

Promoting College Students' Academic Speaking Skills through The Crosscultural Multistructural Approach

Gunadi H. Sulistyono

Abstract: The writing of this article is motivated by the practice in the teaching of speaking skills in the English Department which seems to encounter several challenges, three of which are: absence of cross-cultural contexts, insufficient guidance on the part of the students in organizing ideas, and insufficiency in the instructional framework that the teacher implements to reach the pre-stated goal. To this end, an approach to instruction has been developed, which mainly rests on three theoretical frameworks: knowledge of the world, cultural thought pattern, and cooperative learning.

Keywords: cross-cultural multistructural approach, academic speaking skill, college student.

According to the academic catalog of the Faculty of Language and Arts Education, State University of Malang, speaking is a language skill course that is mandatory for every student majoring in English to master along the line with the other three language skill courses: listening, reading, and writing. The course is configured into four interrelated prerequisite courses as Speaking I, Speaking II, Speaking III, and Speaking IV, each of which has an academic load of 2 credits (IKIP MALANG, 1992). The purpose

Gunadi H. Sulistyono is a lecturer at the Department of English Language Education, State University of Malang (UM).

of the courses in general is to equip the students with speaking skills which will ultimately enable them to function orally in English in varied social contexts using differing modes of rhetoric such as description, narration, and argumentation.

It seems obvious from the description above that the Department considers it essential for the students to master speaking as a functional language skill. The expectation is academically grounded on at least the following two perspectives. The first perspective is instrumentally personal. Naturally speaking, human verbal communication sets out with the ability of utilizing mechanisms that will involve oral production of language (Kayfetz & Smith, 1992). It is through this kind of language skill that human beings socially try to express their emotions, to share their feelings, to exchange ideas, or in a more abstract sense to understand others or to be understood by others. In any highly specialized context, for instance in the business world, speaking skills will crucially help the interlocutors shape an intended message in their minds. Second, with proficient speaking skills, graduates of the Department are expected to be able to function professionally in their future workplace. For instance, those taking the English education stream are expected to be able to set a good model for their students to imitate; whereas those working on the non-education program are expected to be able to deal with job-related matters effectively and efficiently. In short, in terms of professional concerns, with quality speaking skills at hand, the graduates are expected to functionally empower themselves to carry out their responsibilities.

Casual observations, however, reveal that the teaching practice in speaking classes that has been exercised in the Department so far has undergone several features that follow. First, the topics of a session's discussion are normally those encompassing here-and-there aspects of social life. That is to say, the topics are mainly concerned with personal experiences. For instance, in the descriptive mode of presentation the topics may come out as my lovely hometown, an unforgettable experience, or how to make a good friend. In addition to these personally oriented topics, once the topic is assigned prior to the presentation, the students are 'left alone' in a situation in which there is no systematic guidance of what to do next. The instruction would commonly be: Prepare the topics for the next presentation. It is frequently the case that the students have no ideas on how to explore the topics. The students are assumed to know what to

do with the topic. As a result, during the presentation in the class session, they ramble here and there with the topic lacking an obvious focus of interest. They perform orally what they have experienced as best their knowledge can accommodate with no vivid structure of presentation in it. Third, the students commonly work on an individual basis. With the topic at hand, they try to jot down aspects of the topics they think they can dig up. Also, in the class presentation, a one-man-show presentation is frequently exercised in which one student presents orally, the others listening to him/her and responding to him/her. In short, a speaking class such as that described above is characterized by the following: 'close-encounter' topics, guidance-free topic exploration, and individual work basis.

As far as this issue is concerned, there has been scarcity of accurate and objective evidence that documents the history of the success or the failure of such a teaching practice. There has been no single study, be it on a local or nation-wide scale addressing the outcome of such a teaching-learning process. Therefore, it would be too simplistic to state that the teaching learning process described above is successful or fails in term of the students' learning achievement. However, the instructors' semesterly evaluation tends to demonstrate that about ninety percent of the students in a class would be considered successful in achieving the instructional goals.

Apart from the empirical evidence, however, the teaching of speaking skills adopting the approach exercised in the Department seems to bear several potential drawbacks that would put the students at a disadvantage and would degrade the quality of the instruction as a whole itself. First, the use of 'here-and-there' topics tends to lead the students to stagnancy in the achievement of knowledge of the world. This seems to be the case because the topics do not pose the students challenging perspectives. The intended message they want to exchange is already there available. As a result, students do not attempt to make further explorations out of the topic assigned. It seems that so far they have commonly been preoccupied by readily digestible information around them, which prevents them from the possibility of utilizing new challenging topics. That is to say, there has been a lack of topics that would broaden their horizon of knowledge, and that would teach them to make efforts to dig up correct information more accurately. It may be argued, however, that the involvement of such ready-to-use topics will help them in communicating their ideas during

the class presentation. The underlying philosophy for this practice seems to stem from familiarity with what to say. It is true that familiarity is an important aspect of fluency in a way. However, this is not sufficient especially for the students to have a broad point of worldview. It is argued that familiarity of topics can be created if exposure is facilitated. The question is then 'has there been an attempt to have the students exposed cross-culturally?'

