Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions of implementation of communicative

language teaching at tertiary level

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ABSTRACT

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has been extensively discussed and researched, especially in an English as a second language (ESL) context. Some literature has also explored the adaptation of CLT in English as a foreign language (EFL) environments, such as in Asian countries like China. No research, however, has been conducted with consideration given to a specific group of teachers who teach non-English major students at the tertiary level in China. The present study was designed to investigate Chinese university teachers' perception of the implementation of CLT in non-English major programs in China.

This study first differentiates ESL and EFL environments, and then distinguishes the characteristics of CLT and of the traditional Chinese teaching methodology. Second, this study examines how the implementation of CLT is perceived by the university teachers of non-English major programs and whether there exist some constraints that impede the implementation of CLT at the tertiary level in China.

The results show that the adaptation of CLT to the Chinese context is welcomed by university teachers of non-English major programs. However, in the implementation of CLT in the teaching of non-English major students, there are difficulties arising from four directions, namely, the educational system, the EFL context, the cultural tradition, and the students. The results suggest that only by overcoming the difficulties from those four sources and by creating more favorable conditions for the

implementation of CLT can teachers of non-English major programs in China implement

CLT in their daily teaching practice.

RÉSUMÉ

L'enseignement communicatif de langue (CLT, "Communicative language teaching") est le sujet de nombreuses discussions et projets de recherche, surtout dans le contexte de l'anglais langue seconde (ESL, "English as a second language"). Des recherches existent aussi sur le sujet de l'adaptation du CLT dans l'environnement de l'anglais comme une langue étrangère (EFL, "English as a foreign language"), comme dans les pays asiatiques comme la Chine. Cependant, aucune recherche n'a été conduite qui porterait sur un groupe spécifique de professeurs, c'est-à-dire ceux qui enseignent aux étudiants qui n'ont pas l'intention de devenir specialistes de l'anglais, au niveau universitaire en Chine. L'étude présente a été conçue pour enquêter sur les perceptions des professeurs d'université de la mise en oeuvre du CLT dans les programmes autre que la spécialisation en anglais langue seconde, en Chine.

Tout d'abord, cette étude différencie entre les environnements ESL et les environnements EFL, et puis elle distingue les caractéristiques du CLT et de la méthodologie chinoise traditionnelle d'enseignement. En deuxième lieu, cette étude chercher à savoir de quelle façon la mise en oeuvre du CLT est perçue par les professeurs d'université dans des programmes autre que la spécialisation en anglais langue seconde, et s'il existe des contraintes qui poseraient des obstacles à la mise en oeuvre du CLT au niveau universitaire en Chine.

Les résultats montrent que l'adaptation du CLT au contexte Chinois est bien

reçue par les professeurs d'université des programmes autre que la spécialisation en anglais langue seconde. Cependant, dans la mise en oeuvre du CLT dans l'enseignement de ces étudiants, il y a des difficultés qui proviennent de quatre directions: du système d'éducation, du contexte EFL, de la tradition culturelle, et des étudiants. Les résultats suggèrent que c'est seulement en s'attaquant aux difficultés de ces quatre sources, et en créant des conditions plus favorables pour la mise en oeuvre du CLTque l'on puisse aider les professeurs d'université des programmes autre que la spécialisation en anglais langue seconde à mettre en oeuvre le CLT dans leur pratique quotidienne d'enseignement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

China's open-door policy and economic reforms promoted by the government have resulted in a great boom in foreign language education in China. English language teaching (ELT), therefore, has been gaining more and more momentum all over the country. In 1986, the Ministry of Education (MOE), the official authority in charge of educational policy at various levels nationwide, appointed a revision team to develop new curricula and syllabi in order to solve existing teaching problems, improve teaching practice, develop students' communicative competence, and, all in all, to bring about fundamental changes. The new syllabus that came out in 1991 and was revised in 1999 (College English syllabus revision team, 1991; College English syllabus revision team, 1999) highlights the use of language for the purpose of communication. The great emphasis placed on the actual use of the language for communication is an innovation in the history of ELT in China. This thesis will focus on the innovation, implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) specifically to non-English major students at the tertiary level in China.

Markee (2001) defines educational innovation as "proposals for qualitative change in pedagogical materials, approaches and values that are perceived as new by individuals who comprise a formal (language) education system" (p. 120). His definition of innovation has a focus on the systemic context in which the innovation is implemented and on fundamental changes through a modification of pedagogical values

involved in the innovation.

CLT is a major direction in teaching English as second language (ESL) curriculum innovation over recent decades. CLT originated and was nurtured in an ESL context in the 1960s (Richards & Rogers, 2001). It has been standard practice in Anglo-American ESL contexts since then. Richards and Rogers (2001) select it as the most popular and influential method over recent decades, and it is still acceptable and worth our attention.

However, attempts to introduce CLT into English as foreign language (EFL) contexts have not had a high success rate (D. F. Li, 2001, p. 149). The move from traditional English teaching to CLT constitutes an innovation in China. Traditional English teaching and learning in China is teacher and textbook-centered, grammar and structure-based, and test-oriented. Many attempts have been made to introduce CLT with the intention of improving the quality of English teaching. X. J. Li (1984) first introduced communicative teaching to China and was a strong advocate for CLT to be adopted to improve students' communicative competence. Nevertheless, the attempt to introduce CLT to China has provoked debate about whether to adopt it wholesale or adapt it first. The majority of researchers acknowledge that there are difficulties with implementing CLT. They emphasize the limitations of using CLT in the Chinese pedagogical context and suggest a compromise path of adaptation, neither rejection nor adoption, to benefit Chinese students most (Anderson, 1993; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Penner, 1995; Rao, 2002).

The overall objective of the study reported here is to explore the dimensions of the debate about the appropriateness and effectiveness of CLT in the Chinese context from the perspective of experienced teachers of non-English major students. Since 1998, most colleges and universities in China have increased their enrolment to promote economic development. English is set by MOE as an obligatory subject for all students of non-English majors in universities. All non-English major students must take a series of English courses for at least two years with an average of six hours of English classes weekly. To obtain a bachelor's degree, one has to pass the College English Test (CET). Moreover, English is an examination subject for all graduate school applicants. As far as the number of non-English major students is concerned, university students registered in four-year undergraduate programs at the end of the year 2002 were about 17,000,000 (Zhang, 2003). This group is in contrast to the smaller number of future English specialists, who are in English major programs. Since there is no overall official statistic data about the exact figures of students of non-English majors nationwide, I will take Wuhan University, a key university in the central part of Wuhan, China, as a representative of the case of other universities.

Wuhan, a famous traffic, industrial and commercial metropolis with a 3500-year recorded history, is one of the main traffic hubs in China. It occupies an area of $8467.11 km^2$, with a population of 7,811,900 at the end of 2003. A statistical report of 2001 by the UN shows that Wuhan is ranked sixth among the twenty-five cities with the best development prospects in China (Wuhan government, 2002; Wuhan Statistical

Bureau, 2004). Wuhan is also a cultural, scientific and educational center, having thirty-five higher educational institutions.

Among these thirty-five universities, Wuhan University is one of the best, covering altogether the eleven fields of philosophy, business, law, education, arts, history, science, technology, agriculture, medicine, and management. Presently, there are 47,000 students, including 15,000 master and doctor students, registered in Wuhan University, which employs 3,400 professors (Wuhan University, 2004). Among the 1683 higher educational institutions in China, the overall yearly enrollment plan for higher education in 2004 is 3,820,000, with an average enrollment for the individual university of 2,270 (Ministry of Education P. R. C. (MOE), 2004a & 2004b). In Wuhan University, the enrollment plan of non-English majors entering in the year 2004 is 6,500 while the plan of English major students recruitment is only 100. That is, the number of non-English major students is sixty-five times that of English major students (Wuhan da xue zhao sheng ban gong shi, 2004). From this typical number, it is estimated that, at most, two out of a hundred students study English as their major, and non-English major students are the overwhelming majority. According to the statistics from the National Committee of English Teaching to Non-English Majors, the ratio between teacher and student is 1:130, which means that there are about 130,700 teachers teaching non-English major students now at the tertiary level in China (Zhang, 2003).

