PKG: IS IT A TRANSLATED FORM OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING?

Damianus Talok
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF FKIP UNWIRA

A close look at the existing English Teaching Approach in Indonesia is so urgent. This is to help us see if the existing approach is really an approach. An approach has to fulfill two principles. First, a language teaching approach has to be developed upon the nature of the language. A question two be raised here is: what is language? Second, a language teaching approach considers very seriously on how people acquire or learn language. Materials and learning teaching procedures are the most important here. Does PKG (Pemantapan Kerja Guru/ strengthening of the work of the teacher) approach fulfill the abovementioned requirements for an approach?

INTRODUCTION

PKG is claimed to be identical to that of the communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Sooai (1991: 1) stated that PKG is the "Indonesia Communicative Approach". Indeed, PKG is a government project which is aimed to intensify the profesionalism of teachers of English for SMP and SMA. However, It takes its form as an approach when Brian Tomlison (1990) introduced it as an approach; and further used by Sooai and other practioners.

The term PKG approach, brings about contravesies on one hand, the PKG instructors, in their campaign for the nationwide use of the PKG approach, believe it to be an approach, most of the teacher of English, on the other hand, raise questions on the validity of PKG as an approach. Evidently, the pilot survey conducted by lectures of the evidently, conducted by lectures of the English Departement, Unika Widya Mandiri (1991), revealed that most of the private SMP teachers of English in Kupang implemented without knowing whether it is an approach or not.
The observed teachers of English did not know the basic concept of the PKG approach; but they knew that the PKG approach enforces the use of English as the instructional language.

In a one-day seminar on the PKG Approach for teachers of English of private SMPSs in Kupang, which was held in Unika Widya Mandira, in April 29, 1994, a basic question was raised: "why is the PKG an Approach?". The answer to this question was not given adequetely.

This article therefore attempts to lead all of us to arrive at a more conventional and definite answer. For this, an overview of the theoretical perspective is absolutely necessary to be introduced. This is expected to lead us to see if the PKG Approach is an approach.

THEORETICAL CONCEPT OF CLT

Paulston (Birkam, 1985: 15) argues that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) originated from Hymes' Communicative Competence (CC) theory. She condensed Hymes' sense of the CC as that the "CC includes not only the linguistic forms of the language but also its social rules, the knowledge of ehen, how and to whom it is appropriate to use these forms". It is the theory which concerns with one's ability to use his "internalized grammar of a language" (Richards, et al: 1985). Indeed, Hymes refused if the acquisition of a language can occur through intensive learning of linguistic devices of a language as that of the recommendation

of the structuralist. Nor did Hymes have a complete belief that acquisition of a language can take place for the merit of Chomsky's "inner capacity". A successful acquisition of a language; it is also involves what Chomsky called "inner capacity"; but it is also involves context in which language rules are appropriate to use.

Nevertheless, to be able to understand in what way the CC of Hymes is claimed to be the language teaching approach, Littlewood in his Introductory Notes for the book <u>Communicative Language Teaching</u> (Birkam, 1985) clarifies the concept of the CLT as an approach. He claims that it is an approach because it fulfills the two sets of assumptions. The first is about "what language is" and the second "How people learn the language". Further, he describes that the former influences the organization of language teaching syllabus; the latter influences teaching techniques teachers use in classroom. Littlewood insists that to be able to acquire a language sufficient knowledge of language rules, a large stock of vocabulary, and the ability to use rules and vocabulary in appropriate context are of crucial requirements to be fulfilled (cf. Richard, et al: Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, 1991: 16-17).

Further, Prabhu (Birkam, 1985: 32-40) proposes some basic ideas which link the theoretical concept of Hymes' CC to its pedagogical implication. *First,* CLT consists of adding a new component to the existing pedagogical procedures and perhaps also a redistribution of emphasis in those procedures. The shift of the abovementioned emphasis in language teaching is in the same vein with what is recommended by the CC of Hymes. Prabhu claims strongly that learning language rules is still important, but it is necessary to add to it the content in which rules of the language are to be used. Consequently, Prabhu wrote, it is no longer relevant to continuously apply the exercises of structural model, such as drilling exercises, which thus far lead language learners to only master rules of the language but unable to use them for communication. Instead, he introduced and utilized: e.g. games, simulation and role play; information gap, information- transfer, and task-dependency, etc. This is because the proposed communicative exercises model will engage learners in meaning – focused activities. Through such a model of exercises the language learners are supposedly exposed to the real use of the language.

Second, the CLT also pinpoints that the language instructional materials are to be designed on the bases on "needs analysis". This is so important that so much so language learners learn what they need to learn. Such a thing will make language learners feel more courageous to use the language they learn (what they learn). As every body knows that 'needs analysis' concerns with the identification of what to learn, hoe to learn, when to learn and for what purpose they learn what to learn. In

this context, such materials will reinforce the use of language in a more natural way (cf: Abbot, et al: 1988).

