Using Critical Incidents to Investigate the Novice English Teacher Experience With CLT

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Abstract

Although the word “communication” is prevalent in the Course of Study for secondary school English in Japan, few novice teachers have an idea of how communicative language teaching (CLT) can be practiced in their contexts. CLT is not a concrete teaching method, but rather an approach which consists of broad principles about language teaching and learning. How it is practiced depends on the context where it is employed. This paper will present critical incidents occurring when a novice teacher conducts CLT to reveal what the principles of CLT look like in practice and issues that novice teachers might encounter when conducting CLT. Critical incidents are unanticipated events which occur during a lesson that generate insights about teaching and learning. The critical incidents were told by a second year junior high school English teacher.

1. Introduction: Investigating the Novice Teacher Experience With CLT

The Course of Study for secondary school foreign language education in Japan describes its goals as developing students’ communicative abilities. In fact, the Ministry of Education of Japan first made communicative competence a goal in the Course of Study in 1989 (Savignon, 2005). Many studies of English classes in Japanese secondary schools, however, indicate that an educational policy emphasizing the development of communicative abilities has had little effect on classroom practices (for example, see Aspinall, 2006; Gorsuch, 2000; Hahn, 2013; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). In a survey study, Butler (2011) identifies the following factors as impediments to CLT in the Asian Pacific Region: (a) conceptual constraints (misconceptions regarding CLT), (b) classroom-level constraints (various student and teacher-related factors, classroom management practices, and resource availability), and (c) societal-institutional level constraints (curricula and examination systems).

The English teacher education program to which the author belongs is currently developing a teacher education program that addresses constraints (a) and (b). This program seeks to help pre-service teachers develop a clearer understanding of the concept of CLT and an understanding of the skills necessary to conduct CLT through presenting case studies of how novice teachers
interpret and implement CLT. The compilation and implementation of these case studies in the teacher education curriculum is part of a two-year project for the Tohoku Branch’s JASELE Research Issue Forum (kenkyuu kadai fo-ramu). This paper will analyze a case study used in this program to elucidate a novice teacher’s experience with CLT. There are a number of studies conducted in the Japanese context which describe teachers’ classroom practices being inconsistent with CLT and explain personal or contextual factors which impact the teachers’ practices (Humphries, 2012; Nishimuro & Borg, 2013; Sakui, 2004; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). However, to the author’s knowledge, with the exception of Nishino (2012) and Sakui (2007), few studies have explained how secondary school English teachers in Japan, let alone novice English teachers, apply CLT principles to their teaching practices.

1.1 What is CLT?

According to Littlewood (2011), CLT has an identity problem because many educators are unaware of its strong and weak versions. The weak version, according to Kumaravadivelu (2009), adds an element of communication to the conventional form-focused syllabus. The strong version, on the other hand, abandons the conventional form-focused syllabus so that students learn English by using it (p. 133). In reviewing the literature on CLT, Littlewood (2011) concludes that it is an umbrella term that incorporates a range of principles with which most teachers would agree rather than a specific set of techniques. Relating this to Japan, teachers in Japanese schools might reject many CLT techniques, but they are not likely to reject what Hiep (2007) calls the “spirit of CLT.” That is, the belief that “learning is likely to happen when classroom practices are made real and meaningful to learners,” and the goal for students to learn to “use the language effectively for their communicative needs” (p.196) are likely to be acceptable to Japanese school teachers.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) write that CLT refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view on language and language learning which can support a variety of classroom procedures. These principles are (p.172):

1) Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
2) Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
3) Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
4) Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
5) Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

In addition to these principles, a key tenet of the practice of CLT is that any teaching approach it employs will be learner-centered and consider learners’ backgrounds and language learning needs (Littlewood, 2011). Therefore, the actual practice of CLT will depend on the context in which it is practiced.
1.2 The Novice Teacher Experience and its Implications for Conducting CLT

As a teacher educator, it has been my experience that many pre-service English teachers aspire to use English as much as possible with their students and encourage learner communication in the L2. However, during their teaching practice or after becoming teachers, most use primarily Japanese while teaching and there is very little L2 communication in the classroom. According to the teacher development literature, there is a tendency for new teachers to teach as they were taught rather than use methods they learned in their teacher education programs (for example, see Borg, 2004; Borg, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Richards & Pennington, 1998).