From the figures listed above, it is clear that the greatest portion of English learning and teaching in China refers to the condition of non-English major students and

their teachers of English. Surprisingly, as reviewed in the previous section, a lot of the literature covers the difficulties involved in CLT implementation in China in previous research, but the research discusses those difficulties in a general sense without clarifying whether they are found from the perceptions of teachers of English major students or teachers of non-English major students. That is, no attention has been specifically given to the perceptions of the group of teachers who teach non-English major students. Moreover, most of the publications have been generally based on anecdotal evidence rather than on empirical evidence and data collection. As Carless (2001) points out, insufficient information has been provided on the extent to which innovation is implemented by teachers following developers' intentions and how innovation is carried out by teachers according to their own teaching context. Therefore, it is important to investigate how such an enormous population sees the implementation of CLT in their daily teaching practice.

As the researcher of this study as well as a member of this professional group, I have a similar background and experience to the participants in the study. Hence, I hope that this study will help me understand the theory and practice of CLT better, adopt an appropriate attitude toward the implementation of CLT in China, and guide my future English teaching practice in China. I also hope that this study will offer me an opportunity to meet more professionals in this area, listen to their opinions, and get insights from their views. Furthermore, I hope that this study will provide some preliminary and valuable information for my potential research in the future.

In the long term, it is hoped that the research will help teachers and students understand better the problems and obstacles they are experiencing and work collaboratively to overcome the difficulties to improve English teaching and learning in China. It is also hoped that the research will help the authorities at university level decide on more practical and proper workload and evaluation criteria for teachers of English. Equally important, it is hoped that the research will contribute to informing policy-makers of the real situation of English teaching practice in classrooms, thus making possible more suitable policy and syllabus for English teaching.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to this study, including the rationale and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature related to CLT and English teaching in the Chinese context, including both the characteristics of CLT and of the traditional Chinese teaching methodology. The problems arising in introducing CLT from an ESL context to an EFL context are discussed in this chapter as well. At the end of this chapter, the research questions are stated.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology of the study, including the participants, the instruments used for collecting data, the data collection procedures, and the methods of data analysis.

Chapter 4 first presents the results from the questionnaires, and then elaborates the findings from the interviews. I categorize the difficulties discussed by the interviewees into four major categories, and support each point by quoting the

interviewees' words.

Chapter 5 discusses the research results by comparing the questionnaire results with the interview results and by comparing results from both questionnaire and interview with what is discussed in the previous literature. Both the consistency and inconsistency among those results are presented in this chapter.

Finally, Chapter 6 puts forward some suggestions from the findings to overcome the constraints mentioned in Chapter 4. I then conclude with the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

CLT was first introduced to EFL teaching in China in the early 1980s, with the purpose of improving students' communicative competence. Ever since then, there has been a debate about whether or not to employ this innovative teaching method in Chinese schools.

This chapter reviews the relevant literature, first on the definitions and characteristics of CLT, and then on differentiated ESL and EFL environments, pointing out the problems inherent in introducing a new approach from one context to another. A review of descriptions of traditional Chinese teaching methodology, current implementation of CLT within the Chinese context, and the main obstacles arising in the process of implementation follows. Finally, the research questions are presented at the end of this chapter.

DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES OF CLT

Richards and Rogers (2001) identify CLT as an approach that provides theories on the nature of language and learning, differentiating it from methodology which emphasizes the study of the nature of language skills and procedures for teaching them (p. 244). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT starts with a theory of language as communication, which focuses on developing learners' communicative competence. The term communicative competence is best described as "the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct

from their ability to recite dialogs or perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 16). The focus on communicative competence involves many aspects of the widely known language skills, which are reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Hymes' (1972) communicative competence includes knowledge and ability for language use. Canale and Swain (1980) extend Hymes' model and develop a more comprehensive set of principles of communicative competence. Their detailed theoretical framework of communicative competence includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. These proposed principles serve as a set of guidelines that organize and develop communicative approaches to second language teaching. Bachman's (1990) communicative language model further extends Canale and Swain's model with more detailed subcategories. He defines language ability as "consisting of both knowledge, or competence and the capacity for implementing or executing the competence in appropriate contextualized communicative language use" (p. 84). His model of language competence broadly includes organizational competence, which consists of grammatical and textual competence, and pragmatic competence, which consists of illocutionary and socio-linguistic competence. In Bachman's model, strategic competence is not included in communicative competence, making it different from Canale and Swain's model.

There are two versions of CLT: a weak version and a strong version. The weak version of CLT emphasizes communication between students, as well as between students and teachers in the form of group work or pair work. It emphasizes "the

importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching" (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). Teaching of language structures is specifically excluded. In other words, it focuses on creating more opportunities for learners to practice language use, or learn to use English (Howatt, 1984). The strong version is actually quite different. The strong version of communicative teaching "advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself" (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). Holliday (1994a) further claims that the focus of the strong version is on learning about how language works in discourse. The lesson input is language data in the form of text, and "communicative" relates more to the way in which the learners communicate with text and solve problems instead of communicating with each other. The communication between learners and text is accomplished through doing problem-solving tasks. Students can complete the tasks through individual efforts, not necessarily through pair or group work. "As long as individual students are communicating with rich text and producing useful hypotheses about the language, what they are doing is communicative" (Holliday, 1994a, p. 172). The strong version, described in Howatt's words, is "using English to learn it" (Howatt, 1984, p. 279).

The weak version is more popular and has become more or less standard practice in the ESL context. This study uses the definition of the weak version in the

Chinese context.

The weak version of CLT is characterized by "focusing on communicative and contextual factors in language use" (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 158). Students practice meaningful communication through communicative activities such as role-play, games, information gap and group discussion. As meaning is paramount, error correction by the teacher is avoided, as long as students can express meaning with fluency.

CLT is also characterized by a "learner-centered and experience-based view of second language teaching" (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 158). The teaching starts with the needs analysis of the learners, and the needs analysis is an ongoing process (Nunan, 1988). The learners' main need is to take up most of the class time to practice using the language they will be using outside the classroom; the teachers' role is to monitor and facilitate learning. Li (2001) sums up six characteristics of CLT: a focus on communicative functions; a focus on meaningful tasks rather than on language per se (e.g., grammar or vocabulary study); efforts to make tasks and language relevant to a target group of learners through an analysis of genuine, realistic situations; the use of authentic, from-life materials; the use of group activities; and the attempt to create a secure, non-threatening atmosphere (p. 150).

DIFFERENTIATING ESL AND EFL ENVIRONMENTS

CLT has its roots in England, which is primarily an ESL environment. This approach quickly spread in Western countries and gained popularity among language teachers after it was born during the time of reevaluation of L2 teaching in the early

1960s (Holliday, 1994a; Holliday, 1994b). ESL occurs in the target language environment (in this case English). This would represent students learning English in the United States, England, Australia or any other countries where English is the primary language of interaction, communication, and business. Therefore, students are living and interacting with native speakers, and have large amounts of regular exposure to the target language (Ellis, 1996; Holliday, 1994b). In ESL environments, language learning is not limited to the classroom since students may continue to learn outside the classroom through interactions in their everyday lives. For these students, language learning is more than a curriculum discipline; it is part of survival; they need to learn the language to survive and grow (Ellis, 1996). Another factor is that, in most cases, students in ESL classrooms usually do not share the same native language as their classmates, so creating friendships and interactions in and outside the classroom depends on the learning and development of the target language. In many cases, the culturally heterogeneous classroom leads to higher motivation and faster adaptation of CLT (Ellis, 1996).

EFL, in contrast, occurs outside the target language environment. It represents students who learn English in China, Japan, Korea, Mexico, or any other countries where English is not the primary form of interaction and communication among citizens. In this situation, English is part of the school curriculum. Generally, students in these situations have exposure to the target language only during class time (Deckert, 1987; Ellis, 1996). Foreign language learning is a school requirement or a

personal hobby, rather than a survival necessity. Often students learn English with the sole purpose of passing certain exams (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Gorsuch, 2000; Liao, 2000). Another factor is that students share the same native language and the temptation to facilitate conversation with the use of the native language at times is irresistible (Liao, 2000). Considering that language teaching and learning is greatly affected by the environment in which it occurs, it becomes paramount to understand the existing differences between ESL and EFL as related to the implementation of CLT.

