative framework. This can range from explicit grammar teaching to "noticing and consciousness-raising" (Fotos & Ellis 1991, Fotos 1994 in Brown 2007). FFI can work in communicative approaches where attention to form is planned within or arises out of activities that are primarily meaning-focused (Ellis, 2001). Classroom-based researches have produced convincing evidence that incorporating FFI in the lessons is more effective than instruction that focuses only on meaning (Fotos & Nassaji, 2007). Form in language here, is meant phonology, grammar and vocabulary (Brown, 2007).

This study looked into the "problem" of incorporating grammar teaching within communicative approaches. The researcher chose to observe a particular English class which was seen to employ the communicative approach in teaching grammar after a pre-observation using a checklist (Appendix 1). The checklist was a compilation of characteristics of the CLT approach based on theories. Moreover, the researcher conducted an informal interview with the teacher for verification purposes. An informal interview guide was used for this (Appendix 4). It was seen through this checklist and the interview that the teacher in this particular class used the communicative approach in the classroom while doing a lot of grammar teaching. This was a pre-requisite for the study as it aimed to identify how grammar was to be taught in a communicative way. Although the approach was not fully CLT based on the said checklist, it had the more essential features of the communicative approach as opposed to the traditional grammar-focused approaches to teaching English. Specifically, her session had the following characteristics, based on that pre-observation:

1. Grammar rules were tackled making use of contexts that made students express themselves in meaningful ways and in order to interact with others.
2. The lessons incorporated all four language skills.
3. Students engaged not only in individual tasks but also pair work and whole class activity.
4. Use of language expressed real information rather than drills or memorization.
5. Teacher only gave 1 or 2 patterns for the students to follow but allowed them to form their own sentences based on the grammar learned.

6. The students were asked to make use of personal information in some of the exercises or in conversations with the teachers.

Moreover, from the interview, it was gathered that the teacher used techniques that were appropriate for the CLT approach. These were inductive techniques, listening with worksheets, games and speaking activities in pairs. A more detailed account of the results of the interview are in Appendix 6.

This study was a result of the researcher's desire to address the issue of improving the communicative competence of Indonesian learners through the application of the CLT approach, which means helping them gain mastery in linguistic accuracy as well as fluency.

CLT has been in Indonesia since 1994. Despite its inclusion in the curriculum, teachers are still faced with the issue of helping students achieve both accuracy and fluency. The tendency of teachers is to teach only grammar, in view of the national exam (Subekti, 2010) or they attempt to teach fluency sacrificing the accuracy, in an attempt to follow the CLT approach. Thus, grammatical competence may not be addressed. Students may be able to convey meaning using English but their language is affected with grammatical mistakes.

This is noted among older English students in Indonesia who have had many years of studying English. They may know how to convey meaning in speech but their language is wanting of the proper form as demanded by grammatical rules. It is therefore a challenge for teachers to combine teaching both fluency and accuracy especially in an environment where English is hardly used for daily communication.

Moreover, according to Liu (2010), the CLT approach does not always achieve the desired results particularly when it is applied in the EFL (English as Foreign Language) context which has a different linguistic environment from that of ESL. EFL learners, like Indonesians, do not feel the need to have the skills necessary for them to survive in an English-speaking environment. Thus, EFL learners may not want to spend their limited classroom time doing communicative tasks but would rather receive structure-based instruction, as observed by Ling (2010). Yet, it cannot be denied that communicative tasks will inevitably develop grammatical competence (Yalden, 1987).

How to reconcile both needs of developing grammatical competence within the communicative approach was therefore the issue of this research. It is seen that grammar teaching becomes important where the CLT approach may not be able to meet the competency deficiencies of EFL learners. One can say that a fully communicative syllabus is

not that helpful for these learners whose linguistic context does not demand them to master the language in daily communication.

Although, this grammar integration within the CLT paradigm is one aspect of language teaching that remains to be controversial or misunderstood, a lot has been written about grammar revival (Thornbury, 1999). More and more, language educators realize that the use of CLT does not mean eliminating grammar but rather affirming the principle that grammar rules take time to be established in the learners' mind but this should not hinder them from communicating as they so wish. The CLT approach takes this into account, and thus meanwhile focuses on what the learners wish to communicate although they do not produce grammatically correct expressions (Thornbury, 1999).