Next, absence of a systematic framework on which the students can base their topic explorations devalues the achievement of the pre-stated goals. The elaboration of pre-stated goals into highly functional and measurable enabling objectives potentially falls short if the students are not systematically directed to the achievement of the goals. This implies that, first, clear objectives are necessary; and so is the dissemination of the objectives to the students. And, most importantly, sensible ways to achieve the goals are badly needed. Once the objectives are established and communicated to the students, which implies that they will be informed of what is expected of them, a third important step is required: the framework to achieve the goals. This framework ensures the right direction that the students have to take in order that the desired learning outcome can be properly accomplished. This way, the students will not practice 'trial and error' learning, thus minimizing inefficiency and ineffectiveness in their learning. In short, the students should exercise no random learning if effective and efficient learning is the ultimate goal.

Third, 'the lone ranger' way of exploring ideas does not equip the students with a sense of learning from or listening to others, which potentially limits the students' way of broadening their horizon of knowledge. As a consequence, the students are not made accustomed to possibilities of having different perspectives from others, which potentially hampers their ways to healthy and sensible arguments. In some cases, it seems true that individualization has several advantages. For instance, it gives opportunities to the students to learn at their own pace, which tends to be cognitively oriented. However, learning is not merely accomplished for cognitive purposes only. As human beings, socializing, which implies sharing, working together, interacting and probably arguing with others, is inseparable from our daily lives.

The problems as described above surely need attention and solutions if the instructional objectives as outlined in the Catalogue become the

concern of the department. Otherwise, the empowerment of the students with language skills will be seriously restrained, which means inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the instruction will recur again and again. The question is now how can the problems identified be solved in a systematic way? There are actually ways that can be considered to address the problems. The concern, however, for a solution that can embrace all the issues raised in the problems outlined above together conceptually. To this point, there seems to be a compelling need to establish an instructional model for managing a conversational class. To respond to these challenges, these ideas are proposed.

The purpose of this writing is specifically to propose an instructional model for teaching speaking skills, which would include: cross-cultural points of view and a learning framework on which the students can proceed throughout the course. For this purpose, the topics that follow will be discussed in this order: theoretical overview, the model development, and concluding remarks.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

To provide the theoretical ground, on which to base the development of the instructional model proposed in this piece of writing, several relevant conceptual aspects need to be discussed. These concepts include sub-topics that follow: (1) A Model of Communicative Language Competence and the Schema Theory, (2) Cultural Thought Patterns, and (3) Approaches to Instructional Class Management.

A Model of Communicative Language Competence and the Schema Theory

In response to a lengthy debate over factors that constitute language abilities, Bachman (1990) explores the competencies beyond those in the previous models. In her 1990 framework, Bachman speculatively outlines four main factors that are believed to play an important role in language processing. These factors are knowledge structure of the world, strategic competence, language competence, and psycho-physiological mechanisms. In her model these factors are further subdivided into several hierarchical layers. These factors interact in such a way that it makes it possible for someone to process language.

To illustrate, language processing requires active involvement of these four main factors together with their subfactors. First, for someone to process language, s/he needs something to be communicated, which is the intended message. The message itself is not sufficient for language processing. S/he further needs the means with which s/he can communicate the intended message; and this means is linguistic competence. Once s/he meets these two requirements of competence, another competence is needed that is strategic competence in which the information with its means, linguistic competence, will be organized before being produced. To actually produce language, the involvement of the next competence is needed. This is the utilization of psycho-physiological mechanisms. These mechanisms include two main factors: psychological factors such as motivation and attitude and physiological factors, which embrace factors such as the functional use of organs of speech. For a language to be processed, the interaction of these four main factors is critical: one cannot proceed without the involvement of the others.

For the purpose of the present discussion, however, knowledge of the world will be elaborated further; whereas the other competencies will not be addressed. The exclusion of these factors is motivated by the belief that a form of communication can still take place, though in its simplest form, in so far as the existence of the message to be communicated is fulfilled. Conversely, the total absence of the knowledge of the world makes it almost impossible for language processing to take place.

