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Main Activities of Communicative Approach in Indonesian Language Teaching

by Dr. Suhartono, M.Pd.¹

Abstract: After using Curriculum 2006 or Competency-Based Curriculum—the concept of the curriculum is different from competency-based curriculum proposed by Richards—Indonesian language teaching uses text-based curriculum. Because of text-based, the last curriculum uses text-based approach. Text-based approach is part of product-based approach and the last approach is part of communicative approach. Because communicative approach has ten main activities in teaching and learning process, it means that Indonesian language teachers theoretically also implement the ten activities. However, data factually show different facts. Factually, not all of main activities are implemented by Indonesian language teachers. Data show that teachers factually only implement certain main activities, for example information-gap activities, information gathering activities, and opinion-sharing activities. Some of main activities are never implemented, for example fluency and accuracy practice; mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice; information-transfer activities; and role-plays.

1. Introduction

The newest curriculum in Indonesia is Curriculum 2013. In this curriculum, Indonesian Language subject is taught by using text-based curriculum. Text-based curriculum is part of product-based approach. Product-based approach is part of communicative approach (Richards, without year:32). It means that, firstly, text-based approach is part of communicative approach and secondly, in Indonesian Language subject teachers use communicative approach.

When the teachers use communicative approach in teaching process, they implement some activities that usually called “main activities of communicative approach”. Richards (without year:13—18) explained that main activities of communicative approach consist of ten activities, namely fluency and accuracy practice; mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice; information-gap activities; jig-saw activities; task-completion activities; information gathering activities; opinion-sharing activities; information-transfer activities; reasoning gap-activities; and role-plays. How are the activities implemented in process of Indonesian Language teaching, especially in senior high school? The question will be described in this paper because beside not all of senior high school teachers comprehend deeply the main activities in communicative approach, Indonesian government give them obligatory regulation that they have to implement scientific approach. As mentioned in Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture Regulation—Number 103 Year 2014 about Learning in Elementary and Secondary Education), scientific approach consists of five steps,

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namely observation, questioning, experimenting, associating, and communicating. Combination of two approaches in the same function actually can make teachers have some difficulties, especially when determining which one of steps they should use in teaching process.

2. Concept and Goal of Communicative Approach

Experts proposed some opinions about the concept of communicative approach. Richards (without year:1), for example, stated that communicative approach is a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom that all of them are arranged to set students to engage communicative competence.

In line with Richards, Brown (2001:43; 2007:241) also stated that communicative approach is approach that has four characteristics. Firstly, classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competences (grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence) and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence. Secondly, language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes (organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes). Thirdly, fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques (at times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use). Fourthly, in the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

Based on the concepts above, the goal of communicative approach in language teaching is to set students in order to have communicative competences. When the students have communicative competence, according to Richards (without year:4), they (1) know ² how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions, (2) know how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g. knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication), (3) know how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g. narratives, reports, interviews, conversations), (4) know how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g. through using different kinds of communication strategies).

Different from Richards, Canale (Brown, 2007:232—233), stated that when students have communicative competence, they have grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is aspect of communicative competence that encompasses knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology. Discourse competence, as the complement of grammatical competence in many ways, is aspect of communicative competence that encompasses connecting sentences in stretches of discourse and forming a meaningful whole out of a series of utterances. Sociolinguistic competence is aspect of communicative competence that encompasses sociocultural rules of language and of discourse. Strategic competence is aspect of communicative competence that encompasses the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence.

3. The Roles of Teachers and Learners in the Classroom

Teacher and learners generally have specific roles in the classroom. Farrel (2002:33) mentioned that roles of teacher and learners in the classroom, especially in teaching and learning process, are like below.

Lesson Phase	Role of Teacher	Role of Students
Perspective (opening)	Asks what students have learned in previous lesson	Tell what they've learned previously
	Previews new lesson	Respond to preview
stimulation	Prepares students for new activities	Relate activities o their lives
	Presents attention grabber	Respond to attention grabber
Instruction/ Participation	Presents activities	Do activities
	Checks for understanding	Show understanding
	Encourages involvement	Interact with others
Closure	Asks what students have learned	Tell what they've learned
	Previews future lessons	Give input on future lessons
Follow-up	Presents other activities to reinforce same concepts	Do new activities
	Presents opportunities for interaction	Interact with others

1 Different from Farrel, Richards (without year:5) explained that as the consequence of interaction between the learner and users of the language, collaborative creation of meaning, creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language, negotiation of meaning as the learner and his or her interlocutor arrive at understanding, learning through attending to

the feedback learners get when they use the language, paying attention to the language one hears (the input) and trying to incorporate new forms into one's developing communicative competence, and trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things; role of teacher and students in the classroom are like below.

