

Teachers' Beliefs about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Implementation in Classroom Practices

Trifita Setyaningrum

State Senior High School 2, Malang, East Java

Jl. Laks. Martadinata 84, Malang-65118, Indonesia. E-mail: trifitasetyaningrum@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims at investigating the match between beliefs and classroom practices about communicative language teaching (CLT). Survey design through questionnaire for professional teachers of English and guided interviews is employed in this study. The 25 questionnaire items revealed the teachers' belief about CLT and the classroom practices based on its characteristics, i.e.: overall goals, relationship of form and function, fluency-accuracy, focus on real-world contexts, autonomy and strategic involvement, teacher roles, and student roles. The data were gathered, reduced, grouped, and verified. The results showed that the highest discrepancy is on the aspect of fluency-accuracy.

Key Words: teacher's belief, communicative language teaching, classroom practices

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisa kesesuaian antara kepercayaan terhadap pembelajaran komunikatif (CLT) dan penerapannya. Data diperoleh melalui survei dengan kuesioner yang ditujukan kepada guru bahasa Inggris profesional dan interview sebagai konfirmasi. Pernyataan kuesioner sejumlah 25 menunjukkan kepercayaan guru terhadap pembelajaran komunikatif dan penerapannya di dalam proses pembelajaran. Kuesioner ini disusun berdasarkan tujuh karakteristik pembelajaran komunikatif: tujuan menyeluruh, hubungan bentuk dan fungsi bahasa, ketepatan dan kelancaran, penerapan di dunia nyata, keterlibatan dan strategi belajar individu, peran guru, dan peran siswa. Data yang terkumpul dikelompokkan dan dicocokkan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ketidaksesuaian penerapan prinsip CLT dalam proses pembelajaran terutama dalam aspek ketepatan dan kelancaran.

Kata kunci: kepercayaan guru, pembelajaran komunikatif, penerapan di kelas

INTRODUCTION

As professionals, teachers are required to develop their competencies. The four competencies, pedagogy, personality, social, and professional should be integrated in teachers' performance. Kunter, Klusmann, and Baumert, *et al.* (2013) who investigated aspects of teachers' competencies, stated that the specific knowledge of the profession determined the teaching condition and the success of language learning instructions. In terms of language learning instructions, Hill and Miller (2013) agreed that students would be aware of their language when they were challenged to take part in meaningful activities that assess their communicative competences, which are the focus of communicative language teaching (CLT). Teachers have found its effectiveness in classroom instructions (Irawati, 2014; Roy, 2016) as long as the teachers follow the CLT principles.

Principles of CLT

Despite being a world-wide term, interpretations and implementations upon CLT vary widely (Savignon & Berns, 2006). Translating CLT into classroom activities can be intuitive to teachers due to the equivocal construct and communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel, 1995). However, CLT implementation has to put the main concern on pedagogic competence in the content, i.e. assessing the communicative competences. Richard and Rodgers (1986) emphasized that CLT provided contextual and meaningful communication in the target language; further, Nunan (1991) added that authentic context and autonomy learning improved communicative competence. Brown and Lee (2015) corroborated that fluency, accuracy and teacher roles also form the overall goals of communicative language learning.

Teachers' Beliefs on CLT and Their Teaching Practices

CLT have been encouraged in education in order to assess students' communicative competence. However, it is teachers' beliefs upon the principles that determine the classroom activities and management. In implementing CLT, classroom management needs to be put in such a way that students are proactive, autonomic and interactive. Lashgari, Jamali and Yousofi (2014) presented a study showing that teachers' beliefs on CLT and its implementation were convergent on the aspect.