In these last two decades of CLT practice, however, research has shown the advisability of integrating grammatical instruction into English classes. It should be contextualized in meaningful use of language to help the students achieve communication goals. In some cases like when the learners are already quite fluent in the language, grammar can be taught in standalone classes for the sake of polishing it up (Brown, 2007).

Rod Ellis, an expert in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), made several studies on what is called Form-Focused instruction (FFI). 'Form' here is used by Ellis to refer to grammar. In line with his work, a book compiling theoretical and empirical issues as well as studies on form-focused activities in CLT has been written. It shows that many educators now recognize the importance of FFI in classroom practices (ed. Fotos & Nassaji, 2007). This research describes how FFI, among other techniques, was applied in the case under study. Findings from that compilation will be discussed later in the literature review section.

It is therefore in the light of all this that the researcher addressed the "problem" of grammar teaching within the CLT approach in order to help Indonesian learners focus on meaning without sacrificing attention to form. Furthermore, since most of reviewed literature on CLT by past researchers reveal that the first objective of CLT is the acquisition of speaking skills (Huda, 1999), this study puts attention to the spoken grammar.

1.2 Statements of the Problems

This research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What teaching techniques did the teacher employ **to present** grammar in a communicative way?

2. What activities did the teacher conduct in the classroom for the students **to practice** the grammar that had been presented?
3. Were the students able to communicate using the grammar that they had learned as observed in a speaking task?

With this, it was the objective of the researcher to find out how grammar teaching was done within meaningful and communicative contexts. This was done among students who have studied English grammar for several years but might not have had enough practice with it.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to find out the following:

1. To identify the teaching techniques the teacher employed **to present** grammar in a communicative way.
2. To describe the activities the teacher conducted in the classroom **to practice** the grammar that had been presented.
3. To get indicators of the students' ability to communicate using the grammar that they learned as observed in a speaking task.

1.4 Underlying Theories

The CLT approach was a result of the convergence of psychological and sociological views of language. Psycholinguistic theory suggests that language acquisition is more organic than learned and that more effective second language learning will take place if the emphasis is on getting one's meaning across or understanding others rather than on formal accuracy. Sociolinguistic theory suggests that language starts from communicative needs and meanings that need to be expressed through language rather than the prior knowledge of target language structures (Yalden, 1987).

This convergence goes hand in hand with Krashen's input hypothesis which states that learners acquire second languages if they receive comprehensible input. This kind of input demands that the learner focus on the content of the message and not the form. The implication would be that teaching or learning grammar would not directly develop speaking ability but exposure to language that is comprehensible. This kind of language would be more easily obtained in the classroom as the teacher tries to simplify her talk and make her speech clear in order for the learner to understand. This input must also be meaningful and

relevant to the learner and must be sufficient in quantity. Acquisition therefore occurs when the learner interacts with other learners so that verbal communication takes place (Huda, 1999). Classroom interactions play an important role in providing this kind of input.

This leads to the view that the objective of language teaching should be *communicative competence* and not just linguistic or grammatical competence. Linguistic competence was defined by Chomsky (1965) as the complete and perfect knowledge of a language, which means mastery of linguistic rules or grammar. This, according to him, is the aim of language teaching in as far as utterances are simply a manifestation of linguistic mastery. However, Halliday (1975) as cited in Yalden (1987) claimed that the use of language plays a more important part in its learning and acquisition, than grammar learning. Language is a social activity and must therefore be used interactionally.

This theory was further developed by Dell Hymes who expanded the definition of competence to include the concept of communicative function (Yalden, 1987). Thus, for him, communicative competence involves interaction among grammatical, psycholinguistic, and sociocultural subsystems.

