

The Use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the Teaching of English Courses among Malaysian Polytechnics Lecturers

¹Rashidah binti Radzi Rasalingam, ²Mohamed Amin bin Embi

^{1,2} Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

Abstract: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been broadly explored and studied by many researches in the English language teaching field. However, there are only few studies that explicitly focus on CLT and its use in the Malaysian polytechnic context especially after the shift in the Polytechnics English syllabus from English for Specific Purposes to Communicative English in 2011. After six years of the implementation of Communicative English (CE) in the polytechnics, polytechnics students' English proficiency level is still not satisfactory. Hence, this study was designed to investigate the use of CLT in the teaching of English course among lecturers in Malaysian polytechnics focusing on the issues/challenges faced by the lecturers, lecturers' level of understanding and level of CLT implementation. Respondents for this study were 90 English lecturers teaching in the Malaysian southern zone polytechnics. The mode of data collection is questionnaire. The pilot test using Alpha Cronbach analysis revealed the high reliability level which was 0.9. The actual collected data was analysed using SPSS 22.0 for descriptive analysis. Standard deviation was used to identify the lecturers' level of understanding of CLT and the overall lecturers' level of understanding is moderate which 0.45 is. As for level of CLT implementation, the CLT implementation is high which 0.21 is and the issues/challenges faced is moderate which is 0.42.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Malaysian polytechnics, Communicative English, polytechnics lecturers.

1. INTRODUCTION

On-going challenges and increasing globalization have increased the importance of communicating in English at the workplaces, especially for fresh graduates. The ability to speak fluently in English will help the fresh graduates to match and fit the employers' requirement and thus will help the new employees to improve their job performance. Employers are looking for graduates who are fully equipped with both technical skills and ability to communicate well in English in order for the fresh graduates to cope with the rapid changes in the industry. A lack of communicative English skills is a serious handicap to any young aspiring professional, who will go out to seek for job very soon.

This is the reason of the shifting of the English syllabi orientation from English as Specific Purposes (ESP) into Communicative English (CE). The emphasis on the speaking skills has been given a priority in the teaching of English language in polytechnic. The new modules were designed to equip the students with important and useful gestures and expressions so that they can use it in a wide variety of social conversations and situations. There have been a lot of discussions on the low English language proficiency level of the polytechnic students amongst academicians, the community as well as the industry which are soon to be employers of the polytechnic graduates. The general objective of the English Language syllabus in polytechnics is to equip students with required expertise in academic and technical context so that the students are able to excel in the industries when they leave polytechnics. According to [1], communication skills are amongst the most popular sought after skills by many employers. Once the students graduate and go for their job interview, they are already being assessed on their ability to communicate in English. Low confidence level and unable to speak in English will hinder one's chances of being hired as an employee.

In order for the students to be able to work in a good company, they must possess good communication skills other than mastering the technical know-how for the job. Nowadays, communication skills are amongst the most needed skills by many future companies. For an example, once the graduate attends an interview, the employers have started to evaluate the candidate's communication skills. The candidate will have extra points if he or she is able to converse well in English and having high confidence level and ability to express himself well will improve the chance of being hired in that particular company. In order for the polytechnics' graduates to be accepted in any good companies, they must portray their potential not only through their hard skills, but also their soft skills.

Statement of the Problem:

There have been great concerns that Malaysian Polytechnics are not producing graduates who meet the needs and expectations of the employers. The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) mentioned that in the 2016, Malaysia had 200 000 jobless graduates and to make it worse, this number excludes those who have just completed Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), diplomas and certificate programmes [2]. According to [2], there are three main causes why fresh graduates are unemployed which are lack of English proficiency, poor attitude and poor communication skills. Apart from that, according to the research conducted by [3], most studies have concluded that these graduates are not equipping themselves in mastering the use of English for them to be able to communicate at the workplace. Employers are expecting the graduates to have good ability to converse in the language apart from their understanding and knowledge in their particular technical areas.

