

# Communication theory teaching and the challenges of de-westernization of communication theories

Muzayin Nazaruddin & Ida Nuraini Dewi Kodrat Ningsih

*Department of Communication Science  
Universitas Islam Indonesia  
muzayin.nazaruddin@uii.ac.id*

## Abstract

Teaching communication theory in Indonesia and another non-Western countries generally deals with two challenges, namely Western perspective biases and negative perception of students who used to look at the course as complicated and boring. The paper offers teaching strategy for the communication theory course emphasizing contextualization as the core learning message, culturally responsive as the teaching approach, and student centred as the learning method. Students learn to relate the learning process with their everyday experience, so that they could develop meaning or function of the learning process. It would increase students' motivation, involvement, and achievement. It would also be an important point to contextualize communication theory with empirical context, as contextualization is an important process of de-westernization of communication theories. Thus, the communication theory teaching is an initial step to de-westernize communication theory, which has a simple role: to criticize the relevance of established communication theories with local context.

**Keywords:** *communication theory teaching; de-westernization; contextualization; culturally responsive teaching; student centred learning; communication theory criticism.*

## 1. Introduction

Teaching communication theory in Indonesia, or in another non-Western countries, generally face two challenges. First, western perspective biases, since almost all communication theories were developed from research conducted within Western society, in this case America and Western Europe. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, communication studies has been dominated by American Eurocentric theory and research, characterized by anthropocentric individualistic, efficiency-oriented, and positivistic (Ishii 2001). Second, the negative perception of students who used to look at the theoretical courses as

complicated, boring, uninteresting, and not applicable.

The paper proposes a teaching strategy of communication theory course in the university that emphasize application in the local context, focusing on non-western contexts, as well as a teaching strategy that is creative based on student centred learning. Ideally, the teaching of communication theory encourages students to examine the social, cultural and historical context of communication theories, and then contextualize them with students' experience or surrounding phenomena.

Nowadays, mostly communication theory textbooks have been filled by the Western point of view. In Indonesia, almost all communication theory textbooks, which are largely translation books, always give theoretical illustrations from Western society. West & Turner (2008a, 2008b), is a fit example of a good textbook, in which every communication theory is deeply discussed with real example, but would be difficult to be understood when translated and used in Indonesia since every example comes from American phenomena. Littlejohn & Foss (2014), Severin & Tankard (2001), McQuail (1987), Holmes (2012) are another examples of translation books which are fully with examples but come from the American European contexts. Meanwhile, communication theory textbooks written by Indonesian scholars mostly just explain the theory, without any critical analysis with Indonesian contexts. For example, Morissan (2013) textbook of communication theory mentions and describes a lot of communication theories, but does not discuss and contextualize them at all. In these conditions, the teaching of communication theory in Indonesia deals with fundamental constraints that is western perspective biases. Similar constraints are very likely to occur in another non-western countries.

In addition, the teaching of communication theory, as well as another theoretical courses teaching, usually encounters negative perception of students. They have general perception that the theoretical courses are always full of theoretical terms and concepts that are complicated, boring, uninteresting, and not applicable. It would consequently effect the course comprehension.

In fact, communication theory subject is one of the fundamental and obligatory subjects in the communication science departments in Indonesia, as set by ASPIKOM (Asosiasi Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi - Association of Higher Education of

Communication Science). The basic competences of this course are: 1. Students are able to understand the communication theories, their diversity and their theoretical map, 2. Students are able to apply communication theories to explain communication phenomena in the local context. Thus, communication theory course should provide a better understanding about the grouping of communication theories, for example, categorization based on the field of phenomena, namely interpersonal, group, intergroup, public, intercultural and mass communication. Moreover, the course should encourage students to relate the communication theories with their experience or local phenomena. A sufficient understanding of communication theories will be essential for students to understand further subjects or courses, such as group communication, intercultural communication, mass communication, and others. It is also very important when students write a undergraduate thesis, in which they have to discuss the research findings with relevant theory.