The term 'knowledge' in the phrase 'knowledge of the world' is closely associated with the concept of 'schema' or 'schemata'. One of the factors that plays an important role in comprehension-which necessarily involves the mechanisms of how 'human beings' receive, store, represent and process "information" or even "possess" knowledge (Kamppinen, 1993:1) is background knowledge. It is background knowledge that in some way leads human beings to the understanding of the world around them. The place in which this information is stored or processed is called schema.

Several definitions have been proposed in conjunction with the concept of schema or schemata. Schemata are highly systematic and generic knowledge networks, each component of which functions as 'slots' or 'placeholders', or 'nodes' (Kamppinen, 1993; den Uyl & van Oestendorp, 1980). Schemata are classified into two types according to the function: content

schemata, which embody general or specific information on a particular topic, and textual schemata, which contain information concerning rhetorical organization process. Further, with regards to the nodes, several experts theorize that schemata are characterized by the existence of factors that limit the filling of a slot, and the type of relationship among the nodes (Graesser et al., 1980) or the network of associations that a concept has (Pearson & Spiro, 1982). In addition, schemata are a hierarchical organization in which the most important and general information is placed at the top going down to the least important and specific one. In Minsky's vivid words, structures of experience constitute '... a sort of skeleton, somewhat like an application form with many blanks or slots to be filled. We will call blanks its terminals; we use them as connection points to which we can attach other kinds of information' (Minsky in Kamppinen, 1993:149).

One's introduction to or one's encounter with new cultures, which necessarily means the exposure to new knowledge, will be started with the analysis of his/her own cultures, which implies the activation of his/her prior knowledge. It is at this point that the schemata theory is useful to explain how one's new knowledge is processed and finally acquired in accumulation.

Cultural Thought Patterns

Once the intended messages are grasped cognitively, 'the cognitive schemata...(will)...shape experience' (Kamppinen, 1993:146). According to Kaplan (1972), the structuring of thoughts as learned by individuals varies from culture to culture. This implies that thought pattern organizations are culturally bound.

In his exploratory work, Kaplan (1972) argues, among other things, that oriental ways of thought patterning are different from those of the western tradition. While oriental people tend to touch on several general issues in a thought stream without any further elaboration on each issue, their western counterparts are inclined to pose a main idea with its elaborated relevant details. In other words, oriental thought patterns are likely to go round and round about a general theme; western people's organizational ways of thinking tend to go straightforward. Oriental thoughts are circularly patterned whereas western styles are linearly organized. Kaplan illustrates these different thought patterns as in Figure 1.

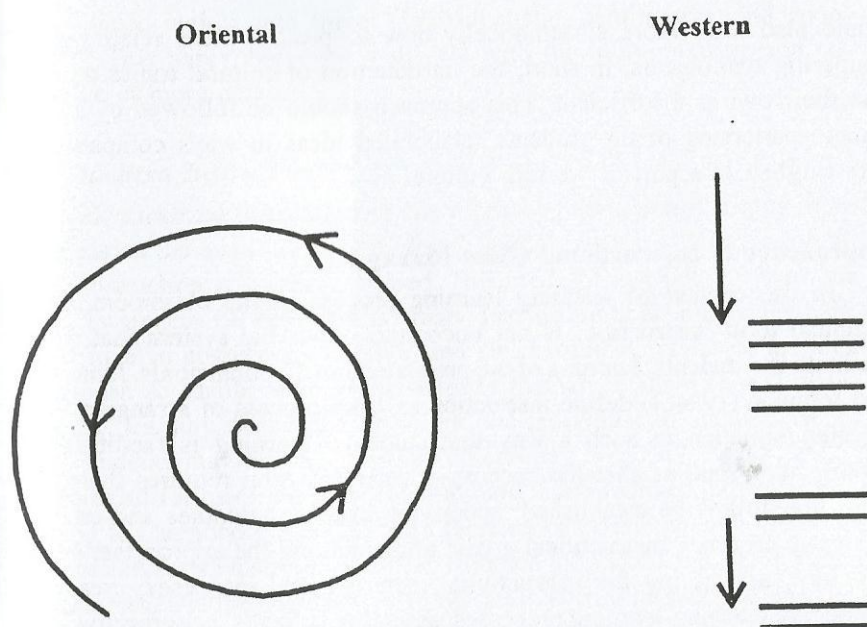


Figure 1 Oriental and Western Thought Patterns (Simplified from Kaplan's Ideas on Cultural Thought Patterns)

The relevance of this theory in this piece of writing lies in the organization of ideas which will be useful when the students have to communicate ideas based on a given topic. First, the students have a sense of awareness of the existence of different cultural thought patterns as outlined above. Next, the students are to organize the ideas in a way suggested by western thought patterns, that is, they are to shift from circular to linear thinking. This approach does not mean 'westernizing' the students' ways of thinking. Rather, it is an approach, which will give the students a sense of western culture learning. As a part of western culture, English should not just be learned for its own sake, but its underlying principle of idea organization needs to be learned as well. For instance, the students

should also learn more systematically how to present ideas relating to comparing two objects. In short, the introduction of cultural topics other than their own is insufficient. This approach should be followed by systematic patterning of the students' elaborated ideas in ways compatible with English as a part of western culture.