The shifting of the English syllabi orientation from English as Specific Purposes (ESP) into Communicative English (CE) took place in 2011 and the main reason for this shift of syllabus was to cater the needs of the industries where they requested for students who can converse well in English instead of students who can only write reports. The general objective of the English Language syllabus in polytechnic is to equip the students with necessary skills to be used on social interactions and therefore fulfil the needs of the industries. Before the introduction of Communicative English syllabus, polytechnic students are taught ESP such as English for Technical Purposes, English for Commerce Purposes, English for Engineering and Technology, English for Design, English for Information Communication Technology (ICT), English for Tourism and Hospitality and other ESP syllabus depending on the courses offered by the polytechnics to meet students' future needs. In this syllabus, each group of students depends on a similar syllabus that is used through the fields (i.e commerce engineering, hotel and tourism and information and technology). The preparation of the module is carried out to accommodate as close as possible the students' background of study so that it can be applied to all departments [4].

All these problems raise a question on why the polytechnic students are still unable to speak well and confidently despite the Communicative English syllabus that they have undergone for three semesters in polytechnic. Other than that, the problems also arise when the sudden change of the syllabus was not supported by the training of the lecturers or any teaching materials to be used in the classroom. The lecturers are not exposed to the basic concept of Communicative Language Teaching that is supposed to uphold the Communicative English syllabus. These circumstances indirectly force the language lecturers to be aware of the trans disciplinary subject contents of different field so that they can really give their best for the benefits of the students.

Research Objectives:

Based on the background of the problem statement, there are four objectives of the research which are:

- a. To find out whether the lecturers are facing common issues/challenges in implementing CLT at polytechnics.
- b. To find out the lecturers' level of understanding of CLT
- c. To find out the lecturers' level of CLT implementation.

Research Questions:

This study focuses on the following questions:

- a. Are the lecturers facing the common issues/challenges in implementing CLT at polytechnics?
- b. What are the lecturers' levels of understanding of CLT?
- c. What are the lecturers' levels of CLT implementation?

Definition and Principles of CLT:

When the audio-lingual approach appears to be a failure, everyone was looking at the new approach that can be used to learn language. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) started to become popular in the 1960s. Once it was known, educationists and scholars alike try to give a definition which best suit the term. [5] claims that the term CLT means different things to different people. The most important objective of any language teaching is the ability to develop communicative competence among the learners through CLT is proposed by [6]. As for [7], she mentioned some aspects which are not CLT. Based on her writing, CLT is not concerned exclusively with face-to-face oral communication and it applies to all aspects of learning including writing and reading activities which get the readers and writers involved in the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning and the objectives of CLT rely in the learner needs in a given context. In short, CLT is an approach, or theory of intercultural communicative competence that can be used in developing materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning.

The CLT basically makes sure that the students are able to communicate with their peers in the language and the most important thing is that meaning gets across to the other side. In this context, CLT is used in teaching English syllabus since the syllabus is Communicative English.

According to [6] and [7], there are eight characteristics of language teaching and learning based on the Communicative Language Teaching or Communicative Approach which are:

- a. The goal of the teaching and learning of language is to improve the learners' ability to communicate in the targeted language.
- b. The content of the language course includes semantic notions and social functions and not just linguistic structure.
- c. Students work in groups or pairs in the teaching and learning process.
- d. Students will carry out role-play.
- e. The materials used in the classroom are authentic so it relates to real-life situations.
- f. Lecturer as facilitator.
- g. Skills are integrated from the beginning; a given activity might involve reading, speaking, listening and writing.
- h. Lecturers have the knowledge of the language and use it fluently and appropriately.