Thus, this paper will answer the questions as follows: 1. How to teach communication theories with an emphasis on the application to contemporary empirical context, especially non-Western local context? 2. How to teach communication theories in a creative manner which is fun for students in order to increase the achievement of the learning competencies? This paper will contribute to the efforts of the de-westernization of communication theories, particularly through the teaching at universities. Furthermore, this paper can provide an initial contribution to the development of non-Western communication theory, which is still very rare. This local based contribution is very important for the development of communication theory, because communication theories that taught in the universities in non-Western countries, including Indonesia, are still deeply rooted in the Western tradition.

## **2. Method**

The paper is based on the teaching grant from the Board of Academic Development, Islamic University of Indonesia, received by the author in 2015 for the Communication Theory course. The grant entitled “Communication theory: analysis and application in the local context” held for one semester, followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of Communications Department, consist of 4 classes, in which each class numbered about 40 people.

In this grant program, the authors proposed two innovative teaching ideas. First, the teaching of communication theories that emphasize contextualization of the theory, as mentioned above. Second, the student centred approach, placing students at the centre of the learning process. The approach is expected to change the learning of communication theory that are usually boring and confusing become interesting and fun.

This learning grant has applied classroom action research, generally defined as a tool that is used to help teachers and other educators uncover strategies to improve teaching practices (Sagor, 2004). Usually, the role of research for teaching process has been that the teaching process is an object of research, being researched by outsider researcher, or teacher is a customer of someone else’s research findings, instead of an active participant of the research process researching their own classroom (Johnson and Button 2000). In the Indonesian university context, the similar phenomena happen that university learning is usually only research object, or the implementation place of research findings.

In the action research, teacher becomes researcher, conducting authentic research, in his/her own classroom in order to enhance teaching methodologies, classroom practices, as well as learning outcomes. Thus, a classroom becomes laboratories for the lecturer and

students as well. McBee (2004: 157) said, “classrooms that become laboratories are better classrooms.” In the Indonesian university context, in which a lecturer is also a researcher, an individual who has obligation to teach in many classes in a semester as well as to do research, the classroom action research is a very helpful tool to improve and combine those two roles.

Having their own research design which are integrated with their teaching, lecturers have professional opportunity to contemplate and identify changes they need to improve their teaching practices (Sax and Fisher 2001), which usually would be resulting in the improvement of teaching quality (McBee 2004). Many studies have shown that action research has encouraged many positive changes, such as teachers’ improvement in their pedagogy; including evaluating existing programs or pedagogical methods, expanding instructional repertoires, engaging in professional development, and developing new pedagogical knowledge (Henson 1996); students’ learning outcomes; and overall learning processes (Johnson & Button 2000; Ross, Rolheiser and Hogoboam-Gray 1999; Sax & Fisher 2001).

One of the key aspects of action research is transformation or improvement. Brown and Dowling (2001: 152) said, “Action research is a term which is applied to projects in which practitioners seek to effect transformations in their own practices ...”. In this sense, action research is not about researching routine practice, but is researching an improvement process disrupting routine practice (Tripp 2005). To do such transformation, a teacher-researcher is active in constructing new knowledge linked with existing knowledge (Miller and Pine 1990; Williamson 1992). Tripp (2005) said that the teacher-researcher should, “not just understand practice in order to improve it in action research, one also gains an improved understanding of routine practice through

improving it, so improvement is the context, means and main end of understanding”. McNiff (2002) noted that researcher should aware of the principles that drive their work: they need to be clear about both what they are doing and why they are doing it. Thus, as Elliot (2000: 209) said, action research is about “gather evidence about their practices and critique assumptions, beliefs and values embedded in them”. In this notion, an action research should employ certain research methodologies, its techniques should meet the academic requirements of research as generally recognized. Tripp (2005) defined action research as “a form of action inquiry that employs recognized research techniques to inform the action taken to improve practice”.

### **3. Student centred and culturally responsive learning**

In the student centred learning, students are seen as adults who have had the experience as a learning capital and the ability to contemplate and reflect on the experience. Thus, students are not empty bottles to be filled with knowledge and science, but a mature person who learns from their experience, that is to experience, analyse, and develop certain meaning and understanding. Each students are unique persons with their own experience, thought, and mentality, who can express and share their opinions, thought, experience, or understanding in the classrooms. The uniqueness of every persons can be further synergized in order to develop group’s strength. Gay (2002: 110) emphasized, “Teachers genuinely believe in the intellectual potential of these students and accept, unequivocally, their responsibility to facilitate its realization without ignoring, demeaning, or neglecting their ethnic and cultural identities. They build toward academic success from a basis of cultural validation and strength”. In some references, this approach is also called as a dynamic group approach (Dananjaya 2013; Vinata 2009).

