

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

High school students need to be able to communicate in English for very practical everyday use, socially, and particularly at the academic atmosphere in the classroom of the school. This will require the teaching contents to be practical and relevant for the students; to do so effectively, teachers should familiarise themselves with those practical contents that the students need. Very often, language teachers just focus on the language itself, content with whatever exercises that are made available in the text developed mostly in the Western cultural contexts, and are themselves unfamiliar with the content the students need. Such teachers serve almost exclusively as “drilling”; in fact, many traditional grammatical drills and exercises are extremely boring at best and de-motivating to students at worst. This is one of the reasons students are driven to learn English by taking short practical language training courses or learn English on their own by tapes and video.

Regarding the appropriate teaching methods and process, from the students’ perspective, teachers should have an open-minded attitude – meaning, avoid feeling that those who speak English well in a conversation are superior to those who cannot, avoid displaying condescending attitude towards those who speak English with a heavy local accent, for instance. Teachers should be aware that English is just a means for international communication, rather than a symbol of superior social status.

Students often think that the competence in a conversation is the product of language learning, but it is also a crucial part of the language learning process. Teachers can improve students' conversation competence using minimal responses,

recognizing scripts, and using language to converse about language that they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. These teachers should help students learn to converse in a group so that the students can improve their conversation competence.

Teachers can help students develop their conversation competence by making them aware of the scripts for different situations so that they can predict what they will hear and what they will need to say in response. Through interactive activities, teachers can give students practice in managing and varying the language that different scripts contain.

Teachers usually use several approaches to influence effective teaching and learning processes. In typical classes, students are given lecture, complete assignments outside of class and take an examination to demonstrate their degree of understanding and retention of the subject matter. The examinations are returned and new material is covered, repeating the process over and over. There is little time for reflection and discussion of students' errors and misconceptions.

The following is the list of score through the first semester of academic period 2010/2011 found by the researcher in a state senior high school 'SMA Negeri 2 Balige' that displays through a table:

Table 1.1 English data of 'SMA Negeri 2 Balige' of Semester 1 of 2010/2011

No	Language Skills	Median Score each classes				Mean
		XI-1	XI-2	XI-3	XI-4	
1	Listening	71,7	72,2	70,8	71,8	71
2	Speaking	75,7	74,4	77,1	73,3	75
3	Reading	78,6	76,3	73,2	75,4	75
4	Writing	72,6	72,1	71,5	72,5	72

Source: First Semester data of students result in 'SMA Negeri 2 Balige' of academic period 2010/2011

Based on the score of students list above, it was found out that teaching English has not yet satisfied particularly in their students' conversation competence which is shown in the score of the speaking skill. There are several factors contributed to the unsatisfied results which may cover the environment, the students' attitude toward the language and the existing teaching techniques which should be improved to meet the students' needs. The teaching techniques for speaking skill applied in the school are varied but mainly the teacher asked the students' opinion about the topic learned at that time. Based on the aforementioned situation, the researcher intended to apply different strategies to provoke the students' mind to eagerly express their ideas in speaking using English language namely by pairing the existing teaching methods in the school with communicative language teaching techniques: information gap technique and information transfer technique.

Which teaching technique is "right" for a particular lesson depends on many things, and among them are the age and developmental level of the students, what the students already know, and what they need to know to succeed with the lesson, the subject-matter content, the objective of the lesson, the available people, time, space and material resources, and the physical setting. Another, more difficult problem is to select a teaching technique that best fits one's particular teaching style and the lesson-situation. There is no one 'right' technique for teaching a particular lesson, but there are some criteria that pertain to each that can help a teacher make the best decision possible.

Apart from the teaching techniques that should be considered to provoke and accelerate the students' conversation competence, the students' attitudes toward the environment that may influence their attitudes to speak a foreign language should also be considered. As Gardner and Lambert (1972:132) contend that improvement in a

second language relies not only on intellectual capacity and language aptitude but also on the learner's attitudes toward representatives of the other ethnolinguistic group involved. In other words, there is direct contribution of attitudes toward learning improvement.

Hopefully, if information gap technique and information transfer technique as teaching techniques paired with students' attitudes toward English as their foreign language can provoke the students' mind to eagerly express their ideas, then their conversation competence can be improved.

1.2 The Problems of Study

The research problems of the study are formulated as follows:

1. Is the students' conversation competence taught by information gap technique better than by information transfer technique?
2. Is the students' conversation competence with positive attitude toward learning English better than with negative attitude?
3. Is there any interaction between the teaching techniques and the students' attitudes toward learning English on the students' conversation competence?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To discover whether the students' conversation competence taught by information gap technique is better than information transfer technique.
2. To discover whether the students' conversation competence with positive attitude toward learning English is better than with negative attitude.

3. To discover whether there is any interaction between CLT teaching techniques and students' attitudes toward learning English on the students' conversation competence.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

Conversation competence will be the focus of the study although the other skills will still be needed during the process to improve the students' conversation competence and the students will be tested in a written form.

The students will be taught using Communicative Language Teaching techniques namely information gap technique and information transfer technique. The study will also investigate two categories of students' attitude namely positive and negative which will affect their improvement in the conversation competence.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to be useful for the following:

1. Theoretically, to enhance English language teachers' horizon about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques in teaching English as a Foreign Language to Indonesian students, of how information gap technique and information transfer technique affect the students' conversation competence.
2. Practically, to contribute information to English language teachers to improve their students' conversation competence in English using Communicative Language Teaching techniques.
3. Also, to contribute information about the interaction between students' attitudes toward learning English and CLT teaching techniques may affect to the students' achievement in studying English language to English language teachers.