Approaches to Instructional Class Management

In the context of teaching learning process in the classroom, the technical term 'instruction' is not uncommon. It is the system that will facilitate the students' learning of the pre-stated instructional goals. Johnson and Johnson (1994:3) define instruction as '...the process of arranging the learning situation in such a way that students' learning is facilitated.' Further, they outline that the success of an instruction requires that the steps that follow be established: specifying desired outcomes and establishing appropriate instructional goals; implementing the appropriate goal structure; assembling the instructional materials and resources; creating conducive teaching-learning processes; assessing students' progress toward the desired outcomes with feedback provision; and assessing students' progress toward the undesired outcomes with feedback provision.

Seen from the perspective, instruction is concerned more specifically with a teacher's responsibility for making the students learn in the classroom. Thus, in order to achieve successful instruction, a teacher needs to master these steps to instruct professionally. In the section that follows, however, the discussion will be limited to the aspects related to the teacher's skills in implementing the appropriate 'goal structures'. The reason for this is that '(of) ...all the steps in the components of instruction described above, it is the teacher's skills in implementing the appropriate goal structures that are most important and which have been most ignored in teacher training programs' (Johnson & Johnson, 1994:3).

'Goal structures' relate to teachers' mode of instruction in enabling the students to achieve the pre-stated learning outcomes. The pre-stated learning objective might be the same. However, the way the teacher sets up the learning process to reach the goal may be different. Johnson and Johnson (1994:7) state that the mode of the teacher's instruction determines the type of interdependence which exists among students, and this can be

differentiated mainly into three: 'individualistic, competitive, and cooperative'. This paper, however, will deal with the individualistic and cooperative in more detail.

Individualized Instruction

Individualized instruction is one mode of instruction that puts more emphasis on the quality of the students' learning welfare. Thus, individualized instruction is student-centered. This mode of instruction arises due to the awareness of the potential individual differences among learners, which involve cognitive, affective, and psychomotoric styles of learning (cf. Nunan & Lamb, 1996). This implies that given instructional goals, students' learning rates will vary from one individual to another. Hence some students may learn faster than others may.

Not all forms of independent study are individualized, however. According to Diamond et al., (1975:4), there are six basic equally important components for an instruction to be considered individualized: (1) 'Flexible time frames.' As the students' learning rates vary individually, there must be flexibility in terms of time for the students to accomplish assigned tasks; (2) 'Diagnosis, remediation, and exemption'. Different abilities of the students require that there is room for a stage to diagnose the students' strengths or weaknesses, and to provide appropriate instructional treatments in accordance with the students' abilities; (3) 'Content Topics.' The course provided should not just deal with a specific subject matter discretely. Rather, the course content is presented interdisciplinarily; (4) 'Student-evaluation-alternate forms and flexible times.' To monitor students' progress in learning, parallel tests are provided with flexible time administration; (5) 'A Choice of Location.' Students' learning may take place in or out classrooms; and (6) 'Alternate forms of instruction'. The students are provided with varied instructional styles.

The requirements for students' independent study outlined by Diamond et al. (1975:4) above are ideal for a program that fully implements individualized instruction. For the purpose of the present writing, however, the idea of individualization is not to adopt all these principles fully. But, individualization here refers to independent study which will involve the students' autonomy particularly in principles (1) 'Flexible time frames';

(3) 'Content Topics'; (4) 'Student-evaluation-alternate forms and flexible times' and (5) 'A Choice of Location.'

Cooperative Learning

As its name suggests, a learning context is said to be cooperative '...when students perceive that they can obtain their goal if, and only if, the other students with whom they are linked can obtain their goal.' (Deutsch as quoted in Johnson and Johnson, 1994:7). In cooperative learning, group performance is thus emphasized.

Slavin (1995) maintains that cooperative learning embodies two theoretical frameworks. These are motivational and cognitive theories. First, from the motivational perspective, learning cooperatively is enhanced because there exists a situation which puts the students in need of working together without which the goal cannot be successfully achieved. In this situation interpersonal commonality for goal achievement constitutes a motivational factor for the group. Working together for a common goal creates '...norms in favor of doing whatever is necessary for the group to succeed', the norm called 'pro academic' which is believed to have effects on students' academic achievement (Slavin, 1995:16-17).