APPROPRIATENESS OF CLT TO THE EFL CONTEXT

In spite of its great success in the ESL context, CLT has been diffusing rather slowly in the EFL context and has not yet achieved wide acceptance. Among some Asian countries with educational systems and cultural backgrounds similar to China's, for example, South Korea, Li (2001) reports a series of difficulties the teachers meet in the implementation of CLT. Sano et al. (1984) take the view that CLT does not fit in with Japanese teaching objectives (learning English as a subject in a whole curriculum) to learn English. Teachers there find that CLT is not working in their environment (p. 170).

Resistance to CLT in these Asian countries can be regarded as the conflict between the Eastern tradition versus the Western approach, with different underlying values and traditions. Penner (1995) points out that the focus in the traditional Eastern approach on teacher, textbook and grammar is in almost direct contrast to CLT's focus on learner, practice and skill development, because CLT views learning as a skill

development rather than a knowledge (grammar, rule, lexicon) receiving process (p .4).

Resistance to CLT is also regarded as a problem inherent in the cross-cultural exportation of educational innovation, or the direct exportation of one approach from one setting to another setting without consideration of the local contexts and the political, cultural and educational gap between different countries (Holliday, 1994b).

The appropriateness of transferring one method from one setting to a new setting wholesale is an important issue. Holliday (1994b) points out that the introduction of CLT from ESL to EFL is a problem of "one way technology transfer" of dominant ESL culture to EFL culture and argues for "basing appropriate methodologies on local contexts" (p. 9). It seems that the context can determine the success or failure of an innovation. As Markee (2001) suggests, "systemic context in which an innovation is implemented seems to be an important determiner of whether or not the innovation will be adopted (p. 120). Richards and Rogers (2001) conclude that new approaches should not have been promoted as an all-purpose solution to teaching problems that can be applied to any part of the world and under any circumstances. Therefore, research and analysis of local context must be done to determine the appropriateness of a new method. As Breen and Candlin (2001) point out, "any realization of (communicative) curriculum must reflect a realistic analysis of the actual situation within which the language teaching will take place" (p. 24).

CLT IN CHINA

In China, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is the official authority that makes educational policies as the representative of the central government (Liao, 2000). It determines the goals, curricula, textbooks, teaching method, and criteria of student assessment throughout the country (Campbell & Zhao, 1993). Officially, there is a desire to shift the English teaching method in China from the traditional Chinese model of grammar-translation and audio-lingual instruction to communicative language teaching (College English syllabus revision team, 1991; College English syllabus revision team, 1999).

Traditional English teaching at Chinese universities is teacher and textbook-centered, grammar and structure-based. It views language as knowledge, teaching as knowledge-transmitting and learning as mastery of the knowledge. The learning process is considered a process of quantitative increase of knowledge by memorizing words, grammar rules or a process of habit formation (Li, 1984). Teachers take up most of the time in classrooms and take full responsibility. Teachers are controllers and have the authority, while students are just passive recipients of knowledge. They seldom take initiatives or ask questions to interrupt or challenge teachers. Textbooks are prescribed by MOE. Among them, intensive reading is the focus. Teachers need to give in-depth text analysis by explaining the language points of each lesson sentence by sentence, including grammar, vocabulary and phrases, sentence patterns and structures. Some other supplementary courses are extensive reading,

listening, and grammar. Students need to take the grammar-focused College English Test (CET) and must pass the CET to get their graduation certificate or to obtain their bachelor's degree (Anderson, 1993; Campbell & Zhao, 1993; Hird, 1995; Rao, 2002).

English teaching for non-English major students at the tertiary level in China is enormously affected by the CET. The CET is a national academic examination at the tertiary level in China. It is managed by the National College English Band 4 & 6 Test Committee, from test design, development, and administration to implementation, with the sponsorship of the Department of Higher Education of MOE. It was first officially carried out in 1987 and is held twice a year, once in January and once in June. The CET is a compulsory test for undergraduates to obtain their Bachelor's degree. Because it is the first and the most authoritative national English proficiency test held at the tertiary level, the number of examinees has increased tremendously from the first ten thousand to the present two million each year. Currently, more than 18.5 thousand people have obtained the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) certificate (Da xue ying yu si liu ji kao shi [College English Test (CET)], 2001).

In terms of teaching results, traditional teaching does not help improve students' communicative competence. Students have little ability to speak, write or understand English, although they have good command of grammar and good reading proficiency. Students find learning English is so time-consuming, and "there is a gap between the effort and result" (Campbell & Zhao, 1993, p. 5). There is an increasing demand for people who can understand the cultural and social context of the technology

and information China is importing from developed western countries. English, as the international language, is the key for China to realize its modernization goals. English teaching seems to fall far short of meeting the needs generated from the country's rapid developments in economy, science, technology and increasing contact with the outside world (Wu, 2001).

As early as the 1980s, Li (1984) wrote her "In defense of CLT", introducing CLT to China. However, there has been strong resistance from the very beginning, as it is a challenge to deep-rooted Chinese educational traditions and values. In 1996, the former Chinese Vice Premier, Li Nanqing, made a speech concerning English teaching in China, pointing out that English teaching is an issue relevant to the success and failure of China's open-door policy. The lack of people with good English proficiency may restrict Chinese cultural, scientific and technological exchange with the outside world. He advocated reforming the English teaching method to improve students' learning efficiency and their overall English proficiency (Zhang, 2003). From then on, MOE's top-down intervention has brought about some changes. Textbooks containing communicative tasks and integrating the four language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing have been published, teachers have been trained to use new materials, and language use components such as speaking test and open-ended questions for reading in addition to multiple-choice questions have been added to exams. However, many teachers who try to change the dominant teaching method quickly get frustrated by the reality of everyday teaching in the classroom and lose their initial enthusiasm (Hui,

1997).

The following section reviews the reasons why Chinese teachers of English

cannot implement CLT as intended by MOE and the specific constraints on teachers'

implementation of CLT at Chinese universities.

DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTING CLT IN CHINA

Socio-linguistic Factors

In China, the single official language is Chinese. English is neither the

native nor an official or working language of its citizens; it is only a foreign language for

students to learn at school, although English is becoming more and more highly valued

in China. As stated above, CLT originated in an English speaking country where students

from non-English speaking backgrounds learn English as a second language. The main

socio-linguistic difficulties in the Chinese EFL context lie in four aspects: lower

motivation of using English to communicate; poorer language environment;

unavailability of native-English speaking teachers; unavailability of authentic materials

(Li, 2001, p. 160).

Lower motivation of using English to communicate

As discussed earlier in the section on the differences between ESL and EFL

environments, learners are more motivated in an ESL context to learn that language well

so that they can fit in or even immerse themselves in the community; or they have "real

and immediate needs for communication" (Burnaby & Sun, 1989, p. 231). However,

learners in an EFL context do not have much motivation to communicate in English in the classroom, because, out of the classroom, "there are almost no real-life communicative target language needs for the EFL learner, especially in China" (Hird, 1995, p. 23).

Poorer language environment

CLT is nurtured in the learning English as a second language context where learners are already exposed to the target language speaking environment and there is a huge amount of language input. After comparing the Canadian and Chinese contexts, Burnaby and Sun (1989) suggest that students in Canada have more access to native speakers, and native speakers of English are readily available as teachers, while this is not the case in China. In an ESL context, as to authentic English practice situations, "the ESL learner has no way of avoiding them"; by contrast, in an EFL context, "the EFL learner has no way of engaging in them" (Hird, 1995, p. 22).

Unavailability of native-English speaking teachers

Near native-like proficiency and confidence are essential for teachers using the CLT approach because it demands of the teacher "an extraordinary level of expertise, together with sustained energy and enthusiasm" (Hird, 1995, p. 26). It is very challenging for teachers of non-native English speaking background to teach English using CLT. Teachers are encouraged to use authentic materials rather than prescribed textbooks. Burnaby and Sun (1989) report that teachers have difficulty working with a curriculum without being provided with the lesson content. It is quite difficult for

Chinese teachers to develop content themselves on the basis of students' needs. They are not able to answer spontaneous questions on the target language, socio-linguistics or culture. It is also difficult to create an English-speaking atmosphere with a Chinese teacher (p. 228).

Burnaby and Sun's point is supported by Penner (1995), who suggests that Chinese teachers' reservations about CLT lie in their deficiency in English, especially spoken English, socio-linguistic and strategic competence, and lack of experiences in selecting, adapting and designing materials. Teachers also have difficulties in managing group activities and completing activities in such ways as "debriefing the activities, pointing out alternatives, extensions, and assisting groups in self-correction" (Holliday, 1994a, p. 168). It is much easier to handle traditional teaching, as noted by Anderson (1993), who points out that detailed sentence by sentence analysis of familiar texts is something they can do over and over again with confidence, without challenging their limits of knowledge of English. From the literature, Chinese teachers' academic ability seems to be an important factor in determining the success of the implementation of CLT.