Nonetheless, there are considerable studies confirmed that despite having positive beliefs on CLT, the teachers failed to keep the practice congruent (Elizabeth & Pelaez, 2008; Tayjasanant & Barnard, 2010; Nishino, 2012). Some researchers suggested that the congruence between beliefs and classroom actions may not always be desirable (Buehl & Fives, 2016), but it is the teacher that play the key role to the success or failure of the revolution in language learning (Nunan, 1989; Markee 1997; Carless, 2001). Conducting a case study to a teacher of English, Farrel and Yang (2017) reported that her classroom practices were mostly convergent with her stated beliefs, except on that of students' role. Thomas' (2013) study which was subjected to professionally and unprofessionally qualified teacher, revealed that although both groups held a positive spirit in implementing principles of CLT, the big number of students in a class made them apply teacher-centered classroom management on the practice. Heng (2014) and Roy (2016) presented the similar fact to Thomas'; additionally, they brought up socio-cultural issues (teachers' low income and local cultures) that brought about the beliefs-practice-inconsistencies. They claimed that traditional classes which culturally required youths to speak less than the adults made students discouraged to produce the target language (L2) in class.

Challenges in CLT Classroom Practice

Researchers have asserted that EFL teachers believe that CLT is an effective teaching approach to develop students' communicative competences. However, despite believing that CLT is consonant with the students' ultimate goal of learning English, sample researches show that some barriers have made classroom practices incongruent with the principles (Choi, 1999; Hiep, 2007; Gallagher, 2011; Rahman, Singh &

Pandian, 2018). The discrepancies between their teaching beliefs and classroom practices were due to several reasons, the most difficult to deal with was related to the format of examination defined by the educational system which did not include speaking (Marylessor, Barasa & Omulando, 2012; Uztosun, 2013; Roy, 2016). Proposing CLT as an effective approach for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, Radzi, Azmin, Zolhani, *et al.* (2007), Juhasz (2015), and Tleuov (2016) found that teachers were lack of hands-on strategies; thence, in their studies, they suggested some strategies and practical activities that could be implemented in class as to make CLT's goals optimized. Similarly, Irawati (2014) and Gudu (2015) identified problems in the process of teaching and learning speaking proposed CLT through language games to improve students' speaking ability. Marylessor, Barasa, and Omulando (2012) who worked on CLT implementation challenges faced by teachers in Kenya revealed problems dealing with limited time, pressure for formal examination, teachers' limited ability on conducting meaningful communicative activities, and the nature of the learners respectively. They suggested teachers emphasize more on students' learning autonomy. Having conducted a research in students' role in learning in South Africa, Ridge (1994) identified that the teacher-student-authority-shift and teachers' competencies were among those needed to anticipate. Methitham (2014) revealed that passive learners were the reason why CLT was not a beneficial approach in language learning in Thailand. Meanwhile, Talley and Hui-Ling (2014) reported that despite its benefits having met cultural barriers which frustrated its implementation for instance in China, CLT did not work quite effectively due to learners' cultural background which made them "reticent and Quiet".

EFL Teaching

Although teachers are aware of the teaching challenges to comply with the students' recent needs, there are few groups of teachers who intend to implement communicative approach (Lu & Lavadenz, 2014). Fauzi, Damayanti, and Ilahi's (2017) case study in Indonesia showed that teacher's belief in EFL teaching had gone through revolutionary stages. Utilizing video technology to comply with CLT's principle concerning real-world context, the teacher had struggled to deal with students' lack of learning motivation. On the other hand, some others decided to apply grammar-based teaching (Canh, 2011; Fayyaz & Omar, 2013;

Uysal & Bardakci, 2014) due to some problematic causes. Gandeel (2016) reported lack of theoretical-based teachings in the country which brought about book-based English speaking-activities. Grammar and vocab were the focus on the teacher-centered approach.

Those varied classroom activities are due to the fact that teaching takes a number of decisions concerning the process of learning and topics to discuss (Thomas, 2013). The decisions made in the classroom are based on the teachers' personal understanding of certain circumstances in class which becomes the ground of their own classroom solutions. Decker and Rimm-Kaufman (2008) asserts that such an understanding is based on teaching belief system. The British educational theorist Pajares (1992) notes that teachers' beliefs have a greater influence than the teachers' knowledge on the way they plan their lessons, on the kinds of decisions they make, and on their general classroom practice. It is the teacher's belief that determines how the class is running and how the materials are delivered. Further, investigating teachers' beliefs will help them change their methods to teaching and learning over time to bring about improvement for students (Gilakjani, 2017).