Before this, Malaysian polytechnics curriculum had given attention to the importance of English of Specific Purposes (ESP) in the teaching and learning of English. This was because of the high usage of English Language in all areas such as business, law, hospitality, science and technology, tourism and many other fields. The shifting of the English syllabi orientation from English as Specific Purposes (ESP) into Communicative English (CE) took place in 2011 and the main reason for this changed of syllabi was to cater the needs of the industries where they requested for students who can converse well in English instead of students who can only write reports [8].

The general objective of the English Language syllabus in polytechnic is to equip the students with necessary skills to be used on social interactions and therefore fulfil the needs of the industries. Before the introduction of Communicative English syllabus, polytechnic students are taught ESP such as English for Technical Purposes, English for Commerce Purposes, English for Engineering and Technology, English for Design, English for Information Communication Technology (ICT), English for Tourism and Hospitality and other ESP syllabus depending on the courses offered by the polytechnics to meet students' future needs. In this syllabus, each group of students depends on a similar syllabus that is used through the fields (i.e commerce engineering, hotel and tourism and information and technology). The preparation of the module is carried out to accommodate as close as possible the students' background of study so that it can be applied to all departments [8]. After the feedbacks given by the industries received, the Department of Polytechnic Education changed the ESP syllabus to Communicative English syllabus.

The shift from ESP to CE was hoped to improve the students' communication skills thus helping them to secure better jobs after they have graduated from the polytechnics. Despite the aim, there are still reports from the industries on the lack of graduates' communication skills and causing problems to the fresh graduates to excel in the field of work. Through their three semesters of learning English, they students are required to carry out role-play, carry out group discussion, deliver oral presentation, attend mock job interview and even learn to write resume and cover letter. All these are to equip

them with the necessary skills when they leave polytechnics. These tasks or assessments are corresponding to the English syllabus designed by Department of Polytechnic Education and it is in line with the characteristics of CLT as highlighted by [6] and [9]. So, the students' performances as reported by the industries raised a question which is why the CLT is not helping the students, thus inspiring the researcher to investigate on what is really happening on the lecturers' point of view as they are the executors.

Research Design:

The questionnaire serves as the main research instruments for this study. It is able to produce the desired results and it is both convenient and cost saving. It also can be carried out within the limited time available for the study and high reliability is obtainable.

Selection of Population:

The population for this study was 90 English lecturers teaching in the southern zone Malaysian conventional polytechnics. The researcher chose the polytechnics with the intention to get the feedback from the lecturers who had taught English as Specific Purposes before the shift to Communicative English in 2011. All the conventional polytechnics in the southern zone were established before 2011 and the lecturers teaching in those polytechnics have experience teaching both syllabuses. That is sufficient enough for them to answer questions pertaining to Communicative Language Teaching. To elicit data for the study, the lecturers have responded to four parts of the questionnaire which will focus on background information, the understanding of CLT, the implementation and also the issues and challenges faced in implementing the CLT in their teaching and learning process.

2. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Questionnaire:

The questionnaire used in this study was designed by Abdul Malik Ahmad to gather data from his research on English teachers in Bengkalis, Riau. Questionnaire poses an advantage in this study as it assists to code and analyse the collected data. The questionnaire was adopted and adapted according to the setting and sample of the research. Some of questions were rephrased and made easier for the English lecturers to answer since it can be understood that the lecturers are very busy with their daily tasks in the office.

Pilot Study:

A pilot study was conducted to obtain validity and reliability of the items in the questionnaire. The pilot study was carried out in order to test the respondents' understanding of the structure of the sentences and the items in the questionnaire. Apart from that, it was also carried out to identify any possible problems that might occur before the real research is carried out. According to [10], a pilot study is carried out to determine whether the questions in the questionnaire should be maintained or amended in order to answer all the research questions.