Unavailability of authentic materials

In China, radio broadcasts, video programs, newspaper articles and real-life dialogues in English and periodicals are increasing, but they are far from sufficient. Rao's study (2002) shows that lack of authentic materials prevents Chinese students from getting exposed to the authentic English language. The availability of authentic

materials as well as the adoption and adaptation of materials to teaching activities are also reported as two kinds of difficulties in Sun and Cheng's case study (2002). Though some articles from local English language periodicals, such as China Daily, Beijing Review, etc., can be used as authentic teaching materials, they cannot offer students the insight into other countries, people and cultures that more international newspapers and magazines do. Moreover, deciding on the level and appropriateness and the degree of language difficulty is a tough problem for non-native teachers of English. The balance is hard to keep (Rao, 2002; Sun & Cheng, 2002). Sun and Cheng (2002) stress that it is also difficult to predict the students' problems when they encounter these materials in class.

Cultural and Ideological Factors

Learning behavior and style

China is well known for its rich culture and 5000-year-old history. However, its deep-rooted Confucian culture may hinder the adoption of CLT. There is a cultural gap. Some ideological and educational models that Chinese hold are different from those of Westerners. Basically, the Chinese are taught to be obedient, respectful, humble, and not to be too challenging or critical. It then turns out that most Chinese appear to be shy, conservative and modest with other people (Brooks, 1997). When this is applied to language learning, it is obvious that students are reluctant to speak out their opinions in public. According to Confucius, keeping silent is the best way of avoiding slips of the

tongue or any words offensive against others. So not airing one's own view too much is safe and can save one's face. Hui (1997) shows the influence of this culture by quoting a long list of old Chinese sayings, such as "silence is gold; eloquence is silver", "keep your mouth shut but your eyes open", "keep silent unless you can burst on the scene like a bombshell", etc. (p. 38). As Anderson (1993) suggests, Chinese learners are not risk-takers, and they are reluctant "to participate in open discussions for fear of losing face by making mistakes" (p. 475).

In China, traditionally, language is regarded as knowledge and should be learnt by memorization, translation and meticulous analysis of the meaning of each fragment of language. Campbell and Zhao (1993) reports that Chinese students' assumptions about second language learning are very traditional. They think that grammar analysis is crucial to language learning, that there is no other way of learning a foreign language, though textbooks and exercises are tedious, and that students only need to listen passively and practice exercises on command. Rao's (2002) report echoes Campbell and Zhao's findings that Chinese students prefer traditional activities to communicative activities. Rao (2002) also reports that university students, after at least twelve years of exposure to traditional Chinese teaching before they enter university, have become accustomed to the traditional language teaching style, which is teacher-centered and textbook-based teaching and learning by an emphasis on rote memory.

This cultural tradition has a great impact on the learners' learning style.

According to Skehan's (1998) classification of four different learner types into concrete, analytical, communicative and authority-oriented learners, Chinese students and other south-eastern Asian students seem to be analytical and authority-oriented learners. They like learning grammar, studying alone, using textbooks, and writing down whatever the teacher explains (Willing, 1988).

Role of teachers and students

The role of Chinese teachers is essentially authoritative, while the role of helper and facilitator in CLT is different from the role of, in effect, omniscient disseminator of knowledge in the traditional Chinese approach. Holliday (1994a) suggests that "mastery of various techniques in group work organization, error correction, student monitoring etc. which comes with the communicative package is not sufficient to provide a consolidated teacher status" (p. 176). Chinese teachers' status and authority could be threatened by using CLT.

Another aspect of Confucian influence is the superiority of teachers over students. Students are not supposed to challenge the teachers, as teachers are the knowledge holders who always need to be held in respect. Even when the teachers make mistakes, the students cannot argue with them. Hui (1997) points out that students have been taught and trained to be obedient rather than challenging, as early as kindergarten. Penner (1995) suggests that the idea of respect and saving face prevents students from challenging or questioning their teachers.

However, the learner-centeredness of CLT requires learners to be actively

involved in communicative activities and oral participation. Initiative on the part of students is also recommended by the learning group ideal of CLT. These challenge Chinese students' passive and obedient behaviors. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out, the different role of students in CLT will make Chinese students under traditional influence confused and resentful.

Attitude toward learning

Cultural influence is also demonstrated in attitudes toward language learning. Traditionally, for Chinese people, learning is a very serious matter and should be conducted in a formal and serious way, so games and fun-like activities do not fit in with this concept of learning. As Anderson (1993) suggests, the Chinese tend to associate games and communicative activities with entertainment and do not think they are useful in learning. If games are the dominant form of exercises and activities in the classroom, the teachers may feel guilty and uprooted because they think they are not doing their duty (Li, 1984).

Political and Institutional Factors

The context of the wider curriculum

The political system in China determines its highly centralized educational system. As pointed out by Holliday (1994b), CLT fits in with an ESL context where instrumentally-oriented language teaching is an industry to suit the needs of learners and the market. By contrast, in an EFL context, English teaching is institutionally-

influenced. English is taught as a subject of the whole curriculum; the textbook, the syllabus as well as the methods of assessment all have been predetermined. So the curriculum, methods of teaching and methods of assessment are more flexible in an ESL than in an EFL context. The dynamic and unpredictable nature of CLT is hardly compatible with Chinese institutional-oriented and predetermined language teaching. Moreover, the available teaching hours, timetable and class size are all allocated by the institution. These are main constraints and influences on teachers' teaching styles. Campbell and Zhao (1993) point out that "individual teachers are not expected to make any changes. The new teachers need only to take the chosen textbook and follow the tried and true pedagogical recipe" (p. 5).

The lack of properly trained teachers

University teachers of English lack formal teacher training and are not exposed to teaching theories. Lack of teacher training is one key constraint on the CLT implementation at Chinese universities because university teachers of English in general have not been trained for the teaching profession (Wu, 2001). At Chinese universities, the selection of new teachers of English does not emphasize the candidates' teaching qualifications but concentrates on their English major background. As the holders of a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree in the English language, the majority of new teachers go straight to the teaching profession without being trained to teach. As English major graduates, they are believed to have achieved high-level English proficiency and knowledge of English culture, and also to be familiar with the teaching methodology by

which they themselves have been taught (Campbell & Zhao, 1993). As a result of this recruitment system, the bulk of the new teachers have neither theoretical pedagogical knowledge nor teaching practice before they start in the profession. Teachers of English in China urgently need to develop in three respects: language proficiency, teaching methodology, and pedagogical theory (Wu, 2001). However, the current teachers can hardly meet these three criteria, especially the requirements of knowing teaching methodology and pedagogical theory, because of the teachers' lack of systematic pre-service teacher training.

There are some opportunities for the teachers to receive in-service teacher training, but the focus of the training is to improve the teachers' linguistic proficiency instead of teaching methodology. "Many Chinese teachers wanted teacher training to be language improvements and considered methods to be secondary" (Penner, 1995, p.2). Chinese people believe that their teachers will teach better if they know more of the English language. Such content-focused rather than methodology-focused training is not sufficient, and is only available to a small number of teachers. Furthermore, only a small percentage of experienced teachers has the opportunity to go abroad to get training in terms of both language proficiency and methodology.

In sum, as Hui (1997) puts forward, to use CLT effectively at Chinese universities, the teachers would first have to improve their academic ability through teacher training courses.

The washback of systematic exams

Washback refers to the role that external tests play in influencing classroom

activity (Turner, 2000). Chinese university students' classroom activities, and even their

lives, are powerfully and directly affected by their performance on the national exams

(Campbell & Zhao, 1993). As explained in the previous section, at Chinese universities,

it is compulsory for the undergraduates to pass the nationwide CET-4 to obtain the

bachelor's degree. The test is based on structure and the format is basically in

multiple-choice questions (Wu, 2001; Da xue ying yu si liu ji kao shi, 2001). Students

failing the test will not be awarded a degree, even if they have registered as full time

students for four years in the program and passed all the exams held by each course

instructor. From the very first day of entry to the university, the students know that their

primary goal of their English study is to pass CET-4. The goal of using the English

language to achieve communication purposes is secondary. Rao (2002) reports that

university students lack motivation for communicative competence, as they need to pass

the grammar-based test. Accordingly, Anderson (1993) points out that Chinese teachers

of English make preparing their students for the national examination their first

responsibility. Therefore, Hird (1995) identifies the unified and standardized national

exam system as the single most powerful impediment to educational innovations in

China.