What happens in the teachers’ first year? According to Huberman (1992), the first year can be thrilling, as teachers are in charge of a class for the first time, and chaotic, as teachers are overwhelmed with the complexity of their job. In this uncertain atmosphere, novice teachers are more likely to concentrate on their own teaching and controlling the class rather than student learning (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Once teachers develop class management routines which enable them to control their classes, their attention will focus more on student learning and innovation to encourage student learning (Farrell, 2008).

Graduates of my university’s English teacher education program often write their graduate theses about such topics as Focus on Form, CLT, or Task-based Language Teaching. Once they become teachers, however, their instruction does not resemble these approaches. Implementing an approach such as CLT arguably requires problem solving skills, something that many novice teachers have yet to fully develop (Kagan, 1992). Britzman (1986) argues that teachers who learn to carry out educational innovations are those that can enter their contexts and envision what is possible. This, according to Kumaravadivelu (2012), means that novice teachers need to develop the competence and confidence necessary to cope with the unknown and unexpected and the ability and willingness to exercise their agency to overcome contextual constraints. Considering that a premise of CLT is context appropriate teaching, the aforementioned qualities are relevant for novice teachers to practice CLT.

1.3 Critical Incidents

Farrell (2009) argues that teacher education programs should provide pre-service teachers with case studies of the challenges, conflicts, and problems they may face in their first year of teaching. One such way to do so is through critical incidents. A critical incident, in general terms, can be thought of as an undesirable event or situation which marks a “significant turning point or change in the life of a person” (Tripp, 1993, p. 24). According to Angelides (2001), in the field of education, critical incidents are not restricted to sensational events involving significant tensions. Rather, critical incidents can be routine incidents that happen in every school. This routine incident can trigger in the teacher a new understanding of an educational phenomenon. Therefore a critical incident is considered critical because of the meaning that the teacher attaches to it rather than its degree of sensationalism. In this study, a critical incident is viewed as an event or
culmination of routine events that caused the teacher to critically reflect on how she conducted CLT. Based on Farrell (2013), critical incidents described in this study will have the following components:

1) **Orientation:** The setting of the incident. It includes who, what, and where.
2) **Complication:** A description of a single event or the culmination of events that caused the teacher to critically reflect on her teaching.
3) **Results:** How the complication was resolved and the change(s) of understanding in teaching it led to.

Critical incidents have been used in teacher education programs to help students’ development of decision-making schema (Griffin, 2003). According to Richards and Farrell (2005), analysis of critical incidents in ELT can be used to generate insights about some aspect of teaching and learning. The benefits of critical incidents are that they can “help identify and solve problems, serve to identify good practice, and give teachers a heightened sense of professional awareness” (p.115). In this study, it is hoped that critical incidents can be used to improve our understanding on how teachers adapt CLT to their contexts in Japanese junior high schools.

**1.4 Research Questions**

So far, I have made the argument that CLT is highly contextualized and its principles are not completely understood. In the context of the Japanese junior high school, there is a need for case studies on how CLT has been applied to bring about a better understanding of how it is practiced. In this paper, through the analysis of a novice teacher’s critical incidents, I will elucidate how the principles of CLT might appear in practice and issues that novice teachers have in conducting CLT. Specifically, I ask:

1. Which CLT principles are prevalent in the novice teacher’s instruction and why?
2. Which principles are problematic for the novice teacher?

**2. Method**

**2.1 Participant**

The participant in this study, Rina (a pseudonym), was a full-time second year English teacher who taught at a rural junior high school in northern Japan. The participant was also a member of the researcher’s project team for the JASELE Research Issue Forum. Because Rina was a member of the project team and presented at the JASELE national conference, it is not possible to keep her identity entirely anonymous. For this reason, any content which Rina did not wish to disclose was not included in this paper.
Although novice teachers are defined as teachers in their first year of teaching by Farrell (2009), a second year teacher was chosen over a first year teacher. The reasons for this were the following. First, this project began in April, 2013, the same time of year when novice teachers begin their career. As first year teachers must spend a significant amount of time undergoing mentorship in their first-year teacher training (shouninsha kenshuu), the added burden of being a participant for the study could be overwhelming. Second, first-year teachers sometimes must teach in the style of their supervising teacher (Shirai, 2012, p. 69). It was thought that a second-year teacher would have more time to cooperate in the project and more flexibility to show their original teaching techniques. Furthermore, given that the first three years of teaching are considered the survival and discovery stage (Huberman, 1992), it was thought that a second-year teacher was still in the beginning stages of learning to teach.