Second, the cognitive theories of cooperative learning are essentially rooted in two main conceptual streams: developmental and cognitive elaboration theories. Developmental perspectives view that 'interaction among children around appropriate tasks increases their mastery of critical concepts (Damon and Murray as quoted in Slavin, 1995:17). It is peer interaction that is believed to play a role in promoting students' learning. Students learn from each other's perspectives. The key is thus student interaction. Unlike developmental theories, Cognitive elaboration theories base their principles on the importance of restructuring the whole picture based on the pieces of information received. And one of the effective ways is through sharing information known completely or partially, or not known through cooperation. Put simply, elaborated information tends to provide the students with a better learning ground.

Slavin recognizes that there are several factors contributing to learning achievements. He hypothesizes that behaviors within cooperative groups, such as cognitive elaboration, peer tutoring, peer modeling, and mutual assessment, lead to enhancement achievement. Group rewards based on

individual learning performances are hypothesized to motivate students to engage in these behaviors, but have no direct impact on learning (1995:45).

His theoretical model of learning is clearly illustrated in Figure 2.

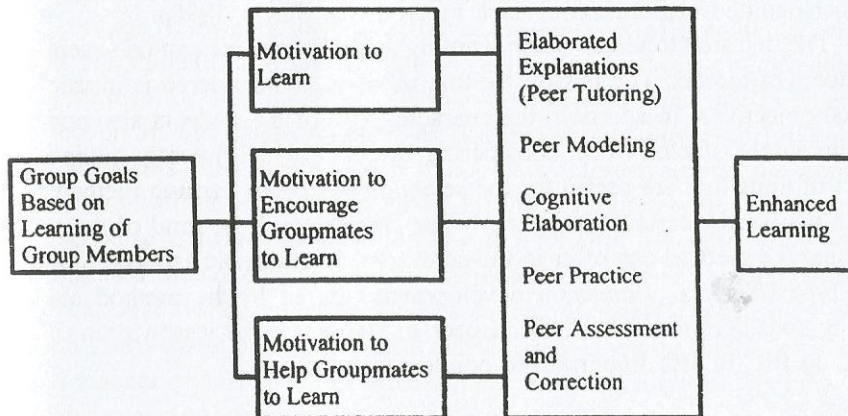


Figure 2 Model of Learning (Adapted from Slavin, 1995:45)

A slightly different theoretical view from that of Slavin's is proposed by Johnson and Johnson (1994:51). They theorize that cooperative learning necessarily embraces the conditions that follow: (1) the integrative utilization of formal cooperative learning, informal cooperative learning, and cooperative base group; (2) functioning group work characteristics: positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, social skills, and group processing; (3) cooperative practice of the repetitive, routine lessons and classroom routines; and (4) a shift in organizational school structures from competitive/individualistic to cooperative team-based.

Cooperative learning approach includes a wide range of learning methods that may be used for different school subjects with different emphases. These methods are, among other things, Student Teams-Achievement Division (STAD), Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), Team Assisted Individualization (TAI), Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition

(CIRC), Group Investigation, Co-Op Co-Op, Jigsaw II, Complex Instruction, Learning Together, Group Discussion and Group Projects, Informal Methods which include Spontaneous Group Discussion, Numbered Heads Together, Team Product, Cooperative Review, and Think-Pair-Share (for further detailed elaboration of each method, see Slavin, 1990).

The decision to select which learning methods is to use rest on several numbers of factors. The first factor that needs to be considered is instructional objectives. In addition, the characteristics of the students also constitute another factor worth considering. Kagan (1993:13) neatly outlines a set of hints that are useful for the selection of certain learning methods, or in his words, certain 'structures'. The first factor is the kind of development the method can offer in the cognitive and academic aspects. Next, the type of social dimension development offered by the method also needs consideration. Third, the aspect of 'where in the lesson plan the method fits' is also important to ponder.

MODELING THE APPROACH

As has been outlined in the purpose of writing the present project, the aim of this writing is to propose a model of instruction, particularly the one that will be useful for teaching speaking skills. This model is a conceptual attempt made to solve the problems encompassing the absence of cross-cultural topics and lack of instructional framework for the students to follow. The proposed model adopts the concepts of Bachman's communicative competence, cultural thought patterns, and approaches to instructional class management. To these ends, the proposed model will basically use a framework which involves the use of 3 (three) main stages. Stage 1 and Stage 2 may take place out of regular class sessions. That is, the students can carry out the activities out of class sessions. Stage 3, however, is class-session-based according to the schedule in the course outline.

What follows describes each of these three stages.