Krashen's Monitor Theory also supports the CLT approach in the sense that it favors interaction in the target language in which speakers are concerned primarily with the messages they are conveying, and understanding, rather than with the form of their utterances (Yalden, 1987). Conscious learning of forms and structures only serves as "monitor" but is not the key to successful language learning. Fluency in production in the target language is thus based on what we have acquired through active communication, and formal instruction may be used only to improve output.

With these theories in mind, we are now ready to proceed to a discussion of communicative competence.

1.4.1 Communicative Competence

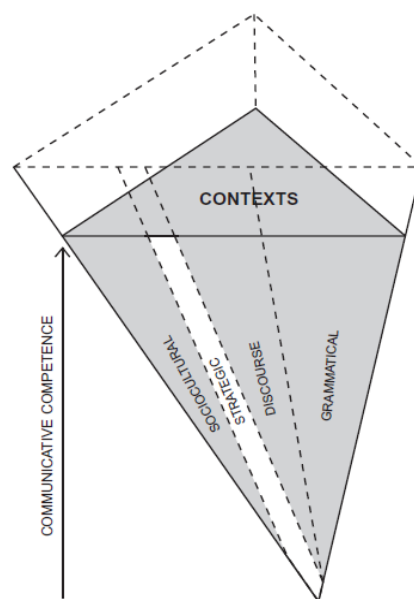
Communicative Competence is the central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching. It is defined in terms of the *expression, interpretation, and negotiation* of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and sociocultural factors that contribute to its development (Savignon 1972, 1997 as in Savignon, 2008).

Hymes defined communicative competence as the ability to use the language in a social context, in a way that is appropriate to it. He claims that mastery of language cannot be reflected only by the ability to talk in the ideal style which is only linguistic competence,

limited to the mastery of grammar only. One should be able to use this mastered grammar considering the social norms related to language use which is communicative competence (Hymes, 1972 in Huda, 1999). Within the classroom setting this means the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to recite dialogues or perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge (Savignon, 1991). This communicative competence is comprised of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence (Canale & Swain, 1980 & 1983 as cited in Savignon, 1991). These four competences are described in more detail in Chapter 2. Communicative competence therefore looks more into language as social behavior more than simply something to be learned. The focus is the ability to use the language in communicative events (Savignon, 1991).

1.4.2 The Role of Grammar

In presenting their theory of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) in Savignon (1994) sought to correct the notion that with this, grammar teaching has to be abandoned. They clarified that grammatical competence is important but it has to be placed within a more broadly defined communicative competence. The premise is that meaning is paramount, but attention to form is essential for developing accuracy and proficiency. This can be illustrated by Savignon's inverted pyramid:



Graph 1
Components of Communicative Competence according to Savignon (1991)

The model shows how, through practice and experience in an increasingly wide range of communicative contexts and events, learners gradually expand their communicative competence, which comprises grammatical, discourse, sociocultural, and strategic competences. Each aspect is essential, and one cannot say he or she has achieved the desired communicative competence without one of these components.

According to Savignon (2002), grammatical competence is the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactical and phonological features of a language and to make use of those features to interpret and form words and sentences. She clarifies that grammatical competence “is not linked to any single theory of grammar and does not include the ability to state rules of usage. One demonstrates grammatical competence not by stating a rule but by using a rule in the interpretation, expression, or negotiation of meaning.” (Savignon, 2002, p. 15),

As can be seen in the diagram, competence in grammar rules occupies a prominent position as a major component of communicative competence. Thus it is important to pay attention to grammatical form for successful language learning. Savignon (2008) suggests incorporating form-focused with meaning-focused activities to develop communicative competence.

Lightbown (1998 in Nassaji & Fotos, 2007) notes that FFI can be done integrating it into a communicative context or delivered in the form of mini lessons. This is very relevant to the study because as will be seen later on in the findings, this teaching method is characteristic of the class observed where the teacher also employs communicative ways of language teaching.

Grammatical competence in this study will be understood as knowing how to produce and express meaning through the application of grammatical principles in the target language, as opposed to merely memorizing and reproducing grammar (Common European Framework, 1996, in Odvik, 2010, p. 113).

More theoretical discussion will be undertaken in the review of related literature.

