The role of teachers' social competence in ELT

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Abstract: The teacher's social competence is one of the four competencies that a professional teacher should have as stated in the Indonesian Government's Act No.14 in 2005 about teachers in Indonesia. It covers the teacher's skills in building an effective interaction and communication with their colleagues, students, together with their guardians. In relation to this regulation, language teachers, including the teachers of English, have greater potential to develop an effective communication. In some cases, several problems in communication between teachers of English and their students occur during the inside and outside classroom learning activities. This paper tries to focus on what should language teachers do to build the effective communication with their students based on the perspectives from some field of studies. Finally, this paper also provides some general suggestions and considerations for language teachers, especially the teachers of English to build the effective communication to their students at any situation.
Keywords: teacher's social competence, teacher's effective communication, and communication development.

INTRODUCTION

Three skills that a teacher should have as indicators of teacher's social competence are able to create an effective interaction and communication with his colleagues, students, together with their guardians (Indonesian Republic Government, 2005).

Moreover, developing a good and effective communication to the students is the teacher's key to success as stated by Anugerahwati & Saukah (2010), "students, colleagues and most of the principals say that the ideal teacher is the one who can be close to the students". Thus, teacher's communication with the students is believed as a determinant for a teacher to be called as an ideal teacher whereas an ideal teacher is those who have achieved the government's criteria of the teacher's competence. It makes the teacher's communication skill become the most important skill for a teacher and it will influence other competence which are stated by the government. To some extent, the teacher's leadership and effective communication contribute the students' motivation improvement in order to be more active in learning (Muhsin, 2008). Muchsin's finding is strengthened by Loy (2006) that teacher with effective communication skill will greatly assist the student in their understanding of the world. Therefore, it will derive the students to enhance their performance as Loy stated that

there is a relationship between students' achievement scores and teacher's communication skills.

In creating the effective communication, the teachers which are assumed to be the most capable teachers to create the effective communication to their students are the language teachers, including teachers of English because they possess an advanced linguistic competence that Taylor (1999) defined it as the required competence in using language to communicate effectively in varied situations. In addition, a language teacher knows the right expression which is appropriate for certain situations, whether he/she is writing or speaking and delivering a speech or conversing.

On the other hand, the problems in communication between teacher and students occurred as mentioned by Masduqi (2011) where Indonesian students, especially those from rural areas are still dominantly influenced by some cultures. For example, two famous Javanese philosophies such as *manut lan piturut* (to obey and to follow) and *ewuh pakewuh* (feeling uncomfortable and uneasy) that impact the teaching and learning activities in English classes such as "proficient students are generally those who follow their teacher's ideas without necessarily analyzing or evaluating them." Moreover, if the students oppose the teacher's opinions, they tend to be silent and seem to accept what the teacher says. These conditions will not drive the students communicate and interact openly and critically with their teachers.

In the field of second language acquisition, intercultural understanding which is related to the ability to understand hidden meaning, assumptions and contextual meanings that are implicit in language becomes a difficult challenge for both teachers and students (Welsh, 2011). Meanwhile, Indonesian learners are generally from varied cultures and languages. This condition makes intercultural understanding is unavoidable in the teaching and learning process and hinders the language teachers to effectively communicate with their students.

According to Yusup (2010), some psychological aspects like ability, skills, intelligence, interests, talents, motivation, attention, sensation, perception, memory, retention, forgetting factor, the ability to think, often do not get attention from the educators. We can imagine if students read a passage where the passage's readability level is too high for them, students will not get the information provided in the passage and this condition can lead the communication to be ineffective.

In addition, Santrock (2011) mentions the problems occurred as the obstacles for teachers to create the effective communication to their students as *barriers to effective verbal communication*. In many cases, a teacher may have a situation where communication with the student becomes ineffective. Gordon (1997) describes six things that can be the obstacles in implementing effective verbal communication, the criticism, labeling (gives them nicknames), advise, set-set, and a moral lecture. Evaluating with the *criticism* to students can reduce the effectiveness of communication, so criticizing students can be done by asking students to do a self-evaluation, for example, the cause of their low exam score. *Nicknames or labeling* is usually a way to humiliate students by using words to insult, so teachers have to control his and the students' words so that students are able to understand the feelings of each other. *Advising* is meant in this case is humiliating other people while

giving solutions. *Ordering* can occur by commanding others to do something he/she wants, so it causes resistance. *Threatening* is controlling another person by verbal force while a better way is approaching the students calmly and talk to students about what they need. While the *moralizing* that is "preaching to the student about what he should do in a condemning fashion" while the better way is avoid words such as should and ought instead to inquire why something is inappropriately happening.