Table 1.1 Description of the reliability classification

A	Reliability description
1.00 – 0.80	Very strong
0.60 – 0.79	Strong
0.40 – 0.59	Weak
0.10 – 0.39	Very weak

Table 1.2 Reliability of the Questionnaire Item for Lecturer's Understanding of CLT

Item	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	The value of Alpha Cronbach if the item deleted	The total value of Alpha Cronbach
B1	0.839	0.922	0.921
B2	0.708	0.921	
B3	0.814	0.921	
B4	0.759	0.924	

Table 1.2 shows that every items in the lecturer's understanding of CLT have been successful such with the values of Alpha Cronbach between 0.921 and 0.924. While the total value of Alpha Cronbach is 0.921 and the values of correlation item score is between 0.708 until 0.839 and the values of correlation item is above 0.7.

Table 1.3 Reliability of the Questionnaire Item for the Implementation of CLT in the Classroom

Item	Correlation item with corrected total score	The value of Alpha Cronbach if the item was dropped	The total value of Alpha Cronbach
C1	0.839	0.922	0.923
C2	0.708	0.921	
C3	0.814	0.921	
C4	0.759	0.924	
C5	0.820	0.919	
C6	0.769	0.920	
C7	0.851	0.919	
C8	0.747	0.924	
C9	0.831	0.924	
C10	0.774	0.921	
C11	0.852	0.919	
C12	0.737	0.919	
C13	0.871	0.920	
C14	0.755	0.919	
C15	0.878	0.920	
C16	0.747	0.924	
C17	0.867	0.920	
C18	0.759	0.926	
C19	0.861	0.925	
C20	0.725	0.921	

Table 1.3 shows that every item in the implementation of CLT in the classroom has the value of Alpha Cronbach between 0.920 and 0.926. While the total value of Alpha Cronbach for this aspect is 0.923 and the value of correlation item is between 0.708 until 0.878. The value for it is above 0.7.

Table 1.4 Reliability of the Questionnaire Item for the Issues and Challenges

Item	Correlation item with corrected total score	The value of Alpha Cronbach if the item was dropped	The total value of Alpha Cronbach
D1	0.551	0.885	0.891
D2	0.689	0.880	
D3	0.550	0.885	
D4	0.581	0.884	
D5	0.642	0.882	
D6	0.717	0.879	
D7	0.025	0.897	
D8	0.368	0.890	
D9	0.604	0.883	
D10	0.681	0.881	
D11	0.599	0.883	
D12	0.074	0.901	
D13	0.797	0.879	
D14	0.332	0.891	
D15	0.664	0.883	
D16	0.292	0.891	
D17	0.623	0.884	
D18	0.271	0.892	
D19	0.059	0.898	
D20	0.627	0.882	

Table 1.4 shows that every item in the issues and challenges has the values of Alpha Cronbach between 0.879 and 0.898. While the total value of Alpha Cronbach for this aspect is 0.891 and the value of correlation item is between 0.025 until 0.797 and the value of this aspect shows that it is above from 0.7.

Findings:**The Issues/Challenges:****Table 1.5 The Issues/Challenges**

Item	Aspect	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
D1	I hesitate to use the CLT because it does not allow enough time to study for grammar	2.63	0.80	Moderate
D2	I hesitate to use the CLT in speaking classes because it asks me to be orally proficient in the target language	2.33	0.88	Low
D3	There are few opportunities for lecturers to get CLT training	3.26	0.78	Moderate
D4	I have little time to develop materials for communicative classes	3.53	0.77	Moderate
D5	I dont have enough authentic teaching materials	2.96	0.85	Moderate
D6	The repetitions of assessments affect the use of CLT in my lesson	3.26	0.98	Moderate
D7	Students have low-level of English proficiency	3.93	0.52	High
D8	Students have a passive style of learning	3.73	0.78	High
D9	The students resist communicative class activities	3.13	0.97	Moderate
D10	It is difficult for most students to use the target language in small groups of about five people	3.33	0.80	Moderate
D11	It is difficult for most students to interact verbally in pairs in the target language	3.30	0.91	Moderate
D12	The size of the class is too big	3.76	0.67	High
D13	Students have a difficult time using their imagination to construct variations on studied conversation	3.46	0.68	Moderate
D14	Student have a difficult time using body language or gestures to communicate	3.66	0.75	Moderate
D15	I feel that students are embarrassed to make gramatical mistakes in front of groups, both small and large	3.76	0.62	High
D16	I feel that students are embarrassed to make pronunciation mistakes in front of groups, both small and large	3.83	0.46	High
D17	Students are hesitant to give their own opinions in the target language for fear of offending other students or the lecturer	3.73	0.63	High
D18	Students are hesitant to give their own opinions in both the target language for fear of being considered wrong	3.86	0.43	High
D19	I feel that students worry too much about their grammar, which hinder them from trying to convey meanings	3.73	0.69	High
D20	I feel that students have a difficult time learning English because of the differences in their cultures/background	3.36	0.88	Moderate
	Overall	3.43	0.42	Moderate