According Vinata (2009) the learning model of dynamic group is based on problem solving. In this case students are expected to sharpen thinking skills to solve problems. In this model, lecturer not only teach in one direction, but is expected to facilitate the discussion with certain issues at each meeting. Through this method, the students are expected to be able to express their opinions and get involved in discussions. This is important to develop students’ self confidence.

Furthermore, this model puts the student in the centre, as well as having a central role in the learning process. It is sometimes referred to as student centred learning. In this model, lecturer provides opportunity for students to learn independently and sharpen critical thinking. Through the implementation of the model, students are expected to gain deep understanding, increase learning motivation, and have positive behaviour to the subjects taught. Froyd and Simpson (2010) quoting Collins & O'Brien (2003) said: “This learning models places the student (learner) in the centre of the learning process. The instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively.”

Student centred learning model emphasizes students experience, in which a circular process happens between experience and meaning. This process begins with (1) the experience itself, both experience gained in the classroom or before the learning process. The next processes are (2) analysing the messages delivered in the learning process, (3) concluding or building specific meaning of the message and the experience that has been obtained, (4) expressing the conclusions or meaning, (5) applying the meaning in the daily life and looking at things based on the meaning that has been studied before, and (6) teaching the meaning to another people (Vinata 2009). This

process will be repeated again as a spiral. Thus, it is a dynamic model, in which the position of learners will always change according to the experience that has been obtained previously. Consequently, learning materials will always be dynamic according to the times and contexts that occur in everyday life.

Respecting the multicultural conditions in Indonesia, as well as in Indonesian universities, the SCL model should be combined with the culturally responsive teaching, defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively (Gay 2002). Culture is deeply embedded in any learning processes, it strongly influences the attitudes and behaviours of students as well as teachers; therefore, teaching ethnically diverse students has to be multiculturalized (Gay 2002). The culturally responsive teaching needs teachers who have knowledge, attitudes, as well as teaching strategies that respect cultural diversity. Gay (2002: 109) posited, “Teachers need to know how to use cultural scaffolding in teaching these students - that is, using their own cultures and experiences to expand their

intellectual horizons and academic achievement”. Thus, in the learning process, a lecturer will always try to link a theory with cultural context in Indonesia, or broadly in Asia. For example, when discussing the cultivation theory, lecturer will discuss the phenomena of violence broadcasts on Indonesian television. Also, when discussing the group communication theories, teacher will ask students to analyse their own group communication.

The combination of student centred learning and culturally responsive teaching could be implemented through some techniques, namely field work, case study, game, and video analysis. Such techniques should be combined with presentation by students, either individually or in groups.

### 3.1 Field work

This technique requires students to do a particular field work, such as observation, media texts analysis, interview, or other, and then discuss the results of the works in the classroom. This model believes a classic wisdom, “learning by doing”. Many communication theories can be taught with this technique, as shown in the following table.

**Table 1** Field work techniques

No	Theory	Field Work
1	Uses and gratification	Observation or interview about media use by local people
2	Framing	Media text analysis, comparing two or more media reports in the same issue.
3	Organization culture	Observation on certain common aspects to several different organizations.

For example, in the 2015 teaching grant, in the teaching of uses and gratification theory, students were asked to closely observe the media consumption patterns of a family or a group of people, including what kind of media are used, how and for what purposes they are used, and how the behaviour of the user. The results of the observation were written in a short

essay and then presented and discussed in the classroom. This learning method, according to the students, can encourage them to learn how a theory can be used to explain phenomena that are close to their live.