In addition to Paulston's proposal on communicative exercises model, Nation (Birkam, 1985: 120) introduces another kinds of communicative exercises. Through which language learners may get "opportunity for participation". To mention some, the exercises are: the story strip – it is the combination arrangements activities, in that language learners whom are randomly grouped must work out a story by arranging the break-up pieces of the story distributed to each of the group members; repetition – it is an activity of language learners to read distributed sentences. Reading has to be done again and again until they are successful in composing a coherent story or a piece of information; ordering – it is an activity of every individual learner whose task is to be able to contruct a story. Many stories are provided as that of the number of learners joining the activity. Necessary explanations have to be made in order to make the story understandable. For this activity, it is required of the students the proficiency in using the target language.

PKG: an approach?

In order to see the PKG Approach as an approach, it is necessary to raise the following questions: is the PKG Approach an approach?

The main point of the claim that the PKG Approach is a language teaching approach is the underlying reason why CLT is accepted as an approach. Littlewood already reasons out that CLT is is apt as an approach because it is required of the two basic elements constituting an approach: what is langauge? And how people learn language?

Does the PKG Approach fulfill the two required elements as that of CLT? The latest curriculum of English for SMP and SMA (1994) clearly indicate that the learning of English in Indonesia is aimed at enabling the students to be able to communicate in English. This objective, as I understand it, originated from the basic principle, that is there exists a shared knowledge of language as the tool of human communication. This is, indeed, another paraphrased form of the nature of language. If this is correct, the PKG approach already fulfils the first requirement. Further, if observed in SMPs and SMAs where the PKG Approach has been being implemented, some evidences can be put forward. *First,* the PKG Approach necessitates the classroom instructor to use English as the instructional medium in the class. And if this is done at maximal percentage, the student are engaged themselves with a high frequency of natural language exposure. The students, therefore, are practicing and doing a real communication. *Second,* the provided

tasks/ activities in a high frequency lead the students to participate in the use of the language they are learning. The learning-centered excises as provided will really make the students experience in the use of language. This does not necessarily mean that the existing classroom materials are already well-designed.

The second dimension to be considered is how people learn English through the PKG Approach. A serious attempt has been employed in order to propose and to design the PKG instructional materials. A lot of books which contain the PKG instructional materials are available. And yet, do they really make the students use English?

As long as the field experience can tell, the instructional materials model is teachable but rather "not learn- able". I honestly admit that the problem lies. In the difficulty level of the prepared materials, more specifically materials for reading for SMA. For example, the unit V of English book for SMA (Intan Pariwara) is so difficult both to teach or to learn. Another example, if observed the Pre- Reading activity, the proposed tasks are not workable. The level of question is so high and the vocabulary employed are so difficult that the SMA students are unable to work out it.

What does it mean by "not learn-able"? *First,* the instructional materials level of difficulty make the students cannot work out the materials by themselves, unless there is a help from the teacher. What happens in the class then is the "teacher talk" not the "students talk". *Second,* the learning does not seem to take place, for example, because the Pre-Reading activity does not create situation wherein the students use the language. The questions employed in this activity are so high beyond the ability of the students.

Thus, as the evidences speak, the PKG Approach fails to accommodate the second requiretment as to make itself an acceptable approach. Nevertheless, it is in our disposal to be able to supply ideas in order to make the PKG Approach an approach.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to provide instructional materials as demanded, it is suggested that we, the authoritative, have to conduct needs analysis as proposed by Prabhu. What I believe in is that the need analysis of the already available classroom materials was not carried out at all, or if it is carried out, it was only for limited schools, known as pilot schools. If this is correct, a review of the materials is of great importance. This is to identify materials which are suitable to larger groups of students in the

country and simultaneously suit the needs of the students. In doing the review, it is also suggested to those in charge to do the needs analysis to think of involving more schools, especially those of unqualified private SMPs and SMAs. Beside, the involvement of more teachers from SMPs, SMAs, and non-state universities (English Departments) needs to be recommended this is to get as representative picture as of varied needs and levels as the points of departure for the designing of the materials.

In the designing of materials, I also suggest the following considerations. First the recommendations for materials preparation can be delegated to the regional office of education and culture (kanwil PK) throughout all Indonesia as to answer to the evidence of the existing varied needs and levels of the students. This is meant to be able to adjust what is already decided as materials to be learnt. This is also to create the possibility to be able to insert materials of the local context, such as folk stories and others. Second, the model of the instructional materials design may be varied depending on the committee who are engaged in the preparations of materials. But there is a common agreement, that is the exercises to be designed has to be oriented to the use the language being learnt.

R E F E R E N C E S

Abbot, Garry and Pieter Wingard. 1987. *The Teaching of English as an International Language*. Great Britain

Das, Birkam. 1985. *Communicative Language Teaching.* SEAMEO RELEC: Singapore

Richards, Jack, et al. 1985. *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics.*Cambridge University Press. London

Richard, Jack, et al. 1991. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching.* Cambridge University Press. London

Sri Lono, Widodo, et al. 1991. *Kompetensi Komunikatif Bahasa Inggris;* Program Ilmu-ilmu Sosial dan Pengetahuan Budaya; untuk SMA kelas II Sem.3. PT Intan Pariwara(ed.2). Klaten

Tomlinso, Brian. 1990. *Managing Changes in Indonesian High Schools.* ELT Journal Volume 44/1 January. University Press. Oxford

(Makalah ini disampaikan pada seminar sehari tentang PKG Approach bagi para guru SMP Swasta se-Kota Kupang pada tanggal 29 April 1994 di Kampus Unika Widya Mandira Kupang)