Table 1.5 shows the overall data related to the issues and the challenges with the mean score 3.43 and standard deviation 0.42. Based on the data, it can be said that most of the respondents faced common issues/challenges from the students and the environment.

Lecturer's Level Of Understanding of CLT and Level Of CLT Implementation:**Table 1.6 Lecturer's Level of Understanding of CLT**

Item	Aspect	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
B1	Communicative competence is both linguistic knowledge and the skill in using this knowledge	4.03	0.49	High
B2	An understanding of the culture of the target language is essential to learn the language	3.13	1.00	Moderate
B3	Teaching grammar, pronunciation and spelling alongside speaking is very important to being able to communicate	4.20	0.61	High
B4	Students should first cope with communicate tasks before being given the gramatical form	3.30	0.83	Moderate
	Overall	3.66	0.45	Moderate

Table 1.6 shows the overall data related to lecturer's level of understanding of CLT with the mean score 3.66 and standard deviation 0.45. In the moderate group, the highest is "Students should first cope with communicate tasks before being given the grammatical form" with the mean score 3.30 and standard deviation is 0.83, followed by "An understanding of the culture of the target language is essential to learn the language" with the mean score 3.13 and standard deviation 1.00. Meanwhile, the highest item in this construct is "Teaching grammar pronunciation and spelling alongside speaking is very important to being able to communicate" with the score mean is 4.20 and standard deviation 0.61 and the interpretation for this item is high.

Table 1.7 Level of CLT Implementation

Item	Aspect	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
C1	My speaking classes focus less on form/grammar but more on meaning	3.53	0.68	Moderate
C2	My speaking classes focus mostly on form/grammar	2.76	0.85	Moderate
C3	My speaking classes have pair work exercises	4.26	0.63	High
C4	My speaking classes have small group exercises	4.43	0.56	High
C5	I use authentic materials from the real world in class when appropriate	4.13	0.43	High
C6	Over 50% of my class time is used in some kind of communicative activity	4.23	0.62	High
C7	I utilize role-play as a great deal in my classes	4.00	0.58	High
C8	The students have more speaking time in class than I do	4.03	0.49	High
C9	I encourage the students to use their own ideas to make conversations in pair or small group exercises	4.16	0.64	High
C10	My classes are more student-centered rather than teacher-centered	4.00	0.94	High
C11	I correct my students pronunciations, even if they can still be understood	3.63	0.92	Moderate
C12	I introduce 'authentic language' in real context in the classroom whenever possible	3.53	0.62	Moderate
C13	I encourage students to convey meaning without penalty, reading and writing together since they are regularly used in real life	3.83	0.53	High
C14	I inculcate all the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing together since they are regularly used in real life	3.83	0.69	High
C15	I focus more on fluency rather than accuracy in order to keep the conversation going on	3.66	0.66	Moderate
C16	I use pre-communicative activities during class	3.80	0.61	High
C17	I facilitate the communication process	4.00	0.74	High
C18	I teach with various communicative activities (pair work, role play, group work, etc)	4.23	0.62	High
C19	I create different life situations during class	4.10	0.66	High
C20	I use audio visual aids during class	4.13	0.68	High
	Overall	3.91	0.21	High