### 3.2 *Game*

In this technique, students in groups are asked to read a chapter from a textbook or a journal article, which has been selected by the lecturer. Then, the students are asked to write down keywords from their reading, in metaplan cards that have been prepared. The metaplan cards are then put on the flipchart. The next groups need to put metaplan containing different keywords that have not been pinned yet by previous groups. After having all the keywords on flipchart, students are requested to draft the relationship between keywords. This task need to shift or change the position of keyword cards that have been taped in order to describe the relationships between the keywords visually. The result is such a map of the idea of a theory, compiled collectively and critically by students. During the tasks, students are asked to explain and give examples related to the keywords from their experience or observation.

In the 2015 teaching grant, this method was used to discuss Social Penetration and Agenda Setting Theory. However, in general, this method could be used to discuss many other theories. With a competitive spirit in proposing and putting keywords, students feel challenged and enjoy these activities. Critical questions could be raised in this process, which could also be initiated by lecturer. For example, discussing the possible relationships between key concepts in agenda setting theory, the concept of media agenda, public agenda and government agenda, could be raised critical question, which one effect another one.

### 3.3 *Video presentation and analysis*

Two to three groups of students are asked to search short video, from YouTube or another sources, which are relevant to be explained by certain communication theory that will be taught. In the class, these groups show selected videos, then analyse them with theory. The class may then be followed by discussion to sharpen

the analysis. This model can be used to deliver a lot of theory, as they are plenty of video resources that are relevant to the theory. The number of groups who do presentations preferably more than one, to anticipate if a group is not able to select and analyse the video, there are other groups who are expected to be able to do the task. This method could also be related to the cultural stereotype theory. Video analysis would be very fruitful to start a critical analyses on how ethnic groups are represented in media and popular culture.

### 3.4 *Case study*

In this model, some small groups, each consist of 3-4 students, have a task to analyse different cases. To improve learning outcomes, in the previous meeting, the lecturer should introduce theories and cases that will be discussed, so that students have enough time to prepare the analysis. During the class, the groups who had the task are requested to make a presentation, then followed by discussion. This model can basically be used for almost any theory, lecturer need to find phenomena or cases that are relevant with the theory.

Case study sometimes will meet with some sensitive and controversial issues, such as racism, religious intolerance, communal violence, historical atrocities, human right, media ownership monopoly, and others. The conventional teaching usually avoids them, but on the contrary, culturally responsive teaching will deal with them, discussing these controversial to build new insight, better understanding, as well as multicultural consciousness among students (Gay 2002).

### 3.5 *Presentation*

This technique is a complement of four techniques explained beforehand. The field work, game, video analysis, or case study, could be combined with presentation technique, either individual or group. In the presentation, students are asked to describe two aspects: 1.

The basic understanding of theory, including its basic theses and concepts, scopes and orientations, history and development, as well as weaknesses and strengths, 2. Application of the theory in the local context. The second aspect can be delivered from the field work that has been done by students, the video that has been prepared as example, or cases or phenomena that have been previously selected.

The model can be modified, namely group work - individual presentation. For example, a group who will make presentation consist of three people, then the class is divided into three groups. Each member of the group should present their ideas in front of different groups of students. This model forces all members of the presenter group work together and master the theory will be presented.

### 3.6 Structure and evaluation

Using the student centred learning, a 150 minutes session can only cover one or two theories maximally. Compared with teacher centred learning method, the SCL takes longer times to discuss a theory. With TCL method, in

which a theory can be delivered in one direction by the teacher, 150 minutes of session can be used to explain three to four theories. However, this is an unavoidable consequence to achieve maximum learning competence, that is students are able to understand and use communication theory to explain the contemporary phenomena surrounding them. Since only a limited number of theory in one semester could be learnt with TCL method, the lecturer must select some fundamental theories that would be learnt in the class. In addition, the lecturer also need to give an illustration of the very broad diversity of communication theories, which is impossible to be all discussed in one semester course. The illustration would make the students be able to understand that they are so many communication theories have not been studied yet in the course. The list of complete communication theories would be very useful for student for further independent learning.

Combining Littlejohn & Foss (2008), Griffin (2006), and West & Turner (2010) the communication theory course could be structured as follows.