1.4.3 Communicative Language Teaching

Since the development of this term by Hymes, communicative competence has then become the objective of language teaching. Thus the CLT approach was developed. In this approach, the objective is no longer just grammatical competence. It includes the teaching of the four language skills. It becomes more integrative, also incorporating pragmatic aspects in

the language skill, that is the suitability of utterances for the context of communication (Huda, 1999). The CLT approach, therefore, provides opportunities for students to develop not only grammatical competence but also communicative competence (Huda, 1999).

One instructional type that integrates grammar teaching techniques within the CLT approach is the focus-on-form (FOF) instruction or FFI as coined by Long (1991 in Gascoigne, 1991). The initial concept of FFI is explicitly drawing students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose main focus is on meaning or communication (Ellis, 2001). By form here is meant not just grammar or the structure or form (-ed in the regular past tense in English) but also to the semantic meaning (a complete action in the past). Thus in FFI, attention is also given to lexical form and the meanings they realize (Ellis, 2001). This was later on reconceptualized by Long himself saying that not only should form be taught incidentally but should be pre-selected for teaching. FFI thus became of two types: *planned* and *incidental*. By planned FFI is meant that the texts to be used are designed to give several exemplars of the target grammar. Incidental FFI, on the other hand, refers more to the original concept of FFI which is attention to form as the need arises. Long believed attention to form in meaning-focused communication helps learners notice the gap between the input and their own interlanguage and thus gives them opportunities to produce the target grammar in question (Long, 1998 in Ellis, 2001). Owing to this, any form of FFI has had positive effects on acquisition. This is one instructional type tackled in this study as it was abundantly adopted by the teacher in many of her classes based on the textbook.

Other communicative techniques are also suitable which will be discussed in the Review of Related Literature.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The researcher deemed this study significant for the case of Indonesia where English is growing in importance but where the standard of English achievement is still far from satisfactory (Suhendi, 2005).

The government has made English a compulsory subject for high schools to provide pupils with a certain level of proficiency in the English language. It is considered fundamental in relating with the outside world and in the thrust to participate in globalization and modernization. In addition, the users of English realize that English has a role in a wide range of professions, businesses, and enterprises (Kachru, 1986 in Suhendi, 2005).

The CLT approach has been adopted in the English syllabi (Subekti, 2010). In spite of this, Indonesians are still not so fluent and in cases when they are able to convey meaning,

there is much to be desired in terms of grammatical precision. This is observed especially for the use of the tenses since these do not exist in the Indonesian language (Suseno, 2007; Hadianomo, 2004; Yunita, 2004). This is a main concern among teachers here because English is not spoken in daily communication. Thus, while English is taught since elementary up to early years in the university, the students hardly have opportunities to use this language outside the classroom. The language use in the classroom is therefore highly important to achieve success in teaching English grammar.

Up to now, there are difficulties in combining the communicative approach and the teaching of grammar. A number of studies have investigated the role of FFI in Second Language Acquisition but despite these reviews, there is still a gap between research and its successful application to language pedagogy (Nassaji & Fotos, 2007).

The researcher therefore saw the need to contribute to knowledge regarding practices of incorporating grammar in a communicative setting especially in an EFL context. The students intended for study were those who have had several years of English learning. In this level, it can already be assumed that the students already have the foundations of English but only need to recall the structures and use them properly in communicative situations. Moreover, according to Brown (2007), older learners are the ones who can benefit most from grammar teaching in advancing their communicative abilities since they already possess abstract intellectual capabilities. This study looked into grammar teaching used in an English class in a language center in Surabaya. The researcher chose a course instead of a school class because informal courses are able to adopt the CLT approach more successfully as they are without the restraints faced by formal school courses (Lie, 2004; Subekti, 2010). From this, the researcher has given recommendations on techniques that English classes can employ so that grammar is tackled while developing fluency. The researcher was interested if this was actually being done and how this could be done within the communicative approach.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This was a case study that aimed to describe grammar teaching in an English course at a language center in Surabaya. It did not include other techniques or activities that did not aim to teach or practice the target grammar which in this case was the present perfect. This course was seen to be sufficiently communicative based on the pre-observation checklist made by the researcher and thus was considered suitable for the design of this study. The researcher observed the teaching practices in these classes focusing on the grammar teaching

techniques. The course consisted of 24 sessions of 90 minutes each but only five sessions were included in this study.