Table 1.7 shows the overall data related to the implementation of CLT with the mean score 3.91 and standard deviation 0.21 which is high. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the lecturers have moderate understanding of CLT. Yet, they still have high implementation of CLT in their classes. Apart from that, the findings for the questionnaire revealed that overall the lecturers are implementing CLT on a high level. As for the issues/challenges shows that the lecturers faced moderate issues/challenges in implementing CLT in the polytechnics. As for the relation between lecturers' understanding of CLT based on highest degree earned and teaching experience, the findings revealed that there are no significance differences on lecturers' understanding of CLT, CLT implementation and the issues/challenges based on highest degree earned and teaching experience.

3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Issues/Challenges Faced by Lecturers in Implementing CLT:

As a whole, the lecturers are facing moderate issues/challenges in the implementation of CLT in their English classrooms. This is based on the data gathered from the survey and the interview sessions carried out with the respondents. As for the questionnaire, 20 questions were asked to 90 of the respondents. The questionnaire was aimed to identify what are the issues/challenges faced by the polytechnic lecturers in implementing CLT in their teaching and learning.

a. Students' Low Level of English Proficiency:

Based on the findings, the highest issue/challenge faced by the lecturers is students have low-level of English proficiency. The finding revealed that the feedback from the questionnaire shows that this item scored the highest mean from the overall questions. Apart from that, the quantitative findings data is supported by the qualitative finding which is from the interview session. Based on the admission qualification for polytechnic diploma level, the applicants must pass their English SPM paper (Bahagian Pengambilan Pelajar Politeknik). This is the main reason why the students in polytechnics have different background of English and different level of proficiency. This makes it hard for the lecturers to really cater to the students' individual needs. Some students are really proficient in the language which makes it easier for them to communicate well in the class and when they start working in the future. As for the students who are not proficient in the language, they will face difficulties in carrying out activities in the classroom. To support this claim, the result from the interviews carried out also revealed the same findings. Six of the lecturers were asked if they think that students have low-level of English proficiency. Based on the interview transcripts, it shows that most of the lecturers agreed that students have low-level of English proficiency. Their responses were based on their own experience and also based on the students' SPM result. Some of the lecturers mentioned that students have low level English proficiency because most of them were not able to use the target language effectively in communication especially when they were asked to work in group or partner, they usually did not use English. This finding is also supported by the research carried out by [11] whereby she identified one of the issues hindering a successful implementation of CLT as students have low English proficiency. Even the lecturers agreed that they faced issues/challenges due to the number of students in the classroom, the level of implementation shown that the students are still benefiting from CLT as it encourages the students to participate in the classroom activities even if they are low proficiency students [12]

b. Large Number of Students in the Class:

Apart from that, it can also be said that the size of the classes are too big and it caused problems to the implementation of CLT in polytechnics. The data collected shows a high mean score for this item. This is supported by the interviews carried out with the lecturers. Based on the interview, all of the respondents agree that their classes are too large and actually give a problem. For an example, one of the lecturers mentioned that she has 40-50 students in her class and it is very difficult for the students to really play an important role in communicative class. Other than that, it is also highlighted that communicative classes should not have big number of students in order for the communicative class to function well. This is because the lecturers could not focus on individual student. Based on the respondents' teaching experience usually there will be more than 40 students in their classrooms. Some of the respondents even mentioned she had 50 students in the class.