**Table 2** Course structure

Session	Course Topic
First	Introduction and learning assessment Introduction of theory
Second	Basic understanding of theory
Third & fourth	Traditions of communication theory
Fifth	De-westernization of communication theory
Sixth	Theories of interpersonal communication
Seventh	Theories of group communication <b>Mid-exam</b>
Eight	Theories of public communication
Ninth	Theories of mass society
Tenth	Theories of limited effect
Eleventh	Theories of audience media
Twelfth	Theories of communication and cultural context
Thirteenth	Theories of new media
Fourteenth	Final review <b>Final-exam</b>

In line with the SCL model, the students' involvements and activities during the learning process should be the most important aspect of final evaluation and grading of the course. It could be measured from two components, namely the collected tasks and activeness in the class discussions. The collected tasks depend on the teaching techniques that are used, for example field work will produce field report, case study will result in short essay, as well as presentation will produce the presentation material. To record the activities during the class, it is required a sheet record for each session, containing the name of students who deliver ideas and the quality of the ideas. The sheet also records data on presentation, including the name of students who do presentation, presentation quality, as well as the ability to respond to the questions.

Meanwhile, mid and final exams are intended to measure the competency of students to understand and apply the theory. Thus, the questions for the exam should be qualitative based on case studies, which are able to show the students' competencies in understanding and applying the theory. In principle, all methods of evaluations are directed to evaluate the competence of students in understanding and applying communication theories.

In addition to evaluation methods in order to give grades to students, at the end of the semester, students will evaluate the lecturer, especially about learning methods and lecturer's competencies. It is performed quantitatively which students fill in the form of faculty performance, which already became a standard in the Islamic University of Indonesia, as a common procedure in many universities that are seriously control teaching and learning quality. The final assessment is also done qualitatively, by which students are asked to answer these open questions: 1. Is this course interesting, why? 2. Is it easy to understand the content of

the course, why? 3. What do you think about the teaching methods? 4. What do you think about the mastery of lecturer to the course material?

#### **4. Towards de-westernization of communication theories**

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, research on communication studies is one-sidedly dominated by American and Eurocentric perspectives. It could be concluded from the existing theoretical models, textbooks, as well as research focusing on Western nations and societies. Thus, nowadays, communication scholars around the world have commonly regarded Western systems as ideal models for conducting research and teaching. But, as Saral (1983) explained, "They are culture-bound expressions of the Western idea and most applicable in the context of Western philosophy and metaphysics."

In this condition, the fresh ideas come from indigenous perspective would be great contribution for communication scholarship. De-westernization is a common concept refers to this new academic milieu. Dissanayake (1986) pointed two main reasons to promote indigenous communication theories. First, it would broaden the field of discourse and facilitate the new insights from various cultures. Second, it would promote new approaches on communication research that are more relevant and culturally bounded to the non Western societies. Finally, this two things would be great contribution to better understanding and conceptualization of communication act. Wang & Shen (2000: 29) said, "For an Asian researcher to fail to recognize, and to take advantage of, their rich cultural heritage is to throw away the most valuable assets in making a significant contribution to the field of communication study."

Besides, the Western tradition itself has been criticized in some fundamental



assumptions. Ishii (2001) identified four theoretical problems of American Eurocentric communication tradition. First, it is white-centric and reluctant to other concepts, assumptions, and philosophy of communication. Second, it has indeed dominated by Cartesian philosophy based on dichotomies thinking, such as culture-nature, society-environment, mental-material; mechanistic views of the relations between the human-culture and the environment-nature; and linear progressivism of science. Third, it posits independence and individualism values in the centre, views individual person as such completely independent. Fourth, as a consequence of individualism, American European tradition focuses on speaker-centred and persuasion-oriented. Chu (1988) found two methodological weaknesses of American European tradition, namely the research tendency to follow already existing traditions, schools or pioneers, driven by the cumulative spirit of the science, and the strong reliance on quantitative methodology and statistical analysis.