Finally, it should be noted that Rina was a graduate of the researcher’s university, and the researcher also served as her academic advisor. Knowing Rina’s background, the researcher could establish that she was familiar with CLT before the study began. A possible disadvantage is that although Rina was told to teach as she normally does, her former academic advisor visiting her classes could have influenced how she planned for them. More background information about Rina will be given when describing the orientation of her critical incidents.

2.2 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher observed and filmed Rina’s classes on April 26, May 10, and June 14, 2013. After each class, based on Roulston (2010), the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with Rina to discuss her decision-making process and identify critical incidents. The semi-structured interview consisted of pre-determined questions and then un-planned follow-up questions to her answers. The pre-determined questions asked Rina to explain her decision making process during the lesson. Rina was also encouraged to raise her own discussion topics. Later, Rina was provided with notes of the interviews and the video for each class and was asked to write 1) Her notion of CLT before and after becoming a teacher and 2) Critical incidents she experienced in the classes observed by the researcher. She presented about 1) and 2) at the JASELE national conference in August, 2013.

It should be noted that while Rina was writing her summary, she and the author had extensive contact over how to identify critical incidents related to CLT. According to Griffin(2003), teachers often experience trouble writing about critical incidents for the first time. In addition to this, it was difficult to limit the critical incidents to the three classes which the author observed. In the end, we decided that Rina could also write about critical incidents that occurred in classes the author did not observe. The critical incidents which the author did not witness had led to changes in the instruction that the author had observed. These critical incidents were identified when Rina discussed the reasons she taught a certain way in the semi-structured interview.
2.3 Procedures for Analysis

A third-person narrative of Rina’s critical incidents was created to be the focus of the analysis. The purpose of the “story” told in a narrative is to “reveal truth about the human experience” (Riessman, 2008, p. 10). Third-person narratives of teachers have been used frequently in teacher development research (Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Nishino, 2012; Tsui, 2007). When constructing a narrative for inquiry, “it is generally accepted that the researcher does not find methods but rather participates in their creation” (Riessman, 2008, p. 21). To write a narrative of Rina’s critical incident, I used her own writing as a base but then elaborated on it by using the field notes of the classroom observations, interview transcripts, and Rina’s conference presentation. After the narrative was written, Rina read it to check its factual accuracy. It can be said that the recreation of Rina’s critical incidents was a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participant. The conceptual framework used to analyze the narrative were the five principles of CLT written in section 1.4.

Some threats to the validity and reliability of this study should also be mentioned here. This research seeks to attain an insider’s perspective of teaching CLT, but Watson-Gegeo (1988) points out that this kind of ethnographic research can give “impressionistic and superficial accounts” (p.575). Edge and Richards (1998) write that single-case studies should be held over longer periods so the researcher can get a proper perspective. Because this study was conducted over a short period of time and sought to understand the novice teacher’s perspective on CLT, it is susceptible to both Watson-Gegeo’s and Edge and Richards’ criticism. Therefore, the researcher has taken the following steps to ensure the validity and reliability of this study. First, the critical incidents are constructed from multiple sources of data: class video, interview transcripts, the teacher’s own written account, and the researchers’ observations. The narrative was then verified by the participant and revised. In this way, it is hoped that the narratives will give an account that reflects the perspective of the participant. Second, the narrative is analyzed through a CLT theoretical framework. The readers can analyze the same narrative using the same framework and confirm the validity of the researchers’ conclusions for themselves.

3. Results: Rina’s Critical Incidents With CLT

This section will present Rina’s critical incidents. The orientation consists of background information on Rina and her school as well as her perception of CLT. The critical incidents were unanticipated experiences that Rina had while the researcher was present in her class or previous experiences. Results describe the measures Rina has taken to resolve the issue. Because at the time that this paper was written, Rina was still working to resolve these issues, at the ending of each critical incident the author has summarized the unresolved issues.
Orientation

Rina is in her second year of teaching and works at a junior high school in a rural town in Southern Iwate which has 129 students. In the previous year and current year, Rina has taught first and second year English. Each grade consists of two homerooms ranging from 18 to 22 students. Many of the students have gone to school together since kindergarten. Although they are well-behaved, they are hesitant to speak to people they do not know. Many of them will attend the town’s local high school where the competition level is not high. Rina feels that studying is not a high priority for the students.