The researcher described the way in which the students tried to apply the grammar that was taught in a speaking task specifically designed by the researcher for this purpose, assessing them through the use of rubric and field notes.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1. **Grammatical competence or ability** – the lack of grammatical errors. A rubric was used to measure this competence in the different speaking activities.
2. **Grammar teaching** – teaching wherein teacher presented structural rules of the language such as tenses, prepositions etc., reviewed them, or promoted awareness of grammar; activities that directed the learner's attention to form.
3. **Communicative competence** – ability of learner to communicate using English when given a speaking task.
4. **Teaching techniques** – a systematic way by which teaching is done in the classroom that consists of procedures or tasks done by the teacher. They are considered **communicative** if they generate interaction with the students or among students.
5. **Activities / tasks** – activities or tasks done by students to practice the grammar being taught. They are considered **communicative** if they made the students interact using the grammar they learned, in situations that simulated real life or that prepared them for authentic communication.
6. **Speaking Task** – exercise designed by the researcher and approved by the teacher where the students were asked to produce more extensive speech applying the grammar that they learned.
7. **Students' Utterances** – student talk during the speaking task given to them in the last observation session
8. **Authentic Materials** - spoken or written language data that has been produced in the course of genuine communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching (Nunan, 2005)
9. **Form-Focused Instruction or FFI** – instructional type wherein the teacher purposely drew students' attention to grammar items within meaning-focused communication
10. **Planned FFI** – FFI wherein grammar was pre-selected for teaching. It consisted of *enriched input* and *focused communicative tasks*. (Ellis, 2001)

- a. **Enriched Input** - is a text that has been contrived to present the target structure many times, but learners' attention is still drawn to the meaning. Thus, the tasks are still communicative (Ellis, 2001).
 - b. **Focused communicative tasks** - those designed to elicit students to produce the specific target grammar that they were previously exposed to in the enriched input. Production takes place in the context of performing a communicative task. Then again, meaning is primary here (Ellis, 2001).
- 11. Incidental FFI** – FFI where the teacher discussed grammar as the need arose
- a. **Pre-emptive Incidental FFI** - when the teacher anticipates a grammatical form as potentially problematic and thus discusses it;
 - b. **Reactive Incidental FFI** - giving negative feedback in response to learner errors. This second one may be *explicit* or *implicit*. Explicit ones are direct correction, metalinguistic feedback, and elicitation. Implicit ones are recasts, request for clarification and repetition.
12. **Direct correction** - overtly telling the student the error he made
13. **Metalinguistic feedback** - giving comments, information or question related to the appropriateness of the form in the students' production (Ellis, 2001)
14. **Elicitation** –directly drawing out the correct form from the students. (Ellis, 2001)
15. **Recasts** - reformulating the student's errors (Lyster & Ranta, 1997)
16. **Requests for clarification** - the teacher uses expressions that indicate that the student's message has not been understood (Lyster & Ranta, 1997)
17. **Repetitions** - when the teacher repeats the student's erroneous utterance adjusting the intonation to indicate that there has been a mistake (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).
18. **Inductive Techniques** - teaching technique wherein the student studies examples of a grammar item and from these examples derives the grammar rules (Thornbury, 1999)
19. **Personalization** – technique wherein the teacher creates activities that make students respond with information that is true for them (Thornbury, 1999)
20. **Use of a rule explanation and Modelling** – teacher presents the grammar rules and provides examples (modelling) in which the grammar rule is applied (Thornbury, 1999).
21. **Information Transfer** - a teaching technique wherein the students have to transfer an input into a chart, map, or any other format different from its original. “A type of

communicative activity that involves the transfer of information from one medium (eg., text) to another (eg form, table, diagram).” (Nation & Newton, 2009)

22. Peer Correction – having learners check or assess one another’s works