De-westernization is absolutely a very long struggle that must go through many stages. Its goal is the development of communication theories that are deeply rooted and based on non-Western societies phenomena, Indonesian context respectively in this paper, or Asian context in general. The fundamental assumption is that there are basic differences in communication act and phenomena between the West and non-West, so that the theory explaining them should be different. It does not mean the rejection of Western communication theories, but rather as revising and criticizing the established communication theories based on the real phenomena of non-Western society. Goonasekera and Kuo (2000: vii) said, "The search for an Asian perspective therefore does not imply the outright rejection of Western theories. What is at issue is the uncritical acceptance of Western models and the neglect

of the cumulative wisdom embodied in Asian literature."

Miike (2002) proposed three assumptions for Asia-centric communication scholarship which differ to the Western communication tradition. First, communication takes place in contexts of multiple relationships across space and time. Contexts, which is neglected in the individual-centeredness theories of American European traditions, should get more attention because every communication takes place not in a vacuum but in a context. The process, meaning and function of communication act could be better understood from its contexts, such as historical, cultural and socio-economic conditions (Ishii 1997; Kleinjans 1972). Miike (2002: 9) proposed, "It is high time for Asiatic communication experts to scrutinize political systems, religious beliefs, historical events, and philosophical thoughts that are integral to a culture and to conceptualize them as communication contexts".

Second, communicator is perceptually and behaviourally both active and passive in a variety of contexts. It brings the understanding that communication act consists of two levels, namely sense making and behavioural, not only outwardly behavioural action as stressed by Western traditions. According to Miike (2002: 10), "The sense-making level refers to whether the communicator is intra-personally active or passive in making sense of her or his perceptual world." In the Asian traditions, communicator's perception and behaviour are not independent, but related to the contexts. It seems that in the communication actions of Easterners, the sense making is more dominant than overt behaviour, because of which Asian people are usually labelled as "passive communicators", who are less in communication competencies, so that should be trained by the Westerners with Western ideas of effective communication.

Third, mutual adaptation is of central importance in harmonious communication processes. It relates to the allocentric or other-directed orientation as the nature of Asian communication. Bruneau (1998) concluded that in the Western communication theories, "The lack of allocentric (other-directed) thinking (mainly feminine) or the use of empathic processes... is especially absent". In this condition, Miike (2002: 12) proposed, "Asiacentric communication specialists can theorize reciprocal aspects of adaptive communication from "extended" perspectives on space and time, which are undoubtedly blind spots of U.S. Eurocentric thinking on communication".

The teaching of communication theory is just one of the initial steps of this de-Westernization, which has a simple role: to question and criticize the relevance of established communication theories with local context. The critical questions are important starting point for the next steps, such as doing empirical research that examines the relevance of a theory to the local context. To bring up the criticisms to the theories, the teaching model emphasizing contextualization and criticism to theory, as proposed in this paper, becomes very important. From this contextualized course, the critical questions will rise up.

Related to the effectiveness of learning process, contextualization makes students feel challenged to share their experiences and opinions in the classroom. Evaluation on five learning techniques as described beforehand shows positive results, in particular the change of students' perception that initially viewed communication theory courses as a boring subject become an interesting subject. Students also feel the closeness in the learning process. It refers to the proximity of the learning process with the students' life experience, so that students could develop function or meaning of the course. Gay (2002: 106) stated, "when

academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly". In the active learning model, students have chance to build self confidence as well as rhetorical skills through sharing and discussing their own experience in the class. For example, in the game method, the class actually turn out to be very pleasant due to the involvement of all class participants. The personal physical proximity among students will directly effect the learning process and its results. The proximity factor is then able to change the perception that "learning theory is boring".

Moreover, in the multicultural contexts of Indonesia, the contextualization becomes more and more important. Students usually express high curiosity about how similar phenomena under discussion happening in other culture in Indonesia. The discussion would be very fruitful because most of the students come from diverse cultures, which they would share local experiences according to each cultural background. This curiosity to another different cultures is very often seen during the discussions. For example, when lecturer teaches the theory of "stereotype", the examples giving in the class are the realm of local people in Indonesia and Malaysia, critical questions arise with regard to how these stereotypes are formed, particularly the stereotypes that exist in Indonesian and Malay society. The contextualization will thus increase the learning comprehension. This result confirms many research findings that the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will increase when they are taught through their own cultural experience (Gay 2000; Gay 2002).