There have been considerable studies on teachers' beliefs on CLT and the implementation in classroom practices. Karavas-Doukas' (1996) questionnaire on attitude toward CLT interest was utilized in previous studies (Lashgari, Jamali, & Yousofi, 2014; Rahimi & Naderi, 2014; Jafari, Shokrpour, & Guetterman, 2015). Concerning the recent implementation of CLT, this study refers to the coexistent characterization of CLT proposed by Brown and Lee's (2015) which includes seven aspects of CLT, they are: overall goals (OG), form and function (FF), fluency and accuracy (FA), real world context (RW), autonomy and strategic (AS) involvement, teacher roles (TR), and student roles (SR).

Based on the background of the study above, the identification of the problem in this study is formulated as: (1) What are the teachers' beliefs on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)? (2) Do they practice what they believe about CLT?

METHOD

Mix method survey research design suits this research to establish explanatory description of teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. The survey

development was conducted by administering questionnaires and interview to sample teachers. The research includes two variables, they are: teachers' beliefs on CLT and the implementation in teaching practices. The subject or the population of this study is the senior high school English teachers in Malang, Indonesia. The population was then stratified into professional and non-professional teachers. The professional teacher group was taken as the sample frame of the study from which then the accessible samples were involved. There are two types of professional teachers included in this study, i.e. the curriculum national instructors (IN K-13) and the certified teachers.

The data in this study were elicited through: 1) Likert-scale questionnaires and 2) semi structured interview. The first step was to quantify the data yielded from questionnaire responses. The quantitative data were then matched with qualitative data from guided interview through which data sanctuary was processed.

Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires to draw a conclusion on teachers' beliefs toward CLT. The Likert-scale questionnaire was first composed by determining the characteristics of CLT. The questionnaire items were then composed on each characteristic by adapting those from previous studies on teachers' beliefs on CLT developed by Horwitz (1985), Choi (1999), Nishino (2009), and questionnaire on teacher's attitude toward CLT by Karavas-Doukas (1996).

The try out upon the questionnaire brought 25 items that are employed in the study through Pearson Product Moment for item validity test and Alpha Cronbach for reliability test (α coefficient = 0.816). The 25-item-questionnaire of teachers' beliefs on CLT consists of four items of overall goals, four items of relationship of form and function, four items of fluency and accuracy, five items of real world context, four items of autonomy and strategic involvement, three items of teacher roles, and two items of student roles. The beliefs were then classified into very strong (100–125 points or 80%–100%), strong (75–99 points or 60%–79%), moderate (50–74 points or 40%–59%), and weak (25–49 points or 20%–39%). Responding to the questionnaire items, the participants were asked to choose five (strongly agree) to one (strongly disagree) for each statement. The highest questionnaire scores for both teachers' beliefs and CLT classroom practices were 125 which shows very strong beliefs on CLT and highly consistent implementation of CLT.

RESULT

The data elicited from the questionnaires and interview were quantified and classified based on the seven characteristics of CLT by Brown and Lee (2015). Six respondents agreed to join the research, taken as the sample; and two of the samples agreed having interview sessions. The responses of Beliefs on CLT questionnaire were matched with them of CLT Classroom Practices from which the discrepancies were revealed. The interview were to explain the CLT beliefs and its implementation in order to correspond to the research problems.

What are the Teachers’ Beliefs on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?

Teachers’ beliefs on CLT as yielded by the tabulation of questionnaire of Beliefs in CLT shows that all teacher samples held very strong beliefs on CLT. The score ranged from 100 to 108 as shown in Figure 1.