Even based on the researcher's experience, if there were too many students, the classes were combined and the lecturers had to carry out mass lectures. With this situation, it is very difficult to have an ideal CLT classroom whereby the students can really interact with their friends and carry out pair work or small group activities. According to one of the respondents, she thinks that it is better to have a small group of students in the class with multilevel of English proficiency so that the low level students can learn from the advanced students to communicate. As mentioned earlier, the main objective of a CLT classroom is for the learners to interact with one another and directly improve their communication skills.

c. Students' Hesitancy to Speak:

Students' hesitancy to speak is one of the issues/challenges faced by the lecturers in the implementation of CLT. According to the interview session carried out, it seems that the lecturers agreed that student's hesitancy to speak in the classroom also leads to difficulty in implementing CLT in the classroom. This is because the lecturers are teaching adult

learners and it is not easy to force the students to communicate during the lesson. If the students are willing to try to improve their communication skills, they will try as hard as possible to understand what their classmates' points and also try to make their classmates understand their points. This will lead to an active participation of students in the communication class [13].

Among the reasons that lead to this problem are, the students are embarrassed to make mistakes in front of their friends. This includes grammatical and pronunciation mistakes. Apart from that, the findings from the survey also reveal that the students are hesitant to contribute to the classroom activities because the students are afraid of being considered wrong. This is supported with the responses gathered from the interview sessions. According to the respondents, students are too afraid to make mistakes and they are not good at voicing out their opinions. Apart from that, the one of the lecturers also mentioned that the students are shy and they think their points are wrong. One of the lecturers also shared her experience whereby according to her, most of her students are afraid to express their opinions and rather keep them to themselves in order to not let others laugh at their mistakes. This issue/challenge is also highlighted by many other researchers. Some students are too comfortable with the traditional classroom arrangement whereby the lecturers are supposed to be in front of the class and the students at the back waiting to receive input from the lecturers [13] and [14]

d. Students' Passive Style of Learning:

Based on the findings, students' passive style of learning is also an issue/challenge for the lecturers in implementing CLT in the classrooms. This finding is also supported by the research carried out by [13] and [15]. Based on these two researches, students involved in the CLT classroom are lack of motivation to participate in the classroom activities. They rather wait for the lecturers or teachers to give them all the inputs. In the research done by [15], the students are passive and the teacher speaks more than the students. This situation might be different in polytechnics as based on the observation, the lecturers carried out CLT according to the criteria. The only problem is some of the students did not participate in the activities and they just sit quietly waiting for their friends to give responses to the class. This situation leads to some issues/challenges faced by the lecturers in carrying out CLT in polytechnics.

Lecturers' Level of Understanding of CLT:

According to the data collected, lecturers' level of understanding of CLT is moderate. Four questions were asked to investigate the lecturers' understanding and it can be said that most of the lecturers have the general knowledge of what is actually CLT. It is very important for the researcher to know the lecturers' level of understanding as it will give information on whether the lecturers are aware of what they are teaching in the class or not. This is in line with the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education), whereby the polytechnics are given the responsibility as the premier provider that caters for technical and professional education to produce skilful and knowledgeable graduates of semi-professionals for future workforce. So, the polytechnic lecturers must have the knowledge and understanding of the syllabus in order to deliver it successfully to the students. It also shows that the six years of Communicative English implementation have given positive impact towards the lecturers' understanding of CLT. The lecturers also believed that the ability to communicate well is both linguistic knowledge and the skills in using the language. This means that the lecturers agreed that in order for the students to be able to speak well, they must not only know the grammatical aspects of the language, but know how to use it and when to use it. This is what the main objective of CLT.

Lecturers' Level of CLT Implementation:

Based on the interpretation for all of the items in this section, the implementation of CLT is high. This proves that polytechnics lecturers do implement CLT in their classrooms despite having moderate understanding of the CLT concept itself. 20 questions were included in this section aimed to get the lecturers to level the CLT used in their classroom. It can be said that most of the lecturers carried out pair work and small group exercise. This is because, the polytechnics lecturers are teaching adult learners, whereby the students have their own ideas and opinions to be shared to the whole class. Their classes are more student-centered rather than teacher-centered since most of the topic included in the English syllabus required the students to be independent and creative. For an example, one of the topics in semester 1 English syllabus is Current Issues. In this topic, students are taught reading skills, but the students are encourage to research on the most suitable topics that they find interesting and they are required to share their ideas with the whole class. This is why the implementation of CLT is high among English lecturers in polytechnics.