Culturally responsive teaching as proposed in this paper also shows two important things. First is the importance group work among students. Gay (2002: 110) stated, "The group

functions somewhat like a “mutual aid society” in which all members are responsible for helping each other perform and ensuring that everyone contributes to the collective task”. This group style is quite different from common task model in school, which prioritize individual work. The 2015 teaching grant, as well as the years authors teaching experience in communication theory course has proven that group works methods are important to invite and engage all students in the learning processes, as well as to increase student achievement. Second is the important role of examples in the instructional process (Gay 2002). Teacher should acquire detailed cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups, harvest examples from these cultural diversity sources, and support student to relate the examples to their own cultural experience. The authors has also found that local empirical examples would make classroom more interesting and challenging for ethnically diverse students.

## **5. Conclusion**

As mentioned beforehand, teaching communication theory in Indonesia, or in another non-Western countries, generally faces two challenges, that are Western perspective biases and negative perception of students who used to look at the theoretical courses as complicated and boring. This paper offers teaching strategy for the communication theory course emphasizing contextualization as the core learning message, culturally responsive as the teaching approach, and student centred as the learning method. In this model, lecturer provides broad opportunity for students to learn independently and develop critical thinking. It emphasizes students experience, in which a circular process happens between experience and meaning, in which students learn to relate the learning process with their everyday experience.

The linkage will rise closeness or proximity, which in turn could increase motivation, involvement, and achievement of learning competencies. As a key concept, proximity refers to the closeness of learning process with students’ experience, so that students could develop meaning or function of the learning process for their social-cultural life. Proximity challenges students to share and analyse their everyday experience with certain communication theories. Thus, proximity is an important point to contextualize communication theory with empirical context in Indonesia, or in Asia more broadly.

Contextualization is an important signifier of de-westernization of communication theories. In this context, the teaching of communication theory is just one of the initial steps to de-westernize communication theory, which has a simple role: to question and criticize the relevance of established communication theories with local context. To rise criticisms to the theories, the teaching model emphasizing contextualization becomes very important. From this contextualized course, the critical questions will rise up.

In the teaching act, contextualization can be applied with several techniques. The first technique is field work, in which students do certain field work, such as observation, analysis of media text, interview, or other, and then discuss the results of the work in the classroom. The second is game, which students compete to write down the key concepts of a theory and the relationships between the concepts, resulting a map of the ideas of a theory. The third is video analysis, that is some groups of student are asked to find and present short videos that are relevant to certain communication theory to be discussed. The next technique is case study, in which several groups of student present their analysis of specific cases using communication theory, followed by class discussion. The later technique is presentation by students, as a complement of these four techniques.

## Reference

- Brown, A. and Dowling, P. 2001. *Doing Research/Reading Research: A Mode of Interrogating for Teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Bruneau, T. 1998. New directions for conceptualizing intercultural communication competency in the 21st century. Paper presented at *the Pacific and Asian Communication Association Convention, "Humans Communicating in the 21st Century: Asian, Pacific, and Western Perspectives"*. Sapporo, Japan.
- Chu, G.C. 1988. In search of an Asian perspective of communication theory. Dissanayake, W. (ed.), *Communication Theory: The Asian Perspective*. Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, pp. 204-210.
- Collins, J.W. and O'Brien, N.P. (eds). 2003. *Greenwood Dictionary of Education*. Westport CT: Greenwood.
- Dananjaya, U. 2013. *Media Pembelajaran Aktif*. Bandung: Nuansa Cendekia.
- Dissanayake, W. 1986. The need for the study of Asian approaches to communication. *Media Asia*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 6-13.
- Elliott, J. 2000. Towards a synoptic vision of educational change in advanced industrial societies. Altricher, H. and Elliott, J. (eds), *Images of Educational Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Froyd, J. and Simpson, N. 2010. Student-centered learning: addressing faculty questions about student-centered learning. Texas: Texas A&M University.  
[http://petersj.people.cofc.edu/CCLI/PDF/Student\\_Centered\\_Learning-FacultyQuestions.pdf](http://petersj.people.cofc.edu/CCLI/PDF/Student_Centered_Learning-FacultyQuestions.pdf) (Accessed 5 January 2017).
- Gay, G. 2000. *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. 2002. Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 53 No. 2 March/April, pp. 106-116.
- Goonasekera, A. and Kuo, E.C.Y. 2000. Forward – towards an Asian theory of communication?. *Asian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. vii-xii.
- Griffin, E.M. 2006. *A First Look at Communication Theory*, Sixth Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Henson, K.T. 1996. Teachers as researchers. Sikula, J. (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*. New York: Macmillan, pp. 53-66.
- Holmes, D. 2012. *Teori Komunikasi: Media, Teknologi, dan Masyarakat*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Ishii, S. 1997. Tasks for intercultural communication researchers in Asia Pacific region in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Dokkyo International Review*, Vol. 10, pp. 313-326.
- Ishii, S. 2001. An emerging rationale for triworld communication studies from Buddhist perspective. *Human Communication: A Journal of the Pacific and Asian Communication Association*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 1-10.
- Johnson, M. and Button, K. 2000. Connecting graduate education in language arts with teaching contexts: the power of action research. *English Education*, Vol. 32, pp. 107-126.
- Kleinjans, E. 1972. Communicating with Asia. Samovar, L.A. & Porter, R.E. (eds.), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth, pp. 256-266.
- Littlejohn, S.W. and Foss, K.A. 2008. *Theories of Human Communication*, Ninth Edition. Thompson Wadsworth.