All of the six samples strongly agreed that it was important to develop students’ ability to communicate in real world situation and that learner-centered activi-

ties were more important than teacher-centered activities (questionnaire of Belief on CLT, item number 11 &17 respectively). Three sample teachers agreed with the statement of item number 23 which stated that the learners had to attain as high degree as possible of linguistic (grammar) competence; two other disagreed and one was uncertain. On the other hand, three teacher samples ticked ‘uncertain’ for item number nine which stated that ‘Group work activities had a little use since it was very difficult for the teacher to monitor the students’ performance and prevent them from using their mother tongue’, while three others disagreed with the statement. No one ticked ‘strongly disagree’ as a response to the questionnaire, 9% of the total samples responded to disagree and uncertain, 37% agree, and 46% strongly agree. The summary of the responses of each item is shown on Figure 2.

Concerning the seven characteristics of CLT, every sample teacher showed different level of beliefs. Teacher Slamet held a moderate belief on the aspect of fluency and accuracy, and very strong belief on the other six aspects. Teacher Yosi and teacher Aniq had the same level of belief on the aspect of fluency and accuracy (67%–strong). Meanwhile, in

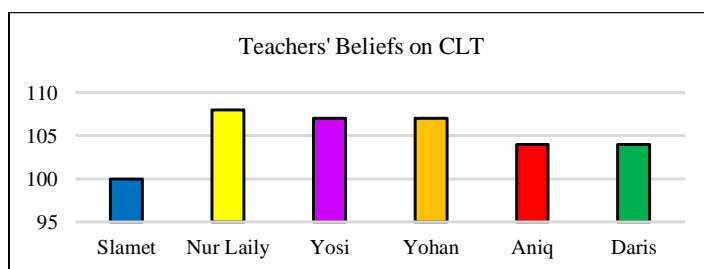


Figure 1. Teachers’ Beliefs on CLT

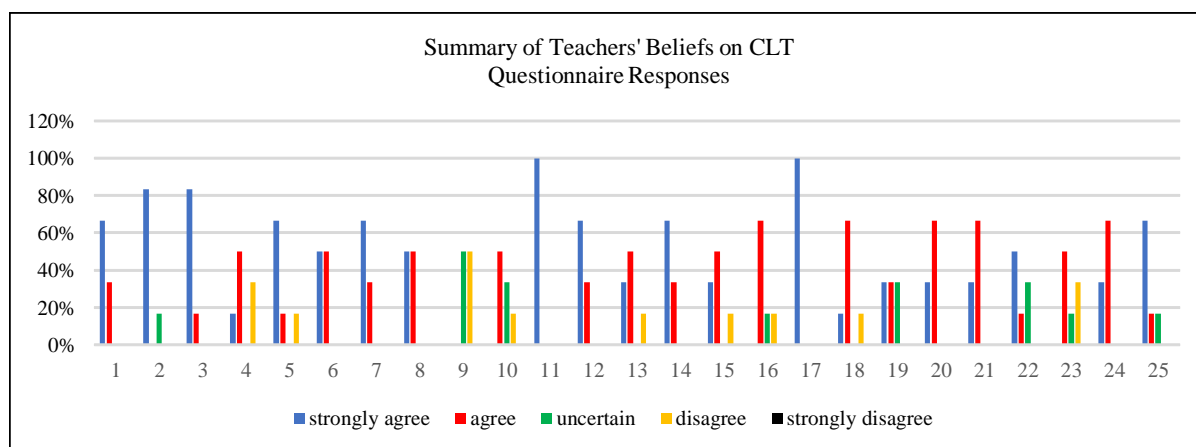


Figure 2. Summary of Belief on CLT Responses

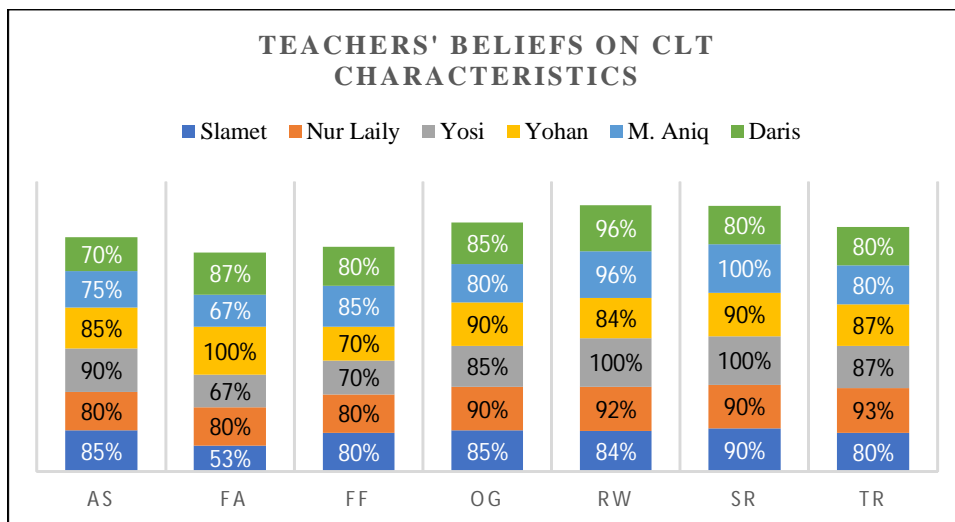


Figure 3. Teachers' Beliefs on CLT Characteristics

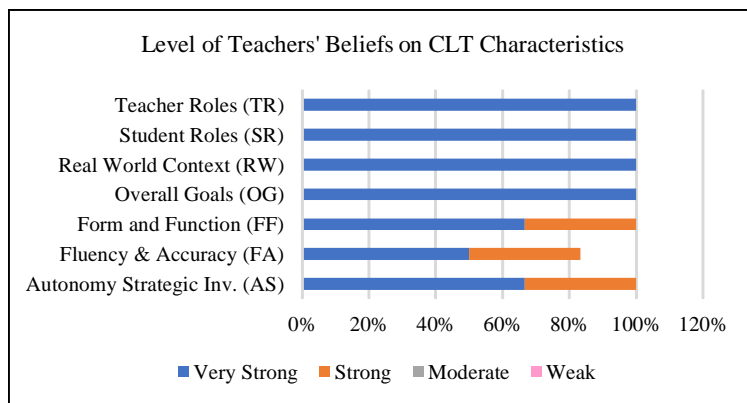


Figure 4. Level of Teachers' Beliefs on CLT Characteristics