Role of Teacher	Role of Students
Become facilitator and monitor rather than being a model for correct speech and writing	2 Participate in classroom activities that were based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning.
2 Develop a different view of learners' errors and of her/his own role in facilitating language learning	1 Become comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks rather than relying on the teacher for a model.
	To take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning

4. Text-Based Approach as Part of Communicative Approach

Communicative approach actually is major approach. As a major approach, communicative approach can be categorized into two kinds, namely process-based approach and product-based approach. The last approach can be divided into two kinds, that are text-based approach and competence-based approach. It means that text-based approach is part of communicative approach.

Text-based instruction, also known as a genre-based approach, sees communicative competence as involving the mastery of different types of texts. Text here is used in a special sense to refer to structured sequences of language that are used in specific contexts in specific ways (Richards, without year:32), for example explanation text and short story text.

When text-based approach is used in teaching and learning process, teachers have to implement some phases to teach each text. According to Feez and Joyce (Richards, without year: 35—37), the phases consists of building the context, modelling and deconstructing the text, joint construction of the text, independent construction of the text, and linking to related text. In building the context phase, the students are introduced to the social context of an authentic model of the text-type being studied, explore features of the general cultural context in which the text-type is used and the social purposes the text-type achieves, and explore the immediate context of situation by investigating the register of a model text which has been selected on the basis of the course objectives and learner need. In modelling and deconstructing the text, the students investigate the structural pattern and language features of

the model and compare the model with other examples of the same text-type. In joint construction of the text phase, in the first hand the students begin to contribute to the construction of whole examples of the text-type and in the second hand the teacher gradually reduces the contribution to text construction, as the students move closer to being able to control text-type independently. In independent construction of the text, students work independently with the text and their performances are used for achievement assessment. In linking to related texts phase, students investigate how what they have learnt in this teaching/learning cycle can be related to other texts in the same or similar context and future or past cycles of teaching and learning.

5. Main Activities of Communicative Approach

When the teacher and students realize their role as mentioned in section 3, they actually act some main activities labelled by jig-saw, opening-sharing activities, et cetera. Related to the label, as mentioned in section 1, Richards (without year:13—18) identified ten main activities in communicative language teaching, that are fluency and accuracy practice; mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice; information-gap activities; jig-saw activities; task-completion activities; information gathering activities; opinion-sharing activities; information-transfer activities; reasoning gap-activities; and role-plays. Fluency practice is a practice which reflect natural use of language, focus on achieving communication, require meaningful use of language, require the use of communication strategies, produce language that may not be predictable, and seek to link language use to context. Contrast from fluency practice, accuracy practice is a practice which reflect classroom use of language, focus on the formation of correct examples of language, practice language out of context, practice small samples of language, do not require meaningful communication, and choice of language is controlled. Mechanical practice is a controlled practice activity which students can successfully carry out without necessarily understanding the language they are using. Meaningful practice is a practice where language control is still provided but where students are required to make meaningful choices when carrying out practice. Communicative practice is an activities where practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable. Information-gap activities are activities who two or more students normally communicate in order to get information they do not possess. Jig-saw activities are activities which the class is divided into groups and each group has part of the information needed to complete an activity (the class must fit the pieces together to complete

the whole. In so doing they must use their language resources to communicate meaningfully and so take part in meaningful communication practice). Task-completion activities are activities which puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus was on using one's language resources to complete a task. Information gathering activities are activities who student conducted surveys, interviews, and searches in which students were required to use their linguistic resources to collect information. Opinion-sharing activities are activities where students compare values, opinions, and beliefs. Information-transfer activities are activities that require learners to take information that is presented in one form, and represent it in a different form. Reasoning gap-activities are activities that involve deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, et cetera. Role-plays are activities in which students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues.

6. Implementation of Main Activities of Communicative Approach in Indonesian Language Teaching

Based on description in section 1 that communicative approach is now used in Indonesia language teaching and section 5 that communicative approach has some main activities, it means that main activities are used in Indonesian language teaching. How do Indonesian language teaching use main activities of communicative approach? The question will be answer in this section based on sample data below.