How to test communicative language ability to evaluate strategic,

socio-linguistic and discourse competence is even a problem in the ESL context (Fulcher,

2000; Bachman, 2000). So far in the ESL context, the evaluation criteria of communicative ability is based on a subjective rating scale (Brindley, 1991). Communicative language testing is also time-consuming and costly. To reform the exam and to test communicative ability in China will be quite challenging.

Class size and schedule

Another institutional factor that hinders the implementation of CLT is class size and schedule. In China, the class size is a minimum of thirty-five students with 4-6 hours a week. Holliday (1994a) points out that oral participation is very difficult to ensure in classes over a certain size. Hui (1997) echoes Holliday's point to suggest that, in China, it is very difficult for students in a class to move around and conduct communicative activities. In addition, the class size constrains the effects of CLT activities and degrades the quality of teaching since communicative activities are quite time-consuming. Even though such methods as group discussion, pair work and language labs might help resolve some of the problems appearing in a large class, the teaching quality of language education is still under threat (Hui, 1997; Rao 2002). Burnaby and Sun (1989) suggest that teachers are under pressure to cover the curriculum in the limited time and in a large class. As a result, sufficient attention cannot be given to individual students, especially low level students, in spite of the fact that low level students need more of the teachers' attention and care. Hence, if using CLT, only good students can cope and cooperate and many teachers have to teach at the expense of the majority of low level students (Hui, 1997).

Economic Factors

Limited resources and funds

Economic factors refer to the constraints caused by the lack of financial support. In most schools in China, there is a lack of resources such as computers, TVs, overhead projectors, language laboratories and authentic materials, which are required to support CLT (Hui, 1997; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Rao, 2000). Access to a photocopier for teacher-designed materials is not available. Sun and Cheng (2002) worry that limited resources make it difficult for students to practice English with adequate and authentic opportunities.

Teachers' economic status

In addition to the lack of resources, teachers' low income also discourages them from using CLT. According to Hui (1997), under-paid teachers in China need to work extra hours in their other jobs to earn more money. These extra working hours occupy a great amount of their time, which should have been devoted to doing research and/or trying to use more challenging CLT. Hence, teachers are also not motivated to use CLT due to their low pay and insufficient time.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the points and views described in the literature in addition to the rationale and purpose of this study discussed in Chapter 1, I chose to investigate the difficulties of the implementation of CLT through teachers' perceptions at the tertiary

level in China. Specifically, the research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are Chinese university teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CLT in non-English-major programs?

2. If they perceive or experience difficulties in implementing CLT in an EFL context at Chinese universities, what are those difficulties?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I first give a general overview of the methodology. I then elaborate the research design, including the participants in the study, the instruments used for collecting data, the data collection procedures, and the methods of data analysis.

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on the two research questions, a qualitative research design was used. Burns (2000) states that "qualitative methodologies provide avenues that can lead to the discovery of the deeper levels of meaning" and "the task of the qualitative methodologist is to capture what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world, to understand events from the viewpoints of the participants" (p. 11). Moreover, qualitative research is pragmatic and interpretive, and takes into account the context and setting in which such experienced are lived" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Qualitative research explores social phenomena, and aims to describe in detail such complex phenomena, according to participants' views (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Therefore, the qualitative approach is a good way to do research about people's beliefs, perceptions and attitudes, especially if there is a lack of research on which to base more quantitative procedures. Furthermore, since the experience of teachers is the source of information for this study, this type of research fits in with my study: describing teachers' perceptions about CLT and its implementation in China.

Data were collected through written questionnaires and interviews, both in

person and by phone. I first identified participants, explaining the study to them and asking them to respond to the questionnaires. It was made clear during these initial meetings that participation was voluntary, and no inducement would be given. At this time, participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research for clarification. After collecting the questionnaires, I reviewed the participants' responses to formulate additional questions for the interviews. Interviews were scheduled with each participant individually.

PARTICIPANTS

In this research study, twenty-four Chinese teachers of English were asked to complete the questionnaire, and eight of them were asked to participate in the subsequent interview. These participants were recruited from two sources. One source was a group of Chinese teachers of English who are doing their M. A. program at McGill or Concordia in Montreal (among my classmates or acquaintances) and have experience in teaching non-English major students. Another source is a group of Chinese teachers of English who are now teaching non-English major students in universities in China, some of whom I approached while they were at McGill in early 2004 completing an intensive teacher training short course, and some of whom were my former colleagues or classmates.

Among these twenty-four participants, twenty-one of them are female teachers and three are males. The age range is from twenty-three to fifty-three years old, with the majority in their thirties. Their experience in teaching non-English major

students in Chinese universities varies from two years to twenty-five years. Among them, three teachers have 1-4 years of teaching experience, six have 5-9 years of teaching experience, another six have 10-14 years, still another six have 15-19 years, and three have more than twenty years of teaching experience. Ten of them are holders of a B. A. majoring in English, eleven of them are holders of a master's degree, two have a Ph. D, and one is the holder of an advanced /assistant teacher training certificate.

Eight of the twenty-four participants were chosen for the interviews. In the selection of the interview informants, first, the background information on the questionnaire participants was tabulated. Then, among the six factors concerning the participants' background information, Patton's "maximum variation sampling" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200) was followed. The proportion of females to males and of less experienced to more experienced teachers in this selection of eight interview participants is representative of the sample of twenty-four as a whole. This can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Background of interview participants

Participant	Gender	Years of Experience	Degree	Age
Teacher 1	F	1-4	M. A.	21-29
Teacher 2	F	5-9	Ph. D.	30-39
Teacher 3	M	5-9	M. Ed.	30-39
Teacher 4	F	10-14	M. A.	30-39
Teacher 5	F	10-14	B. A.	30-39
Teacher 6	F	15-19	M. Ed.	30-39
Teacher 7	F	15-19	B. A.	40-49
Teacher 8	F	> 20	M. A.	40-49

As stated in the previous paragraphs, most of the participants are in their thirties and with five to nineteen years' experience teaching non-English major students. Also from Table 1, the representative information on the participants, we can see there is a general positive relationship between participants' age and experience. Generally, the career path of teachers of English in China begins after their graduation from the universities. These graduates who directly go to work as teachers of English usually stay in the universities, teaching English, with very occasional opportunities to get in-service

training. It is rare to meet teachers who were not in the teaching position at the beginning of their career but later shift into this line of work. Therefore, in China, the majority case is that the older the teachers are, the more experienced they are. Since the study is based on the teachers' beliefs about CLT, it is preferable to have a greater number of more experienced teachers as participants because their experience and perceptions might better help me interpret the results and ensure the validity of the study.

INSTRUMENTS

Given the purpose of the study, qualitative research seems to be the best and most appropriate research methodology to be used. Not only is it important to document teachers' perceptions, but also to determine how their environment, in this case an EFL environment, affected and shaped such perceptions. In this study, both questionnaire and interview data were collected. These instruments permitted the teachers to identify in their own terms whatever aspects of their context they considered to be constraining in using CLT, whether these were cultural, economic, political or administrative.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were given to the twenty-four participants to explore the teachers' background, their general understanding of English teaching in China, the CLT approach as well as the challenges and difficulties in implementing CLT. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were included. There were three parts to the questionnaire. The first part consisted of direct questions about the participant's age,

gender, academic background, and teaching situations. The second part was the major part, consisting of questions regarding the difficulties of implementing CLT in China. The participants were asked to choose from a 5-point scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The third part consisted of open-ended questions asking participants about their attitudes toward CLT and their thoughts about the implementation of CLT in China in the future. All questionnaires were written and answered in English (See Appendix A).

Interviews

Following the questionnaire, interviews with eight participants having answered the questionnaire were conducted to further explore their background, their understanding of English teaching in China and difficulties in implementing CLT. Lynch (1996) states that an interview can get most in-depth information. An interview is a very personal way of gathering information because it allows for adaptability in questioning. If an answer is insufficient or raises another related issue, there is room for this to be explored in the interview. Therefore, the interview data complemented and expanded on the questionnaire data because it probed for follow-up information in the case of ambiguous and incomplete responses from questionnaires.