terms of form and function aspect, teacher Yosi held the same level of belief with teacher Yohan (70%–strong). On the other hand, teacher Aniq shared the same level of belief, i.e. strong, on the aspect of autonomy and strategic involvement, showing 75% and 70% respectfully. All the sample teachers held very strong goals, real world context, student roles and teacher roles as depicted in Figure 3.

The responses to the questionnaires showed no weak belief upon the characteristics of CLT as shown in Figure 4.

Do They Practice What They Believe about CLT?

The responses to CLT classroom practices showed consistent to highly consistent (67%–96%) implementation of CLT principles in classroom practices. The highly consistent implementation of CLT principles in the classroom practices were on the OG

and FF aspects (96%), SR and AS aspect (92%), RW (90%) and TR (89%) as shown in Figure 5.

Despite having very strong beliefs on the principles of CLT, the sample teachers implemented each CLT principles on different portion as shown in Figure 6.

Teacher Slamet and teacher Yosi practiced 33% of their beliefs in the aspect of FA. In CLT belief questionnaire concerning FA principle, both teachers responded ‘disagree’ to the statement ‘Developing students’ fluency is as important as developing their accuracy.’, while in the CLT implementation questionnaire they ticked ‘often’ to the corresponding statement, ‘I give the same portion of exercise and scores for fluency and accuracy’ (item number 4). Similarly, teacher Slamet responded ‘disagree’ and ‘often’ to item number 18, ‘Proficiency means correct application of the four skills’ (questionnaire of CLT Belief) and ‘I make students practice the four skills in learning language’ (questionnaire of