Stage 1

The purpose of Stage 1 is mainly to get the students acquainted with the information about the culture beyond their own. The specific objective

is essentially, first of all, to dig up relevant information as assigned in conjunction with the theme provided; and more importantly, to familiarize the students with cultural information as the basis for their class presentation. It is believed that familiarity as discussed previously will facilitate the students' fluency in expressing their intended message.

Stage 1 involves several activities on the part of both the teacher and the students. The teacher is responsible, for instance, for providing the themes for class discussion. It should be kept in mind that the theme selection in this stage in so far as possible should meet the following requirements. First, the themes are of non-daily interest; second, the themes are cross-cultural in content; and third, the themes should be general enough in scope so as to provide the students with a room of different viewpoints. Suggested themes dealing with cross-cultural aspects such as democracy, educational system, governmental system, gender issues, race issues, women's movement, and environment may be used. Upon the theme selection, the teacher should set the course outline which clearly and specifically includes components such as course vision, course objective/mission, course (cultural) material, course evaluation, and course progress. This course outline basically dictates what to achieve, how to achieve it, and how to assess the achievement. It is mandatory that all the students at the beginning of the course understand these components. The other activity that the teacher needs to accomplish in this stage is to provide the students with learning resources that may be in the form of texts of cross-cultural sources.

The next important step on the part of the teacher is concerned with classroom activities. More specifically, the teacher assigns the students the themes already outlined. Once the theme is assigned, the teacher has the responsibility for guiding the students so that the students can elaborate the themes into topics and detailed information. The technique, which has proved to be useful for elaborating ideas out of the assigned theme, is the so-called brainstorming technique. In this stage the teacher gives examples of procedures in which brainstorming can be utilized to dig up ideas.

The basic mechanism of brainstorming is jotting down all possible information out of the theme. This may be carried out through idea branching. The theme 'environment', for instance, may be elaborated intensively as Figure 3 suggests.

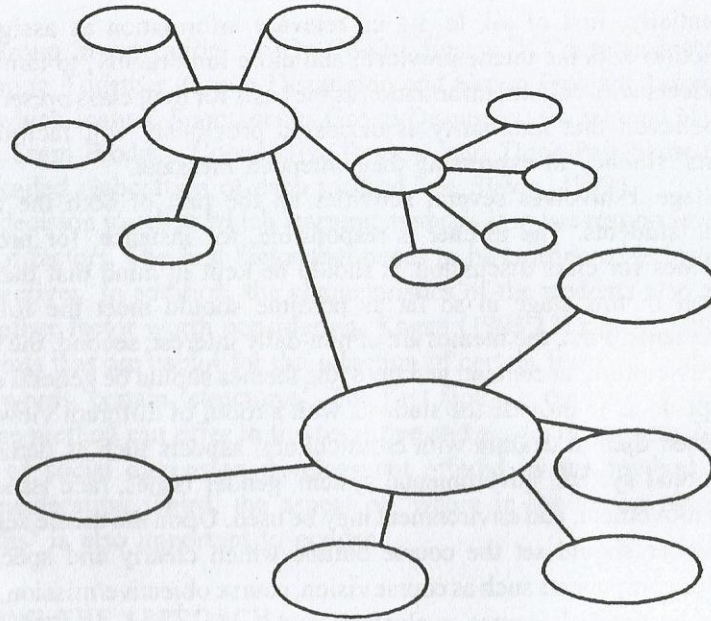


Figure 3 The Logical Branching of Ideas

Not all the information elaborated is necessarily considered for further discussion, however. In the example above, students may choose environmental conservation. With this, again, students need to elaborate further, resulting in more specific details concerning the topic environment such as what, why, and how. This branching, if necessary, can be continued until after intended details are achieved. What needs to be continually practiced with this branching method is a sense of providing as many branches as possible. This exercise gives the students a kind of practice that allows them to view an issue from many possible different perspectives.

Stage 2

When the theme has been assigned and when the guidance to the theme elaboration has been outlined, it is, next, the task of the students to develop the theme based on general guidance from the teacher.

In elaborating the theme in detail, two modes of learning may be applied. These are 'individualization' and/or 'cooperation'. For instance, first, the students may work individually by utilizing learning resources provided by the teacher. They may read the materials individually. If necessary, they can find reading materials other than those made available for them. Next, when the individual work is accomplished, they can work together to exchange ideas or information that they have dug out. At this stage, the expected outcome is a list of ideas elaborated through brainstorming. It should be kept in mind that since cross-cultural aspects are necessary, the students need to view the materials in their own cultural repertoire first, then the cultural materials of the target language (cf. Straub, 1999:2-5, 23). In terms of language processing, in this stage students are more engaged in reading activities. Some activities may require listening skills or writing skills particularly if the learning resources are in the form of audio or video recordings.