Furthermore, what should the language teachers, especially the teachers of English do to build an effective communication to their students in accordance with the government policy about the teachers' social competence? In this paper, it will be discussed several suggestions, ideas, and considerations from some fields of study to help the language teachers to develop the effective communications either for their students or other people including colleagues together with students' guardians.

Teacher's effective communication

In Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Fifth Edition, the word *effective* means *successful, and working in the way that was intended*. While the *communication* is *the process by which people exchange information or express their thoughts and feelings*. Based on the meaning of each words of *effective communication* above, teacher's effective communication is the successful process by which teacher exchange information or thoughts and feelings that work in the way that was intended.

There are some terminologies of *effective communication* we can use to define this term, such as it is a particular communication that produces an attitude change to those who are involved in (Yusup, 2010). Thus, effective communication would provide an easy and balance feedback in comprehending the speaker's message or idea in a clear, complete, and it helps the listener and speaker practice either verbal and non-verbal skills.

Educational Psychology

Managing the class and resolve conflicts in a constructive learning as a teacher with effective communication skills requires good understanding of these four main aspects of communication: clarity in communication, active listener, message-passing style, and how to deal with conflict (Santrock, 2011).

First, *clarity in communication*. The teacher should be able to communicate clearly when he/she speaks in front of the class. There are some good strategies as propose by Florez (1999) such as: 1) The vocabulary used should be appropriate and understandable to the students; 2) Do not speak too rapidly or too slowly, just speak at an appropriate pace; 3) Be precise and avoid vagueness; 4) Good planning and logical thinking skills should be used as a basis of your communication. What Florez suggests as the considerations lead to the teacher's implementation in using the correct grammar, vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate to the student's development, made an emphasis on key words or by repeating explanations, talking to the right tempo, do not convey the things that blurred, and use planning and logical thinking as a basis to speak clearly in a classroom.

Second, the speaker should be an *active listener* by giving full attention to the speaker, focusing on the intellectual and emotional content of the message. (Santrock, 2011). In addition, Santrock describes some strategies the teachers should implement to their students such as maintaining eye contact, paraphrase, synthesize themes and patterns, and giving feedback in a competent manner.

Third, another important aspect to consider is *message-passing style*. According to Santrock (2008), there are two styles of delivering messages in verbal communication, which is the style message of *you* and the style of the message of *I*. *You* message style is a style that students do not like because the speakers seem to judge others, and putting students in a defensive position. For example, "it's really stupid word" meaning "you're saying really stupid". Or "stay away from me" which means "you're disturbing my life". While the *I* communication message reflects feelings and better speakers. The message *I* can lead the conversation to the more constructive conversation by expressing feelings without judging others or students. For example, "I am angry because the situation is going bad", "I am feeling sad if none notice this". In the learning process, teachers must not only be able to monitor their own conversation, but they have to monitor their students' conversation in order to guide them to use more of the *I* communication style.

Fourth, *how to deal with conflict* is important for teachers to consider. According to Santrock (2008), how to handle conflicts can be done using the four styles, namely aggressive, manipulative, passive and assertive. *Aggressive style*—tends stern, demanding, rude and acted with hostile force, and often are not sensitive to the rights and feelings of others. *Manipulative style*—trying to get desired by making other people feel bad to him, choosing to act as a victim for others to do something for him. *Passive style*—not firm and tend to give up, let others oppressing him, do not tell anyone else what he wants, and do not want to express his feelings. While *assertive style*—express their feelings, ask for what they want, and say no to things that are not desirable, fight for legal rights, express their views openly, trying to change the behavior which is wrong, and refuse to be manipulated. According to Santrock (2008), being assertive is the best choice for teachers to communicate verbally with students to resolve conflicts.

Psycholinguistics

In this session, a psycholinguist, Taylor (1990) from University of Toronto, stated that, "communicative competence may be needed whether one is writing or speaking and whether one is delivering a speech or conversing." This statement provides the clue that teachers as those who are involved in the interaction with their students also have to have a good skill when they commit to communicate with their students especially conversation.

Moreover, Taylor (1990) argues that there are three principles must be considered in conversation, cooperative principle, principle of minimal information, principle of relevance.