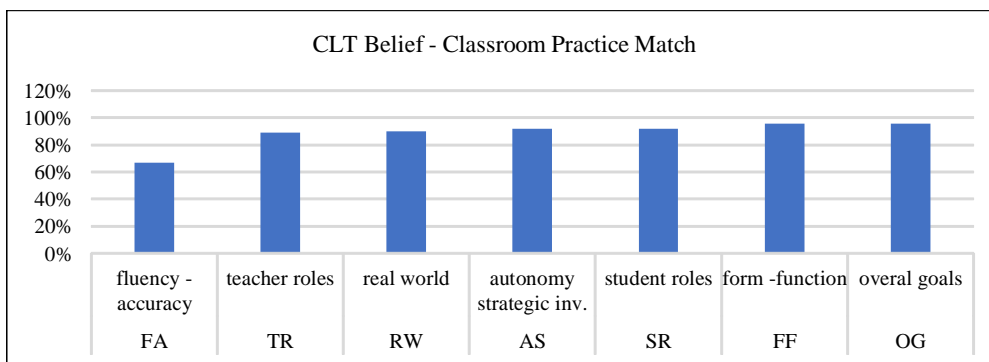


Figure 5. CLT Belief–Classroom Practice Match

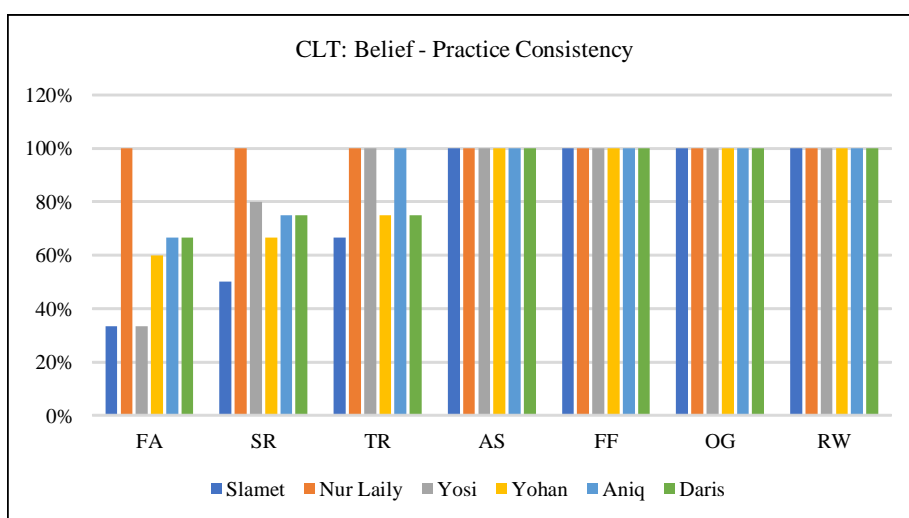


Figure 6. Consistency of Beliefs and Practice in CLT Principles

CLT Implementation) respectfully. On the same item, teacher Yohan’s belief was ‘strongly agree’ but he did the practice only ‘sometimes’. Further of the same aspect, FA, teacher Yosi agreed with item number 13 in CLT Belief Questionnaire stating that ‘Fluency needs to be more emphasized than accuracy during oral production activities’, on the contrary, she responded ‘seldom’ to the statement ‘I give higher score to students who speak more fluently than to those speaking more accurately’. While teacher Aniq responded the other way around to the same item, he showed ‘disagree’ for his belief, but indicated that he always gave higher score to students who speak more fluently than to those speaking more accurately.