Data 1

Label of the text : exposition text
 Enabling objective : to abstract exposition text
 Grade : X

Steps	Main Activities	Kind of Main Activities
1.	Observing	
1.1	<i>Peserta didik mencermati kalimat utama tiap paragraf dalam teks “ Integrasi ASEAN dalam Plurilingualisme”</i> (Students observe main sentence for each paragraph in the text)	information gathering activities
2.	Questioning	
2.1	<i>Peserta didik menanya tentang kalimat utama yang terdapat dalam teks “ Integrasi ASEAN dalam Plurilingualisme”</i> (Students ask about main sentence in the text)	information-gap activities, information gathering activities opinion-sharing activities
3.	Experimenting/Data Collecting	

3.1	<i>Peserta didik dalam kelompok mendata kalimat utama yang mereka temukan di dalam teks “ Integrasi ASEAN dalam Pluralingualisme” (Students in their group identify main sentence in the text)</i>	opinion-sharing activities
4.	Associating	
4.1	<i>Secara mandiri, peserta didik menulis ringkasan/inti sari tiap-tiap paragraf teks berjudul “ Integrasi ASEAN dalam Pluralingualisme” dengan menggunakan bahasa sendiri (Students independently summarize each paragraph of the text with their own expressions)</i>	information gathering activities
4.2	<i>Peserta didik mendiskusikan hasil ringkasan yang telah mereka kerjakan (Students discuss the summary)</i>	information-gap activities, jig-saw activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities
5	Communicating	
5.1	<i>Perwakilan tiap kelompok membaca hasil ringkasan/inti sari teks “ Integrasi ASEAN dalam Pluralingualisme” (One of group members read the summary)</i>	information-gap activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities
5.2	<i>Peserta didik lain memberikan tanggapan terhadap hasil kegiatan merangkum teks eksposisi (Another students give comments)</i>	information-gap activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities

(Source: PPG’s lesson plan)

Data 2

Label of the text : sort story text

Enabling objective : to abstract sort story text

Grade : XI

Steps	Main Activities	Kind of Main Activities
1	Observing	
1.1	<i>Peserta didik membaca teks cerpen berjudul Bertengkar Berbisik (Students read sort story text entitled <i>Fight Silently</i>).</i>	information gathering activities
1.2	<i>Peserta didik mencermati LKS yang dibagikan oleh pendidik (Students observe work sheet from the teacher).</i>	information gathering activities
2	Questioning	
2.1	<i>Peserta didik bertanya tentang cerpen tersebut (Students ask about the sort story).</i>	information-gap activities, information gathering

		activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities
3	Experimenting/Data Collecting	1
3.1	<i>Peserta didik secara mandiri mengidentifikasi struktur, unsur kebahasaan, isi, dan unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik (Students independently identify structure, linguistic component, content, and intrinsic and extrinsic component).</i>	information-gap activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities
4.	Associating	
4.1	<i>Peserta didik dalam kelompok mendiskusikan kesesuaian struktur, unsur kebahasaan, isi, dan unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik teks cerpen (Students discuss about the appropriateness of structure, linguistics component, content, and intrinsic and extrinsic component).</i>	information-gap activities, jig-saw activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities reasoning gap-activities
4.2	<i>Peserta didik mencatat hasil diskusi mengenai struktur, unsur kebahasaan, isi, dan unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik teks cerpen (Students note discussion results)</i>	information-gap activities, jig-saw activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities reasoning gap-activities
5.	Communicating	1
5.1	<i>Peserta didik mempresentasikan hasil diskusi kelompok mengenai struktur, unsur kebahasaan, isi, dan unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik unsur kebahasaan teks cerpen (Students present discussion results).</i>	information-gap activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities
5.2	<i>Kelompok lain menanggapi presentasi kelompok lain secara santun (Members of another groups give comments politely)</i>	information-gap activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities
5.3	<i>Peserta didik mengisi rubrik penilaian dari pendidik (Students receive assessment rubric from the teacher)</i>	task-completion activities, opinion-sharing activities, reasoning gap-activities
5.4	<i>Pendidik memeriksa hasil penilaian dari setiap kelompok (The teacher have a look assessment result from each group)</i>	-
5.5	<i>Pendidik mengumumkan hasil pekerjaan (nilai) kerja kelompok (The teacher announce group's score).</i>	-
5.6	<i>Kelompok yang mendapatkan nilai tertinggi menerima penghargaan dari pendidik (Students who got highest score receive reward from the teacher).</i>	-

(Source: PPG's lesson plan)

The data above show that not all of main activities in communicative approach are implemented in Indonesian language teaching. Some of main activities are implemented, for example information-gap activities, information gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities. Some of them are never implemented, for example fluency and accuracy practice; mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice; information-transfer activities; and role-plays. Why do the teacher use some main activities frequently and “avoid” another? The answer of the question will be found in the next paper/research.

7. Conclusion

In Indonesian language teaching teacher only use some main activities in communicative approach. Some main activities are used frequently, especially information gathering activities. It means that the teaching and learning process is still focussed to get information as much as possible and that is not the feature of communicative approach. It shows that the Indonesian language teachers have to learn more about communicative approach and the details. Another facts that some main activities in communicative approach are never used also shows something wrong in the implementaion of communicative approach

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