The next step the students can perform is organizing the ideas already listed. In this stage students may carry out several activities which may involve the following: sorting identified ideas, ordering them logically, evaluating the ideas once again, rearranging them more systematically, etc. (cf. Turk, 1985:43-70). The learning mode they are practicing in carrying out these activities is essentially cooperative. Thus, they will be cooperatively engaged in sorting identified ideas, ordering them logically, evaluating the ideas once again, rearranging them more systematically, etc. The language skill the students use in this kind of stage is basically spoken, so the students will interact with each other in spoken English.

As the students' activities are necessarily cooperation-based, the cooperative learning methods that will fit the criteria of working together can be applied. However, it should be kept in mind that, naturally, certain instructional objectives require the application of specific cooperative learning methods. Therefore, the teacher should be skillful in deciding the use of specific cooperative learning methods. For instance, Numbered Heads Together can lead to learning processes which are characterized by team working, positive interdependence, and individual accountability (Kagan, 1993:10).

Once the ideas are established, that is, that they are confident that the ideas they have listed can be organized properly, the next step that the students need to do is to write what they have discussed. The mode

of learning is now individual. Thus, based on the ideas they have worked on together, individual students are responsible for reporting their work individually in written form. Unlike the previous activities in which the students are engaged in the spoken language, in this stage the students are concerned more with individual writing tasks.

Stage 3

Stage 3 is the main concern of the approach proposed in this writing. Unlike Stage 1 and Stage 2 in which the students are engaged in unscheduled-basis activities, Stage 3 takes place in the scheduled time as established in the course outline. Therefore, this stage is essentially classroom-based.

Basically there are two main activities that the students carry out in this stage. These are first, handing in their written work to the teacher and, second and more importantly, performing presentations in the spoken language. In carrying out their presentations, it is desirable that the students work in groups again as they work on the idea elaboration. The same group is preferably maintained.

In Stage 3, each group is responsible for reporting what they have achieved in their discussion on the assigned theme to the class. The groups take turn in the presentation. As it is possible that each group has a different focus in elaborating the pre assigned theme, there will be different emphases in their points of view. What is elaborated in one group might be different from the one in another group. In the example of the theme elaboration on environmental issues presented in the previous section, a group may address the issue of environmental reclamation; another group may be interested in discussing environmental development. Still another group may want to talk about environmental destruction. In this sense, an information gap is created among the groups so as to enable them to have verbal communication.

As in Stage 2, in Stage 3 the teachers should be skillful enough in choosing cooperative learning methods that would suit appropriately the nature of the topic of discussion. This requires that the teacher exercise a careful selection of cooperative learning methods. Otherwise, classroom sessions in which the students perform their presentation to each other will not be educationally fruitful.

It is obvious that the approach proposed incorporates learning activities that the students will carry out and language skills that might be developed.

The cross-cultural aspect of the instructional material, however, is not reflected. The inclusion of cross-cultural features begins at Stage 1 that is when the students are assigned cross-cultural materials.

In a more conceptual fashion, the idea proposed could be illustrated as Figure 4 suggests.