Another inconsistency of belief and implementation can be found in the CLT aspect of SR where teacher Slamet put 50% of his belief into practice. In the implementation he strongly agreed with the statement ‘A textbook alone is not able to cater for all

the needs and interests of the students. The teacher must supplement the textbook with other materials and tasks so as to satisfy the widely differing needs of the students’, but he seldom ‘... provide additional learning media and exercise instruments to comply with different needs of the students and does not use only a textbook’ (item number 1). Beside the aspect of SR (Student Roles), inconsistencies between CLT belief and implementation were also experienced by teacher Slamet and Daris in terms of teacher roles (TR). In response to item number 10, teacher Slamet stated that he disagreed with the statement ‘It is important for a teacher to speak in English as much as possible for classroom instruction’; on the contrary, he indicated that he always used English in delivering classroom instructions. Teacher Daris had different point on the same CLT principle, on the statement ‘The teachers’ role in the classroom is to facilitate students’ activities in communicating in English’ he showed his uncertainty, but he showed

that he always became students' facilitator to make them able to communicate in English in his classroom practice.

Teacher Yosi's and teacher Yohan's CLT belief and classroom practice inconsistency in the principle of RW were of the opposite to each other. Teacher Yosi responded '*strongly agree*' to the statement '*Classroom activities should engage students in meaningful communications*' but she only sometimes engaged students in meaningful communications; while teacher Yohan felt uncertain about the belief statement, but he responded that he always put students in meaningful communications in his classroom practices. The CLT principle of real world context (RW) was also an issue for teacher Yohan when he strongly agreed on the statement '*It is important to develop students' ability to communicate in real-world situations.*' but he only sometimes made students practice it in classroom activities.

Teacher Yohan also showed inconsistency in his CLT belief and classroom practices in the aspect of FF (form and function). He disagreed with the statement '*Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to use the language*'; being paradoxical to his belief, he often trained students to use language for communication, not the accurate use of grammar.

In the principle of CLT concerning autonomy and strategic involvement (AS), teacher Aniq and teacher Daris ticked '*disagree*' for the statement '*Group work activities have little use since it is very difficult for the teacher to monitor the students' performance and prevent them from using their mother tongue*'; while in classroom practices, teacher Aniq ticked '*often*' and teacher Daris responded '*always*' to the statement '*I do not make students work in groups in class because I cannot control their using mother tongue (L1) during the learning process*'.

Teacher Daris was also found inconsistent in implementing his CLT belief in a classroom practice in terms of OG, where he strongly agreed that '*It is impossible in a large class of students to organize your teaching so as to suit the needs of all*' while he was only sometimes of being not able to organize the teaching in such a way that he could accommodate every individual need in a large class.

Teacher Nur Laily was the only teacher sample in this study who put a perfect match to her CLT belief and classroom practices.

DISCUSSION

The result of CLT Belief questionnaire shows that professional teachers participating in this study hold very strong beliefs on the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). The finding also shows a highly consistent match between their beliefs and their classroom practices. However, detail information from the questionnaire illustrates different courses of actions in classroom practices. It is due to the fact that teacher has a right to decide how the classroom is organized and what activities suitable for the students, and these decisions are based on their belief system (Decker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). Referring to CLT characteristics by Brown and Lee (2015), the questionnaire revealed some mismatch between teachers' beliefs about CLT and their classroom practices. The discrepancies are due to some academic backgrounds.

As teacher Yohan explained during the interview, his inconsistent belief and classroom implementation in terms of FA (fluency and accuracy) happens because he believes that students should be encouraged to be confident in using their English on the first place. Thus, his teaching emphasizes more on using English for communication, not the accurate use of grammar. However, he was affirmative that being accurate in grammar, in some context, makes communication meaningful and appropriate. For example, when students are to formally ask for a help to the elderly, in this situation simple past will be more appropriate. Hence, teacher Yohan was sure that appropriate use of grammar makes appropriate contextual conversations. It is in line with Thomas (2013) who stated that varied classroom activities are due to the fact that teaching takes a number of decisions concerning the process of learning and topics to discuss.

In the principle of SR (student roles), teacher Slamet showed a discrepancy on providing more learning sources for the students as a textbook will not satisfy the widely differing needs of the students. Teacher Slamet confirmed that he did not provide every learning sources himself despite being strongly agreed that a textbook is not enough in a learning process. Instead, he often asked students to find any additional materials and learning sources themselves as to make them feel comfortable with the subtopic they were dealing with. In this case, the task selection for the students should take the target task rationale and psycholinguistic principles into account (Nunan, 1991).