Since becoming a teacher, Rina’s biggest challenges have been, 1) responding to the diverse needs of each student and, 2) managing all her other duties in addition to English instruction such as homeroom activities and an assortment of administrative duties. Because of the latter, another significant challenge for her is preparing classes designed to improve students’ communicative abilities in the limited time available to her.

Rina first heard of CLT when she was a university student. Most of what she knew about English teaching came from the teaching methodologies discussed in university lectures, open class conferences, books, and the Course of Study. Her teaching experiences consisted of mock lessons at the university and a four-week teaching practicum. For her, CLT was a way of teaching that used fun activities to promote student fluency and interaction. For activities to be successful, she believed that students would need to be provided a meaningful situation in which they felt the need to communicate.

As a second-year teacher, she now understands her students’ living environments, personalities, relationships with others, academic abilities, and various problems they face. Although her original beliefs about CLT have not changed, as shown in Figure 1, new elements have been added. She now believes that CLT also emphasizes accuracy, consists of small steps to aid students’ participation, encourages student involvement, and builds student and classroom character. For activities to be successful, she believes that the communicative situations should not just be meaningful but also real. A “real situation” is one that meets the unique needs and interests of her students which are determined by their personality and locality.

![Figure 1. Rina’s perception of CLT (made by Rina).](image-url)
traits.

Critical Incident 1: Students struggle to read and write English

In her first year, Rina taught first grade and devoted significant class time to speaking and listening. In December of that year, her critical incident occurred when she discovered that many students were not reading or writing English at an appropriate level for their grade after they scored lowly on a prefectural English achievement test.

Results: To address this issue, first, she started to incorporate phonics, spelling quizzes, and worksheets devised by the prefectural education center to improve students’ reading ability. Second, she gave students more reading practice by having them use a workbook specializing in reading and worksheets that she made. Lastly, she adopted the practice of reviewing grammar or vocabulary points during communicative activities so that students could “learn while using English.” However, she also found that having students practice vocabulary and grammar too much before a communicative activity would have them focus just on learning the language rather than attempting to communicate, so she decided to incorporate vocabulary and grammar learning into the communicative activities.

Unresolved issues: It is still not known to what extent Rina’s interventions will improve the students’ reading and writing. Furthermore, it is likely that her strategies will continue to evolve. Secondly, although Rina was observed teaching phonics, doing spelling quizzes, and using the reading worksheets in each class by the researcher, it was not clear how the communicative activities were designed so that students could learn while communicating.

Critical Incident 2: A student refuses to participate

Some students in Rina’s classes have special needs. Getting these students to participate in class and interact with their classmates is a challenge for her. It is very important to Rina that all students are able to participate, and she has put a lot of thought and effort into developing procedures for introducing communicative activities that all of her students can follow. Throughout Rina’s first year and into her second year of teaching, one female student with a mental disability has routinely refused to participate in the class. She either refuses to join pair or group work or she refuses to even enter the classroom.

Results: Rina has met with counselors and other experts and has received different kinds of advice about how to handle this one student. Rina has not been as successful as she would like but she will not give up. Rina has learned that if the explanations to an activity are clear and the student knows exactly what she must do, then she will be more likely to participate. Rina’s principles for explaining communicative activities that most of her students can understand are as follows: 1) The instructions are very clear: Students are informed who they should work with, the small steps they will have to perform to complete the activity, and the time that they have to finish. 2)
There is always a model dialogue or exemplar vocabulary/structures displayed for students who cannot think of language on their own.

On April 26, Rina used these principles when explaining an activity where students had to ask each other what they had done yesterday. The purpose was to review the past tense. Students had a worksheet in Japanese with the directions given in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** An extract from Rina’s worksheet (The English was added by the author.).

After this, Rina explained the activity as shown in Excerpt 1 in Japanese.

**Excerpt 1:** Rina introduces a speaking activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Italics:</em> Translated from Japanese to English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ): Additional explanation by the researcher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| R: Rina | SS: Students |
| S: Student | S1, S2: Student 1, Student 2 |

1. **Review the last year**

   ①自分の昨日のことを、過去形を使って1文書きましょう。
   
   (Using the past tense, write one sentence about what you did yesterday.)

   ②相手がしたことを尋ねる発文、過去形を使って書きましょう。（疑問文）
   
   (Using the past tense, write a sentence asking your partner what they did.)