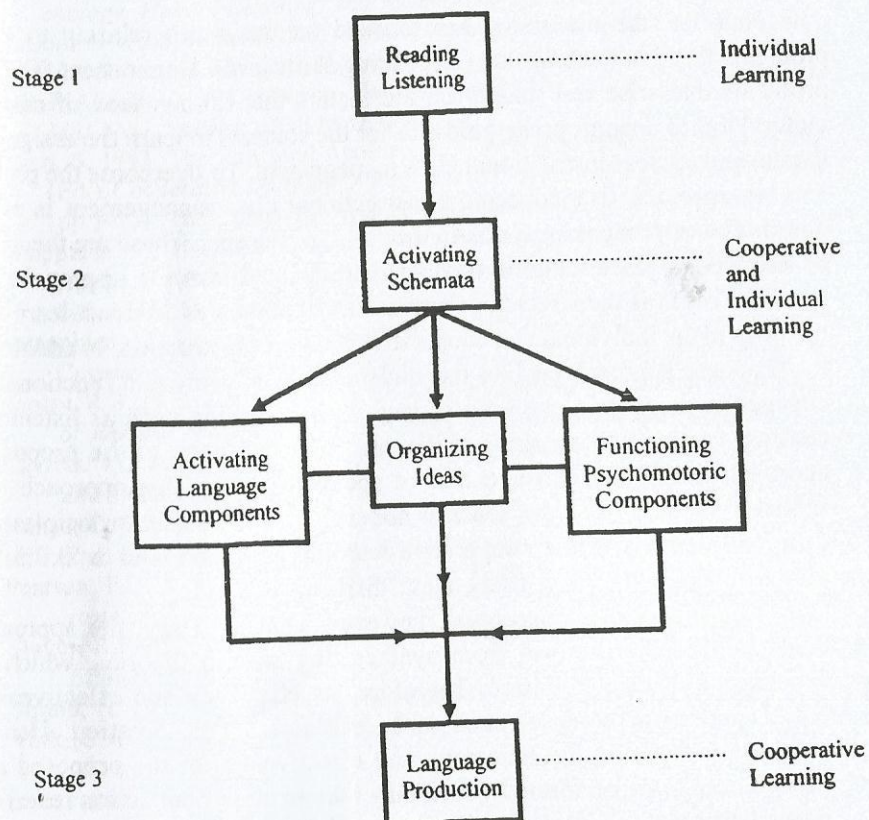


Figure 4 The Approach Proposed

In Stage 1 reading and/or listening activities, which are accomplished individually, initiates the whole process. This provides the students with an important process for content input. This input is further processed

through Stage 2, which involves interrelated activities of activating schemata, activating language components, and functioning psychomotoric components. Upon the completion of Stage 2, language is produced as a result, which is essentially an encoding process, which takes place in Stage 3.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus far, the discussion has touched on the issues relating to the problems faced in the teaching of speaking skills in the Department. These problems that arise rest mainly on the factors that follow: lack of cross-cultural topics, inappropriate guidance for the students to learn the assigned theme, and unclear instructional class management. To overcome the problem, an approach to a conceptual instructional class management is proposed. This approach stems mainly from three concepts. These are theories of knowledge bases, cultural thought patterns, and learning approaches.

The result is the three-stage approach that embraces different learning methods in the individual and cooperative modes of instruction. In addition, the proposed approach enables the students to be actively and functionally engaged in more than one kind of language processing such as listening, reading, writing and speaking skills, although the focus of the proposed approach lies in the enhancement of speaking skills. This approach essentially requires that the teacher understand and master principles of different methods in the cooperative learning approach, and is skillfully able to manage the class using these different methods.

This proposal is conceptual, however. That is to say, the approach developed here is derived from synthesizing several theories, which is necessarily abstract in nature. Therefore, its efficiency and effectiveness in the classroom contexts need to be taken into consideration. Hence, empirical studies on the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposed approach need to be performed which may take in classroom action research, particularly the one dealing with English language arts instruction.

REFERENCES

- Bachman, L.F. 1990. *Fundamental Foundation in Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Den Uyl, M. & van Oostendorp, H. 1980. The Use of Scripts in Text Comprehension. *Poetic*. 9: 275-294.

- Diamond, R.M., Eickmann, P.E., Kelly, E.F., Holloway, R.E., Vickery, T.R. & Pascarella, E.T. 1975. *Instructional Development for Individualized Learning in Higher Education*. Englewood Cliffs. N.J.: Educational Technology Publication.
- Graesser, A.C., Woll, B., Kowalsky, D.J. & Smith, D.A. 1980. Memory for Typical and Atypical Actions in Scripted Activities. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, Human Learning, and Memory*. 6: 503-515.
- Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T. 1994. Learning Together. In S. Sharan (Ed.), *Handbook of Cooperative Learning Methods*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- IKIP MALANG. 1992. *Katalog Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni IKIP MALANG*. Malang: IKIP MALANG.
- Kagan, S. 1993. The Structural Approach to Cooperative Learning. In D.D. Holt (Ed.), *Cooperative Learning: A Response to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity*, (pp 9-17). The Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems, Inc.
- Kamppinen, M. 1993. Cognitive Schemata. In Kamppinen, M., Revensuo, A. & Sajama, S. (Eds.), *Introduction in Consciousness, Cognitive Schemata and Relativism*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher.
- Kamppinen, M., Revensuo, A. & Sajama, S. 1993. *Introduction in Consciousness, Cognitive Schemata and Relativism*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher.
- Kaplan, R.B. 1972. *The Anatomy of Rhetoric: Prolegomena to a Functional Theory of Rhetoric*. Philadelphia: The Center for Curriculum Development.
- Kayfetz, J.L. & Smith, M.E.F. 1992. *Speaking Effectively*. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.
- Nunan, D. & Lamb, C. 1996. *The Self-directed Teacher, Managing the Learning Process*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Pearson, P.D. & Spiro, R. 1982. The New Buzz Word in Reading Schema. *Instructor*, 41: 46-48.
- Slavin, R.E. 1995. *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice 2nd Edition*. Boston: Allyn Bacon.
- Straub, H. 1999. Designing a Cross-Cultural Course. *Forum*, 37 (3): 2-5 & 23.
- Turk, C. 1985. *Effective Speaking*. New York: E. & F.N. Spon.