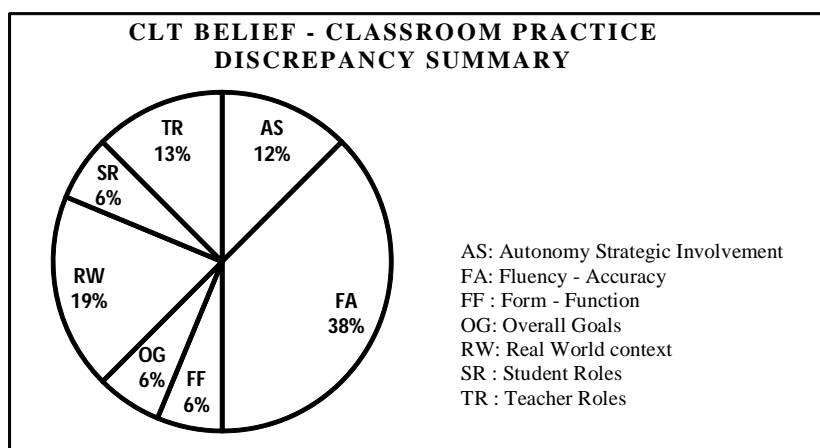


Figure 7. CLT Belief–Classroom Practice Discrepancy Summary

Sample teachers in this study support contextual language learning, i.e. students should be situated into certain context when they learn English as to make the EFL learning meaningful; thence, professional teachers do not teach discrete grammar. As Hill and Miller (2013) confirmed that students will be aware of their language when they are challenged to take part in meaningful activities that assess their communicative competences, these professional teachers implement their beliefs into contextual classroom practices to prepare the students ready to use the four language competencies for real world communication. Teachers play the key role to the success or failure of the revolution in language learning (Nunan, 1989; Markee 1997; Carless, 2001). Through this study, it is shown that the sample teachers play their role as instructors to create autonomy and strategic learning involvement of the students and give a room to the students to make use of any related references for successful learning. In developing countries, successful learners are those who are autonomous who can effectively explore out-of-school resources (Smith, Kuchah, & Lamb, 2018). Thus, all of the sample teachers have accommodated the learning environment needed by the current generation.

Kunter, Klusmann, and Baurmert, *et al.* (2013) stated that the specific knowledge of the profession determined the teaching condition and the success of classroom instructions. Teachers of English in Malang are members of teacher community and are scheduled to share the most updated pedagogic knowledge every week. These professional teachers share the skills and any academic information in the meeting as to anticipate the newest issue in EFL teaching and learning, and CLT is one to be updated.

The professional teachers in the study are aware of the teaching challenges to comply with the students' recent needs, they are part of few groups of teachers who intend to implement communicative approach (Lu & Lavadenz, 2014). Although the knowledge of CLT principles that they share in the local teacher community are the same, and they implement the principles in their classroom practices, their beliefs are more influential than their knowledge when it is coming into practice (Pajares, 1992). Their classroom decisions sometimes may be incongruent with what they believe in general for some academic reasons.

In this study, the incongruence of beliefs and classroom practices about communicative language teaching is summarized as illustrated in Figure 7.

CONCLUSION

Communicative language teaching (CLT) and learning process cannot be separated from teachers' beliefs as it becomes the base comprehension of how the classroom activities should be running and what aspects of communicative competences should be assessed. Holding strong beliefs to CLT principles, professional teachers are able to manage their classes and assess their students' communicative competences in accordance with its coexistent principles. These principles will be continuously developed as students' needs change over time. Detail and more complex principles of CLT require teachers to update their knowledge and pedagogic skills; thus, periodic teachers' professional development should be intensified and updated with the coexistent teaching pedagogy so that the teachers' beliefs be more contributing positively to the improvement of teaching and learning process.

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