   ③作った文を使って、同じ班の人全員と会話をしましょう。
   
   (Using the sentences you made, have a conversation with everyone in your group.)

The worksheet provides students with the structures they will need to do the activity as well as a rough description of the activity in Japanese. In her explanation (lines 1 – 5), Rina provides more detail about what the students will do in Japanese. In lines 7 – 8, she tells the students...
exactly who they should talk to and in what order. In Rina’s class, students have regular partners and groups with which they work.

**Unresolved issues:** Through a year of trial and error and getting to know her students, Rina has developed procedures for explaining an activity clearly. However, she does this using Japanese exclusively. Does she sacrifice clarity of her explanations for more meaningful L2 communication? If she gave these kinds of clear directions in spoken English while providing a written description of the activity in Japanese, could students follow?

**Critical Incident 3: Textbook content is not relevant to students’ daily lives**

On June 14, 2013, Rina conducted a role-playing activity based on a telephone conversation in the textbook she was using, *Sunshine 2* (Niisato et al., 2011, p.26). In the conversation, the textbook character, Becky, calls her friend, Maki, and invites her to go shopping. Based on the conversation in the textbook, students were asked to write and perform a dialogue. Rina thought hard about how to introduce the activity in such a way that students could make a connection between it and their daily lives. Excerpt 2 shows how she introduced it:

**Excerpt 2:** Students create and perform a dialogue

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1 R: With your partner you can choose any topic you want. You can invite them out to play, to study because there is a test, to practice for the all-Iwate sports tournament, or anything else. I want you to choose as a pair. You can say something fictitious.
2 S: Fictitious?
3 R: Yes.
4 S: Even our names?
5 R: Your names? I’d like you to use your own names.
6 S: Eh?
7 ((S1 and S2 are nominated to do a demonstration after 10 minutes. S1 is female and S2 is male.))
8 S1: Hello.
9 S2: Hello, S1, this is S2.
10 S1: Hello S1, what’s up?
11 S2: Are you free this weekend?
12 S1: No.
13 S2: Are you free this afternoon?
14 S1: No.
15 S2: Are you free next week?
16 S1: No.
17 S2: Bye.
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When introducing the activity, Rina tried to show students situations where they would conceivably call a friend (lines 1-3). She also told the students they could make a fictitious situation (line 3) in case they could not think of a situation where they would call a friend in their town. However, when S asks her whether or not they can use different names, Rina says she wants them to be themselves. As was the case with S1 and S2, in this class most of the pairs consisted of one male and one female student. Rina felt that the dialogue between S1 and S2 was awkward because male students do not usually call female students to arrange a meeting of just the two of them. She wished she had either allowed the students to use fictitious names or have them work with members of the same gender. Rina’s prefecture changed the junior high school textbook from New Horizon to Sunshine the year before. Although Rina felt she knew the topics and exercises in New Horizon well, she is still getting used to Sunshine.

Results: She has decided to research the topics in Sunshine because this increased understanding of the textbook will help her to create relevant supplementary material for the students.

Unresolved issues: Although it is important to give students what Rina calls a “real situation” for using English, what constitutes a real situation in their context where there is no need to use English outside the class? As Rina continues to adapt the content of the textbook to her learners, her answer to this question might become clearer.

Critical Incident 4: Team teaching

On June 14, Rina team-taught a class with a veteran native-speaking Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). Rina had been unsure about the roles that she and the ALT should take during the class. For the telephone dialogue, Rina first introduced the new words and then did pronunciation practice. After this, the ALT conducted pronunciation practice for approximately 5 minutes with the same words. Lastly, Rina reviewed the same words one more time. When watching video of the class, Rina realized that she and the ALT had been performing the same roles. She read that the ALT is there to provide communicative opportunities for the students (Tajiri, 2009) and decided this is what she needs to do for her classes.

Results: Two months after this class, the ALT was transferred and Rina gave the first graders an assignment to make name cards and introduce themselves to the new ALT, one by one, outside class.

Unresolved issues: Although Rina has conceived of ways to encourage students to communicate with the ALT outside class, she has not developed ways to encourage communication with the ALT inside class.

Critical Incident 5: Not enough time to do communicative activities

Rina is concerned about her students learning the basics of English as well as participating in class. Her grammar-focused classes are designed through a series of small steps which
culminate in a communicative activity. Rina has redesigned her classes this year to provide a curriculum with a better balance between communication and form (Table 1).