Cooperative principle, as stated by Grice (1975), is maintaining the conversational contribution as required in accordance with the accepted purpose and direction

provided in the conversation. In addition, this principle is broken down into four categories as:

1. Quantity—say as much as required; do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
2. Quality—do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack evidence.
3. Relation—be relevant
4. Manner—be perspicuous by avoiding obscurity of expression; avoid ambiguity; be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity); be orderly. Grice (1975, pp. 45-48)

Principle of minimal information—some information that is believed to be known by both the speaker and his partner are not provided or requested; if such information is given or requested, interpret it as indicating something other than what is said (Grice, 1975). The implementation of this principle is shown in the conversation when A says something to B, "Can you open the windows?". From the question, it is assumed that A knows that B is capable of opening the window and B turns this question into a request.

The last principle is *the principle of relevance*. According to Grice (1975) this principle is the opposite of the previous principle where the information your partner needs or will need in order to interpret what you have said or will need is provided. It is shown when in the previous conversation B responses by going to the windows and open it. Thus, A confirms his question, "Oh, I didn't want you to do it; I only wanted to know if you could." In this occasion, there was some reason for A to doubt this event (such as the window's being painted shut).

The principle of minimal information is one of the most useful to be implemented in English language teaching in some respects. Because for some beginner students, it will decrease their difficulties in expressing something in English. On the contrary, the principle of relevance is quite hard for them since students are imposed to express anything as clear as possible.

Sociolinguistics

Teacher-student conversation has been becoming the focus of the study of many researchers including sociolinguists. In the interaction between teacher and student in the classroom, there are three segments of teacher-student conversations which show some types of data collected to be considered to achieve an effective communication as mentioned as a problem-solution, show & tell, and teacher talk (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, 2009).

First, the problem-solution based on data collection—the teacher tries to help students find the solution of a problem provided in the teaching and learning activity (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, 2009). This segment offers the data collected are dominantly from the students led by teacher's insight. In higher educational level, the students are more able or willing to participate and being involved deeper in the discussion (Pinney, 2010). Thus, in higher educational circumstances, this segment is the most interesting segment during the classroom management activities.

Below is an example of the problem-solution segment in conversation between teacher and student in the classroom as mentioned by Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap (2009).

Teacher : What is nine times nine?

Student : Ninety

Teacher : No, that is too big. We know that nine times nine is eighty-one. What is nine times nine?

Student : Eighty-one

Teacher : Eighty-one. You know that nine times nine is eighty-one. Can you get a nine out of here (motions to the 90 on the board)?

Student : Yes

Teacher : OK, if we take nine out of here, what do we have?

Student : Eighty-one

Second, this segment is fulfilled with some classroom activities which are constructed by the student as the basis or source of information (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, 2009). In some occasion, the information that the teacher use is the information that only the student knows. Moreover, students were busy writing replies to questions like 'where do you live?" and "do you have a pet? Or in higher education level, the teacher might be questioning what the students have found from the activities in their academic report writing.

The third is teacher-talk. In this segment, the teacher helps the students by presenting new information in the classroom instruction, while listening, answering and question-asking (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, 2009). Basically, the teacher will be the primary speaker in classroom conversations and maintain tight control over the conversations by determining the topics for discussion and chose which student should speak on those topics.

The Study of Communication

In the perspective of communication study, there are some general consideration or suggestions as mentioned by Yusup (2010) in order the teacher to create an effective communication to his students such as:

1) Open-communication model, where everyone listens to both sides, should also be implemented during the interaction besides closed-communication where someone shuts down (in some occasion, they will not listen) during the interaction. Moreover, it can provide more opportunities to control the mistakes from each other that may exist, both for teachers themselves, as well as for students;

2) The communication process can run smoothly and have a clear meaning if between one information and another there is a logical (thoughts and relevance) connection in students' cognitive structure. Therefore, learning is a process of changing one's cognitive structure. In this case, students will be able to follow and pursue every single learning phase that the teacher provide during the teaching and learning activities;

3) The teacher should use the same logical thinking level with the students. Thus, the implementation of instructions would work fine. This will lead to the student's acceptance of almost everything that the teacher provides.

DISCUSSION

From the educational psychology and psycholinguistics perspectives, teachers are suggested to show their best performance in creating or delivering the information. Moreover, the strategies to be considered are not trying to explore or expose the personality aspect of the students. So, these perspectives suggest creating the effective communication for the teachers and students who are not really deeply understand each other, or in other words, these perspectives are very useful for those who are going to create or begin an interaction to the stranger or the people that he/she haven't met before even at the inside or outside of the classroom.