Other than that, it can be said that the implementation of CLT is high among polytechnic lecturers due to the fact that all lecturers are observed by the Head of English Unit or Head of Department once every semester. Before the lecturers carry out the lesson, they must submit their lesson plan to the observer to be checked and approved. The Head of Unit or Head of Department will give their comments and give suggestions to help to improve the lesson. With this practice, the lecturers will always prepare themselves to teach according to the syllabus and incorporate CLT in the everyday teaching and learning process.

On top of that, semester four students learning Communicative English 3 will learn Job Hunting Skills. In this topic, the students are preparing themselves for a job interview and also the working environment. CLT is highly implemented since the students will usually asked to sit in groups to discuss about the do's and the don't while attending a job interview, discuss in pairs what to be included in a resume and cover letter and also carry out a mock job interview in front of their friends. This is in line with the research carried out by [16] whereby students will improve on the communication skills if they are exposed to purposeful and authentic language use rather than mechanical practice of language drill. Based on the findings, it can also be said that polytechnic lecturers act as facilitators during the communication activities. This is supporting the claim made by [17] who mentioned that CLT requires minimal teacher roles, constant pair work or small group problem solving. From the questions in the survey, it can be said that CLT is fully implemented and it is suitable with the polytechnic English syllabus.

The Summary of Findings:

The polytechnic lecturers faced moderate issues/challenges in implementing CLT. Among the issues/challenges faced are students have low-level English proficiency, students have passive style of learning English, the size of the class is too big, students are embarrassed to make mistakes in front of the class and students are too afraid to be considered wrong. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the issues/challenges faced by the polytechnic lecturers come from the students and the educational system. For an example, the students lack of participation, students low-level of English proficiency, large number of students in the class and also the repetition of assessments.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study suggest that it is essential to identify the lecturers' understanding of CLT, CLT implementation and the issues/challenges faced along the way in preparing polytechnic students to face the working environment after they have graduated. This study is important since after the shift of ESP to CE in 2011, English lecturers in polytechnic had to change their method without proper guidelines. With the findings, there will be no mismatch between the instructions from the Polytechnic Studies Department and the real implementation of CLT in the classroom. This will ensure no mismatch between the lecturers' teaching and the students' needs after they have graduated. The results of the study in general demonstrated high implementation of CLT among polytechnic lecturers even though they face some issues/challenges.

Many studies have been carried out on students in foreign countries on the effectiveness and the weaknesses of CLT. This study is unique because it focuses on polytechnics lecturers only where by the syllabus being taught is Communicative English. Even some of the researches mentioned some mismatch and the lack of implementation of CLT in the classroom, this research findings revealed that polytechnic lecturers have good understanding of CLT and they know how CLT is being practiced in the classroom. Therefore, if the issues/challenges highlighted in this research is tried to be solved, the students will get the most benefits of CLT which is being able to communicate well in the targeted language.

As seen on mass media nowadays, speaking skill among Malaysians has deteriorated tremendously. CLT is one way of making the students and fresh graduates to speak. Despite all the advantages of CLT, lecturers must not expect the students to become proficient within a short period of time. Allowing the students to get use to speak and interact in the class will eventually help them to improve their English language proficiency since in CLT view, language is considered as both linguistic and social-behaviour and with the interaction in the classroom, the students will learn to make meaning in their conversations [18].

There are a lot of other contributing factors towards language learning in classrooms. CLT is one of the ways to learn a language. This study suggests that lecturers should be made aware of students' needs and thus working helping them to improve the English language proficiency. If there is a match between lecturers' understanding of CLT, CLT implementation and the addressing issues/challenges in CLT implementation towards improving polytechnic students' English language learning, then the research objectives have been achieved.

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