The interview lasted between twenty to forty minutes for each participant. A list of open-ended questions was prepared for the interview (See Appendix B). Participants reviewed the questions briefly before the interview was conducted. Marshall

and Rossman (1999) state that "typically, qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories" (p. 108). Therefore, participants were free to speak their minds and add additional information. Yes/no questions were avoided, and most of the questions focused on teachers' perceptions from their experiences using CLT, or not, in EFL environments. During the interview, I asked questions in Chinese and invited responses in whichever language the participant preferred for that topic. In this way, complete understanding between the researcher and the participants would be ensured and also participants could express themselves more fully. In order to gather accurate information, all interviews were audiotaped, with participants' approval, then transcribed and analyzed by me immediately after each interview.

PROCEDURES

All appropriate ethical procedures were followed for the data collection. (See Appendix C for a copy of the Ethical Certificate from the Faculty of Education at McGill University.) Before the implementation of the study, the nature of the study was explained to the participants verbally. I encouraged the participants to participate by telling them that this study would give them an opportunity to voice concerns about their teaching environment and to reflect on issues arising from this topic for their own professional development. Two weeks prior to the data collection procedures, an informed consent form (see Appendix D) was sent to the participants to make them fully aware of the nature of the study and its purpose as well as the participants' rights. They

were informed that they would participate in the research voluntarily and were assured that any information offered to me would remain confidential and would be used only for the purpose of this study.

After signing the consent forms, the participants were asked to complete the questionnaires, which took them approximately 20-30 minutes. Two weeks after completing the questionnaires, eight participants were asked to participate in the interview. Each interview lasted between twenty to forty minutes, and was taped and transcribed. When the transcription was complete, the original cassettes were erased. When any direct quotes were used in the final report, a pseudonym was assigned and small changes were made so that it would be impossible for anybody to be identified as an individual. Moreover, the transcriptions were kept under lock and key, and only I had access to the actual names of participants.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis means to "find meanings from the data and a process by which the investigator can interpret the data" (Burns, 2000, p. 430). The themes and coding categories in this study emerged from an examination of the data rather than being determined beforehand and imposed on the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). To analyze the data from this study, I read through all the information gathered from the completed questionnaires and the interview transcripts. Since I belong to the same professional group and have the same background as those participants, as the researcher, I have an insider's understanding of the participants' perceptions. The strategies that I

applied to organize information are "immersion strategies" (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 17), which means that I did not prefigure or predetermine categories but relied heavily on my intuitive and interpretive capacities (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As mentioned earlier, I taught non-English major students in a Chinese university for six years, so I was able to take advantage of the knowledge gained from this experience to perceive and interpret the significance of the data obtained in the questionnaires and interviews. Moreover, the related literature reviewed in the previous chapter provided guidelines for data analysis. This earlier grounding and planning were used to suggest the problems and difficulties asked in the questionnaire and interview. I exploited the intuitive and interpretive capacities of an insider's experience, and grounding from the literature review, to code and analyze the data systematically.

Questionnaire data analysis involved the analysis of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were analyzed by reporting the number of people falling in different response categories. The open-ended questions, however, were analyzed through the themes and categories prompted by the questions regarding teachers' attitude toward CLT and the future implementation of CLT. During the process of data analysis, patterns were identified, and were divided into categories.

In analyzing the interview data, the scheme of categories was created to suit the collected data and the concerns of the study. The ultimate aim in the coding and analysis of the data was to gain a better understanding of how the Chinese teachers of English who teach non-English major students perceived the difficulties in implementing

CLT. The interview revealed statements disclosing underlying beliefs, pedagogic philosophies and ideologies. The goal of the research was to describe the meaning as validly as possible; hence, the interview analysis involved reviewing, categorizing, sub-categorizing and coding what the participants had said. Categorizing and coding were done after each interview, so the data collection and analysis of interviews overlapped.

Specifically, several steps were taken to develop a coding scheme for all data. First, a preliminary coding scheme was developed based on a small batch of data. I read through the data and coded it according to these preliminary categories, in order to assess their workability. Second, when I was going through all the data, the initial categories were discarded, modified or new ones developed, according to the concerns of the study and the nature of the collected data. I then sifted through all the data recursively to test this new list of categories and subcategories. Finally, after I was satisfied with this appropriate coding scheme, I used it for the analysis of all the data, and key exemplars were underlined to serve as illustrations of the points made in the descriptions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter includes two sections. The first section presents the results from the questionnaires, including the results of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The second section presents the results from the interviews. Four major categories are generated from the interview data, and each category has several sub-categories. An overview of the categories is presented, and the interview results are reported according to the categories.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Ranking of closed-ended questions

Questionnaires were sent out to twenty-four participants. All items were completed and returned, for a response rate of 100%. Table 2 shows the overall ranking of items from closed-ended questions in the questionnaire. They are ranked from the most significant factor causing difficulties to the least significant factor causing difficulties in implementing CLT according to the percentage of the participants who agreed or strongly agreed on a specific item.

Table 2

Overall ranking of the difficulties

Listed difficulties	% of participants who emphasized this point
1. Lack of teacher training	96%
2. Large classes	96%
3. Grammar-based examination	92%
4. Students' passive learning style	88%
5. Students' lack of motivation to communicate	75%
6. Teachers' lack of socio-linguistic knowledge	67%
7. Lack of authentic material	67%
8. The new roles of teachers and learners	67%
9. Teacher's poor English proficiency	33%
10. Difficulties in testing communicative ability	29%

Open-ended responses to the difficulties in implementing CLT

Open-ended comments were added to closed-ended questions to allow teachers to add more problems encountered in implementing CLT. It was anticipated that they would provide more difficulties that were not included in the list provided. Teachers did not seem to have a lot more to add to the difficulties listed already in the

closed-ended questionnaire. Four more difficulties are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Additional difficulties in implementing CLT suggested by questionnaire respondents

Additional difficulties	% of participants who emphasized this point
11. Lack of funding, learning resources and facilities	38%
12. Limited authentic social environment outside class	30%
13. Different levels of students' English proficiency	25%
14. Teachers' lack of motivation because of their low income	25%

Though only four more difficulties were added in the open-ended questionnaire, the number of participants who suggested adding them was rather high, with a percentage from 25 to 38. Therefore, it was necessary to explore all these added topics in the follow-up interviews. One of the reasons of conducting interviews with the participants was to identify other relevant sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). This was why I made the interview protocol very open-ended and left ample latitude for additional questions probing these topics.

Results of open-ended questionnaire about teachers' attitudes toward CLT and its future implementation in China

All twenty-four teachers had a positive attitude toward CLT and

acknowledged that CLT should work well in many contexts, but that it was difficult to implement in China. They thought CLT puts emphasis on communication and language use; and it is more interesting and can create a very lively classroom atmosphere. By way of contrast, traditional teaching focuses on grammar and it is boring. However, Chinese conditions make the CLT way of teaching, which is desirable in principle, very difficult for teachers to adopt. Even teachers who attempted to implement it got frustrated and found that on their own they could not make it work. In spite of the difficulties, they still believed it would become popular and widely accepted in China in the future, because China's developing economy has a demand for people with good English communicative ability. To make it popular, twenty-two teachers thought that the grammar-based exam system needed reform and the communicative curriculum needed more systematic design.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

All the teachers interviewed reported that grammar translation, audio-lingual or 3Ps (presentation, practice and production -- Skehan, 1998) teaching approach dominated their classroom teaching. All of them attempted to use CLT to make their classes more interesting and interactive, but ended up frustrated due to constraints outside their control. The teachers alone could not overcome those constraints. However, they all had a positive attitude toward CLT and hoped that it could become the dominant teaching methodology at Chinese universities in the future.

The difficulties the Chinese university teachers of non-English majors

encountered fall into four categories: those caused by the educational system, the EFL context, the cultural tradition, and the students (see Table 4).

Table 4 summarizes all the interview data, which will then be discussed in this chapter item by item. Each of the four categories suggested by the participants has several sub-categories. The number of participants who emphasized this theme is indicated. For example, "8" for the sub-category "grammar-based examination" meant that all eight participants considered grammar-based exams a difficulty in using CLT in their own context. Since altogether there were eight participants in the interviews, the maximum number possible for each sub-category was 8. The number given of each major category is the sum of the numbers of its sub-categories.