Table 1.
A Typical Grammar Class Taught by Rina in her First and Second Year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rina’s first year</th>
<th>Rina’s second year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sing a song</td>
<td>1. Sing a song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Review of previous class</td>
<td>2. Grammar/reading worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tell students the goal</td>
<td>3. Students check each other’s answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Explain/practice new grammar and words</td>
<td>4. Tell students the goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Communicative activities</td>
<td>5. Explain/practice new grammar and words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Communicative activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Self-evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the classes Rina taught on April 26, May 10, and June 14, she did not have enough time to finish the communicative activities. When she is in the middle of an activity, she can become lost in the moment and lose track of time. She thinks that as she has added more activities to her classes, she needs to pay more attention to how much time she devotes to each one. **Unresolved issues:** Rina has yet to resolve this issue. She must consider how to maintain a balance of form and meaning while giving students time to engage in L2 communication.

4. Discussion: CLT Principles in Rina’s Teaching

The "unresolved issues" show that Rina is still developing her own way of practicing CLT and thus the critical incidents serve as a snapshot of her current stage of development. As a second-year teacher, it is apparent that Rina’s teaching prioritizes some principles over others. In this section, I will answer the extent to which each CLT principle is manifest, and the issues Rina has in enacting the principle.

**Communication involves the integration of different language skills**

Rina is aware that communication involves the integration of different language skills and critical incident 1 shows that she puts substantial effort into teaching a balanced-class. However, because her second-year classes have more stages, time for communication has become an issue. Handbooks designed for beginning teachers such as Yoneyama et al. (2013) and Kanatani et al. (2009) give models of classes with multiple stages featuring a balance of communicative activities, teacher-centered instruction, and practice. However, Rina’s experience shows that completing a lesson with numerous small activities in 50 minutes can be challenging. Lack of time is a
frequently cited reason by English teachers in Japan for not being able to do communicative activities (Nishimuro & Borg, 2013). An ongoing issue for Rina will be how to foster the development of basic English abilities as well as give students opportunities to use English in the class.

**Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities**

Rina’s conception of CLT includes activities that provide students with “real situations” for communication. Critical incident 3 shows how Rina makes an effort to make textbook dialogues relevant to students’ daily lives. However, one can make the argument that communication with the ALT is also a means for students to engage in authentic communication. The biggest issue for Rina is not how to make the textbook content more relevant but rather how to use the human resources to give students more opportunities for authentic communication.

**Learners learn a language through using it to communicate & Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error**

For learning to use a language through communication, Rina said in an interview that this was a purpose of her communicative activities. Critical incident 3 shows that Rina takes great care to introduce an activity in a way that all students can understand. However, by explaining everything so thoroughly in the L1 and providing students with the language they will need to use, it was not clear how learners could discover new language in the activities the researcher viewed. Furthermore, because the activities were highly structured, it was hard to discern how they were encouraging learners to learn from trial and error.

**Fluency is an important dimension of communication**

Fluency was an important element of Rina’s original conception of CLT but accuracy has been added to her current conception. In her first year, she prioritized fluency but shifted to accuracy in her second year after she felt that her students had fallen behind in English reading and writing. For Rina, the choice between prioritizing accuracy and fluency has depended on her perceived needs of the students.

5. **Conclusions and Future Investigation**

Rina’s version of CLT is likely located somewhere between the strong and weak version. Although novice teachers do not usually focus on enhancing student learning, Rina, in her second year, is making it a priority. The way she incorporates elements of communication into the class depends largely on her perceived needs of the students. Sometimes, the perceived needs of the students can conflict with the principles of CLT. For example, giving students too much support could deny them the opportunity for creative construction and trial and error.
The above example shows that Rina still has unresolved issues with enacting CLT. As she resolves these issues, her way of practicing CLT will likely evolve. It is the author’s intention to continue to follow the evolution of her teaching. Continuing to monitor how Rina’s CLT practices change can serve as a good example for aspiring teachers and teacher trainers that CLT is not a static concept. It will also show that teachers’ ability to incorporate CLT into their respective contexts is dependent on their perception of CLT and their understanding of student learning in their particular context evolving together.

Acknowledgements

This study was supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Young Scientists (KAKENHI) (B), (No.25870036). The author would like to thank the participant, Rina, for sparing her time to cooperate in this study. Lastly, the author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and constructive criticism.

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