- Littlejohn, S.W. and Foss, K.A. 2014. *Teori Komunikasi*, Edisi 9. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- McBee, M. 2004. The classroom as laboratory: an exploration of teacher research. *Roeper Review*, Vol. 27, pp. 52-58.
- McNiff. 2002. *Action research for professional development: concise advice for new action researchers*.  
<http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (accessed 5 January 2017).
- McQuail, D. 1987. *Teori Komunikasi Massa: Suatu Pengantar*, Edisi Kedua. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Miike, Y. 2002. Theorizing culture and communication in the Asian context: an assumptive foundation. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, Vol. XI No. 1, pp. 1-21.
- Miller, D.M. and Pine, G.J. 1990. Advancing professional inquiry for educational improvement through action research. *Journal of Staff Development*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 56-610.
- Morissan. 2013. *Teori Komunikasi: Komunikator, Pesan, Percakapan, dan Hubungan (Interpersonal)*. Bogor: Ghalia.
- Morissan. 2013. *Teori Komunikasi: Individu Hingga Massa*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Ross, J., Rolheiser, C., and Hogoboom-Gray, A. 1999. Effects of collaborative action research on the knowledge of five Canadian teacher researchers. *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 99 No. 3, pp. 255-274.
- Sagor, R. 2004. *The Action Research Guidebook: A four-step Process for Educators and School Teams*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publication.
- Saral, T.B. 1983. Hindu philosophy of communication. *Communication*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 47-58.
- Sax, C. and Fisher, D. 2001. Using qualitative action research to effect change: implications for professional education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 71-80.
- Severin, W.J. and Tankard, J.W. 2001. *Teori Komunikasi: Sejarah, Metode, dan Terapan di dalam Media Massa*, Edisi Kelima. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Tripp, D. 2005. Action research: a methodological introduction. *Educacao e Pesquisa*, Vol. 31 No. 3, January.
- Vinata, V. 2009. *Penerapan Model Pembelajaran Dinamika Kelompok (Group Dynamic)*. Bengkulu: Universitas Negeri Bengkulu.
- Vivian, J. 2008. *Teori Komunikasi Massa, Edisi Kedelapan*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Wang, G. and Shen, V. 2000. East, West, communication and theory: searching for the meaning of searching for Asian communication theories. *Asian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 14-32.
- West, R. and Turner. L.H. 2008a. *Pengantar Teori Komunikasi: Analisis dan Aplikasi (Buku 1)*. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- West, R. and Turner, L.H. 2008b. *Pengantar Teori Komunikasi: Analisis dan Aplikasi (Buku 2)*. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- West, R. and Turner, L.H. 2010. *Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Williamson, K.M. 1992. Relevance or rigor: a case for teacher as researcher. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, Vol. 63 No. 9, pp. 17-21