Table 4

Reported difficulties in implementing CLT

Source and difficulty	No. of participants who emphasized this point
Educational system	43
Grammar-based examination	8
Large classes and schedule	8
Lack of opportunities for teachers to get trained	8
Insufficient funding and resources	8
Highly-centralized curriculum	7
Teachers' lack of motivation to use CLT	4
EFL context	21
Students' lack of communication needs	8
Non-native English speaking teachers	5
Lack of authentic material	5
No language environment	3
Cultural tradition	15
Students' passive learning style	8
Traditional views about learning	6
Teachers and learners' new roles	1
Students	8
Students' low English proficiency	4
Different English proficiency of students	4

The four major categories and sub-categories shown in Table 4 were detailed as follows. All these interview results are supported by extracts from the interview data. Because all the interviewees answered the interview questions in Chinese with occasional use of English to refer to certain terms or phrases, the extracts from the interviews given here are my translations from the interviewees' Chinese words. The number of each teacher in the extracts corresponds to the number in Table 1 (Background of interview participants).

Difficulties caused by educational system

Grammar-based examination

All eight teachers regarded the grammar-based examination as one of the most important constraints on the application of CLT at universities. The performance of teachers was evaluated by the scores their students got in the exams such as CET-4. A good pass rate of the nationwide CET-4 was the only criterion to judge whether a teacher of non-English major students was good or not, in many universities. Teachers were under pressure to help more students pass the exams to show that they were good teachers and performed their duties well.

> At my university, the exam results (pass rate and excellence rate of CET-4) were ranked from the first place to the last. The ranking affected teachers' bonus, promotion and training opportunity. Exam results were the only criteria for evaluating teachers' teaching results. (Teacher 1, April 23, 2004).

Students also took passing the English exams as their ultimate goal so that they could graduate from the university. This affected what focus students put on their English study. The goal of passing the grammar-based exam drove them to improve their reading skill, grammar knowledge and test preparation strategies rather than real language use, because most of the tests were grammar-based with multiple-choice questions.

> The students who failed CET-4 could not be awarded a Bachelor's degree. My students were under pressure to pass the test. Two months before the test, I gave my students a lot of time to do sample tests and explained vocabulary, grammar and test-preparation strategies (such as listening and reading techniques about how to find patterns to answer the multiple-choice questions correctly without understanding the whole passage). I ignored speaking and writing. (Teacher 2, May 28, 2004).

Although the test developers added more language use components in the CET-4, a high-stakes test, language use still accounted for less than grammar and reading did. The grammar-based nature of the exams remained unchanged. These minor changes and additions could not change the way the students prepared to focus more on vocabulary, grammar and multiple choice questions than on communication.

> CET-4 has a writing component (only 15% of the total score, listening 20%, reading and grammar and vocabulary 65%). For only 15% of the total score of writing, my students only memorized several sample compositions and did not practice writing at all. If reading was good enough, they could pass the test anyway without preparing for writing, or even listening. Now those students who scored over 85 could take part in the speaking test. However, the majority of the students took reading and grammar as their focus of exam

preparation. (Teacher 3, May 3, 2004).

In order to pass the test, the students were neither interested in learning from textbooks nor from their teachers in their routine English classes. Instead, they bought many test preparation materials and spent a lot of time on them even during class time. This happened especially during the third term of their university study as the test date was approaching.

> Some of my students were only concerned about the test. What I taught in class unassociated with the tests could not attract their interest. They did test preparation tasks while I was lecturing. (Teacher 8, May 17, 2004).

Large classes and schedule

All eight participants named large classes and tight schedules as one of the most important constraints as well. Large classes made it hard for teachers to organize and monitor CLT activities, especially for classes with immovable chairs and desks. Moreover, because of the time constraints, it was impossible for each learner to get individualized attention as required by CLT.

> The students have English classes only four hours a week. I had three classes with 60 - 70 students in each class. Students could not move around, and I did not have time for each student to practice speaking. I had to finish the required content of the whole textbook and keep pace with the other teachers. (Teacher 6, May 14, 2004).

Lack of opportunities for teachers to get trained

All eight participants named lack of training as one of the main difficulties they faced in applying CLT. The teachers generally complained that they did not have

many opportunities to receive pre-service or in-service CLT training; therefore, it was

very demanding for teachers to use CLT without any knowledge of CLT theories and

practice. If they had known what CLT was and what expertise was needed for using CLT

and even had got some supervised practice teaching using CLT or other relevant training,

they would have oriented themselves to CLT more easily in their classrooms. Otherwise,

even if there were communicative-oriented textbooks, they still could not put CLT into

practice.

> I have taught English for over ten years, but have never been given any opportunity to receive teacher training by the English department in our university. I only have some fragmented knowledge about CLT. (Teacher 6, May 14, 2004).

> I taught junior students Cambridge Business English for a short period of time. The textbook itself was communicative-oriented, but it was too difficult to handle. Why was I not trained to use that textbook based on the communicative principles before I started? I gave up teaching it at last. (Teacher 3, May 3, 2004).

Due to lack of training, many teachers did not know the contemporary

theories of teaching and did not even know what teaching methodology they had been

using. They taught based on the teachers' book (the guidelines for teachers to use the

textbook and how to teach each unit) or their intuition.

> Thinking back, I did use some CLT, but I did not even realize that was CLT at that time. (Teacher 4, April 25, 2004).

Among the eight interviewees, four of them were self-supported in doing

TESOL/ESL courses either abroad or in China, only one of them was sponsored by her

department as an in-service training program, and the remaining three never got any

opportunity for in-service training. The five teachers with training admitted that they

were very lucky to be trained, because only a few teachers could get these opportunities.

Unfortunately, the training the teachers received in China did not focus on CLT or other

systematic pedagogical training, but on improving teachers' linguistic knowledge.

> The teacher training I received focused on advanced grammar or teachers' linguistic competence more than on pedagogy or CLT training. Time was too short. It would have been ideal for all us to have teacher training once a year in terms of teaching methodology. (Teacher 1, April 23, 2004).

Lack of resources and funding

All eight participants realized that this was one of the obstacles to do the

implementation of CLT. At Chinese universities, facilities and equipment such as

computers, photocopiers, overheads, and video resources for supporting CLT were not

available. Funds distributed to higher education were not sufficient. Every step toward

CLT was costly. Training teachers, hiring foreign experts, making class sizes smaller,

providing more materials, doing the photocopying for each student -- all of these need

money. However, China is a developing country with the biggest population in the world.

Lack of resources and funding compounded the difficulty of applying CLT.

> Japan and South Korea could afford to employ a large number of foreign experts with a high salary while China cannot. (Teacher 5, May 30, 2004).

> A textbook, a tape-recorder; those were all I had to teach English. It was very low-budget and it was very difficult to go beyond that. (Teacher 1, April 23, 2004).

Highly centralized curriculum

Seven out of the eight participants referred to the highly centralized curriculum as another major constraint. The MOE had prescribed the nationwide and unified syllabus and textbooks, so teachers needed to base their teaching on the textbook. Therefore, there was little room for flexibility and creativity in teaching non-English major students English as required by CLT. Only a couple of teachers tried new communicative-oriented textbooks, while most of them still used very old and non-communicative textbooks.

> I had to cover the curriculum and go through the
> textbook from the first unit to the last unit. The textbook was
> not communicative, so how could I teach communicatively?
> (Teacher 7, May 31, 2004).

Even though there were more communicative textbooks appearing in the market under the MOE's call for improving and enhancing students' communicative competence, and some universities adopted the communicative textbooks, most teachers still could not teach communicatively. This was because it took more than communicative textbooks to teach communicatively. The teachers called this phenomenon non-communicative teaching of communicative textbooks.

> I had to skip the time-consuming communicative
> activities from the textbook. I had to cover the curriculum
> and finish the whole textbook for the term, not to mention the
> pressure from the exams. (Teacher 6, May 14, 2004).

> Everything was prescribed. The teacher was not the
> boss in the classroom. They are supposed to do whatever the

> curriculum required them to do. Private schools could use
> CLT because they did not have to follow the nationwide and
> unified curriculum as we did. (Teacher 4, April 25, 2004).