Meanwhile, the perspectives of sociolinguistics and communication study are very strong in employing student's personality and autonomy aspects. Most of the strategies to be considered seems to link the students' personality with their teacher. It is shown when in the sociolinguistics point of view, there are two segments suggested which are exposing the students' role as the source of information and the partner in the discussion. Moreover, in communication study perspective, student and teacher are put as in the same level during their interaction, even in the classroom management activities or on the outside of the classroom. Furthermore, these perspectives believe that by putting the students' existence as an important role as well as the teacher's in classroom management activities is believed to be able to create the effective communication among them.

The Implication of Teacher's Effective communication on Language Pedagogy Principles

When it comes to the pedagogical aspect of language teaching, some of the considerations mentioned above could match the 12 language pedagogy principles as stated by Brown (2007) such as *cognitive principles* (automaticity, meaningful learning, the anticipation of reward, intrinsic motivation, strategic investment, and autonomy), *socioaffective principles* (Language ego, willingness to communicate, and the language-culture connection), and *linguistics principles* (the native language-effect, interlanguage, and communicative competence).

The information of each principle as Brown stated in 2007 are mentioned below:
1. *Automaticity*—the focal attention is on the meanings and messages and not on grammar and other linguistic forms.
2. *Meaningful learning*—meaningful associations between existing knowledge/experience and new material.
3. *The anticipation of reward*—deciding whether something should be rewarded or not and whether the reward is appropriate or not.
4. *Intrinsic motivation*—self reward system of the learner.
5. *Strategic investment*—decide how to say or write or interpret and make repairs when communication pathways are blocked.

6. *Autonomy*—the capacity to control one's own-learning (e.g. Allowing the learners to initiate oral production, solve problems in small groups, and practice language with peers.
7. *Language ego*—creating a sense of fragility, a defensiveness, and a raising of inhibitions in language use.
8. *Willingness to communicate*—desire to communicate with others (apart from knowing what to say).
9. *The language*-culture connection—link between language with cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.
10. *The native language-effect*—strong influence (facilitating or interfering) on the acquisition of the target language system.
11. *Interlanguage*—develop the learner competence (systematic stages of acquisition) in the progress to full competence in the target language.
12. *Communicative competence*—involving grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistics, pragmatic, and strategic in human interaction.

In the table below, it is shown how the effective communication perspectives are associated with the Brown's language pedagogy principles.

Table 1.

The association of effective communication towards Brown's language pedagogy principles

		Educational Psychology				Psycho-linguistics			Socio-linguistics			Communication		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Cognitive	A		√	√		√	√	√			-		√	√
	B		√				√				-		√	√
	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	D								√	√	-			
	E		√	√	√	√	√	√			-		√	√
	F								√	√	-	√		
Socioaffective	G		√	√							-			
	H								√		-	√		
	I		√			√					-			
Linguistics	J	√									-			
	K	√					√				-		√	
	L	√	√	√		√	√				-	√	√	

Information on the table:
1 : Clarity in communication
2 : Active listener
3 : Message-passing style
4 : How to deal with conflict
5 : Cooperative principle
6 : Principle of minimal information
7 : Principle of relevance
8 : The problem-solution based on data collected
9 : The student as the basis or the source of information
10 : Teacher-talk
11 : Open-communication model
12 : The relevancy of information
13 : The equal level of logical thinking

A : automaticity
B : meaningful learning
C : the anticipation of reward
D : intrinsic motivation
E : strategic investment
F : autonomy
G : language ego
H : willingness to communicate
I : the language-culture connection
J : the native language-effect
K : interlanguage
L : communicative competence

From the table, the *message-passing style* could not be associated with one single principle because there is no principle which is focusing on how the teacher or student address their statement in a conversation. In another word, this perspective could be the weakest consideration in language pedagogy.

In another occasion, providing rewards to the students is not recommended to create an effective communication since there is no one single perspective concerns about rewarding the students to create an effective communication.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After considering all of the perspectives mentioned above, teachers are hoping to be capable of creating the effective communication to their students during or out of the classroom management activities. In addition, as the effective communication between the teacher and students is the key of the teacher to be an ideal teacher, teacher should not ignore all the obstacles found during his/her interaction with the students.

Moreover, from the discussion above, the perspectives of effective communication provided by some field of studies hence do not only enhance the teacher's social competence but the perspectives also have a great potential to support the teacher's pedagogical competence. Thus, the language teachers should know and implement all considerations which are suggested to successfully create the effective communication to their students because there is no one single aspect which can benefit all the principles.

Finally, the social competence of the teacher highly plays an important role in enhancing the quality of their teaching and student's learning.

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