Teachers' lack of motivation

Four teachers included teachers' lack of motivation among the difficulties of

using CLT. As non-native English speakers, university teachers were reluctant to shift

from the traditional way of teaching to the more demanding CLT due to lack of training,

lack of time to cover the curriculum and the need to help students pass the exams.

> I taught three classes. Except preparing for lesson and
> teaching, I did not have any extra time to be creative or use
> CLT. I did not have time to read the contemporary teaching
> theories either. (Teacher 6, May 14, 2004).

Low economic status strongly discouraged the teachers from applying CLT.

University teachers generally are not highly paid in China. The salary for the university

teachers were from RMB 800 to RMB 1,100 a month without much difference between

new teachers and very experienced professors. About 40%, 30% and 20% of the salary

went to housing, food and clothes respectively. After affording the basic necessities of

life, the teachers did not have much left. So if they wanted to earn more and live a better

life, they had to try some other ways to get extra money. They could teach more classes

besides the required 8 – 12 hours of teaching per week, teach some courses outside their

universities with higher pay, teach private classes, supervise more graduation papers, etc.

The extra work they do could double their income. But the extra time and effort that the

teachers put into using CLT did not reward them as much as the extra work they did.

Since there was no difference in pay between the teachers who taught in the traditional way and the teachers who taught using CLT, they would rather spend more time and effort preparing lessons for extra work than use CLT.

> I spent a lot of time preparing for my CLT lesson. My husband said to me: "You work much harder than other teachers, but have a look at how much you get paid. Do you get more? Why not teach like other teachers?" I got confused. (Teacher 8, May 17, 2004).

Lack of support from the administration and colleagues discouraged the teachers from applying CLT too.

> It is risky to use CLT. You overcame great difficulties and put great efforts to be creative and use CLT, but it might not pay off. Most of the teachers were afraid of failure and losing face or criticism from peers and dean if they tried CLT. It was much easier and safer to keep to the old way. (Teacher 3, May 3, 2004).

Difficulties caused by EFL context

Students' motivation to communicate

All eight teachers mentioned students' lack of communicative needs as a major limitation. Although an increasing number of students realized how important it was to communicate in English for future jobs or going abroad, for most of these non-English major students, there were not many communicative needs in their daily life, and they did not have opportunities to use English after graduation.

> Some of my students wanted to improve their communicative competence because they wanted to work or

study in English speaking countries or to pass the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or Cambridge Certificate which includes a speaking component. The majority of the students just wanted to pass the CET-4 and graduate. (Teacher 5, May 30, 2004).

Some students might be excited to be taught in CLT at first, but eventually, passing the exam was the only goal for them to learn English.

My students were enthusiastic about CLT in the first term because they realized communicative competence was important. However, they got frustrated and resisted when they did not feel the anticipated rapid progress within a short period of time. They did not have to use English outside the classroom anyway. So they did not have an immediate need to improve their communication ability. It was more urgent and practical to study hard on grammar and vocabulary to pass the exam. I had to respond to their need to pass the test, and give up teaching communicatively. (Teacher 6, May 14, 2004).

Teachers' non-native-like English proficiency

Five of the participants regarded teachers' non-native-like English proficiency as one of the difficulties. The participants' reports focused on their imperfect pronunciation and lack of sociolinguistic knowledge that inhibited the implementation of CLT.

Chinese teachers' accent could not change. My English was neither American nor British. My students wished to copy standard English from a native English speaker. (Teacher 2, May 28, 2004).

I was one of the teachers who tried using the new communicative textbook. I needed to explain some cultural knowledge from the new textbook. But actually, I did not

know much about it. How could I explain it to my students?
(Teacher 3, May 3, 2004).

Lack of authentic and communicative materials

One of the important characteristics of CLT was using authentic materials.

Authentic materials could support using CLT and help students practice English in real

life. Although there are increasing amounts of authentic English teaching materials in

China, in general, these materials are far from sufficient to support the use of CLT and

not always available. Five participants regarded the lack of authentic materials as one

constraint.

> There were very few English newspapers, magazines
> and English TV programs in China, which meant that most
> authentic materials were not available. (Teacher 7, May 31,
> 2004).

> Though there were lots of authentic materials
> available on the Internet, without sociolinguistic knowledge,
> it was hard for the teachers and students to figure out which
> ones really reflected the real life and tradition of the English
> speaking countries and therefore could be taken as good
> teaching materials. (Teacher 4, April 25, 2004).

Even if there were some newspapers and magazines available, they were not

up to date. If the newspapers and magazines could not offer current news of real life and

up-to-date use of language, they were of little use.

> There were some English newspapers and magazines
> from English speaking countries in the library, but most of
> them were years old. (Teacher 7, May 31, 2004).

No language environment

Three participants said that a poor language environment was not conducive

to develop communicative competence. In the ESL context, students were immersed in

English. By contrast, in the EFL context of China, students had only four hours a week

in the classroom to learn English with non-native English teachers. There was not

enough language input.

> If the students could be exposed to English everywhere, they would have learnt better. In Canada, the learners could always watch TV programs or English movies. Everything was in English; English was everywhere. This was not the case in China. (Teacher 1, April 23, 2004).

> There was no chance for the students to use spoken English in practical and real life. Even if some students went to English Corner* to practice their spoken English on purpose, the created language environment was still different from the authentic one. (Teacher 5, May 30, 2004).*

Difficulties caused by cultural tradition

Students' learning style

Cultural tradition could contribute to the passive behavior of students. All

eight participants pointed out that the students' passive learning style made CLT teaching

very frustrating for teachers. The teachers complained that students did not cooperate

with them and refused to participate in communicative activities. They were quiet in

class and teachers could not expect them to initiate speaking in English. Listening to the

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* English Corner is any "corner" (appropriate place) on a university campus for students to practice their oral English in their spare time. English corners began to be popular in the early 1980s in China, and today, English corners exist in all universities in China.

teacher's monologue was more acceptable to students.

> They were not risk-taking and not self-confident. They were afraid of making mistakes and losing face. They needed to be 100% sure before answering the questions. Some students knew the answer, but they were too shy to speak in front of the class. (Teacher 5, May 30, 2004).

> They liked learning grammar, using textbooks and relying on teachers to explain everything in the textbook. Their job was to write everything down in notes. Otherwise, they did not think they were learning a language. (Teacher 3, May 3, 2004).

> Chinese culture highly values reserve and holds a negative attitude toward talkativeness. On the other hand, since the English class was usually very large, students would not like to risk losing face if they made mistakes in speech. Things were changing, but tradition still died hard. (Teacher 8, May 17, 2004).

Students' strong resistance to participate in communicative activities might cause conflict between the teachers and learners.

> One student suddenly stood up while I told them to work in groups and practice English. He said in front of the class: "It is a waste of our time. Please do not ask us to do this activity again." I almost burst into tears at these words. (Teacher 8, May 17, 2004).

Teaching and learning tradition

Six participants said traditional views about teaching and learning stood in the way of Chinese embracing the new methodology. Basically, the traditional Chinese view about learning was to accumulate knowledge, while teaching was transmitting knowledge. This determined the teacher-centered way of teaching. Traditional views

about teaching and learning and the teacher-centered way of teaching were deep-rooted,

and contradictory to the principles of CLT.

> Teachers taught with a textbook; students listened.
> This was the way of teaching in China for thousands of years.
> I was taught this way, and then I taught my students this way
> too. (Teacher 4, April 25, 2004).

The students were used to the transmission model of teaching. All subjects

including English had been taught this way since the first day of their schooling.

> They had learned in the traditional way since the day
> they went to school. They could not accept the new way of
> CLT teaching at university. (Teacher 2, May 28, 2004).

Teacher and learner relationship

One participant indicated that the new relationship between teachers and

learners impeded the application of CLT. The students were accustomed to the

traditional teachers' role. That is, the teachers stood in front of the classroom and

transmitted knowledge. The students could not accept the teachers' new role in CLT and

did not think that the teachers had performed their duties fully in the role of CLT.

> I tried to apply CLT. While students were working
> together as a group to practice English, I just walked around
> and monitored the group activity. One student asked me
> straightaway: "We are busy doing the task, but you seem to
> have nothing to do and look very relaxed. Have you prepared
> your lesson?" (Teacher 2, May 28, 2004).

Difficulties caused by learners

Students' low level of English

Four teachers suggested that students' low English proficiency made communicative language activities hard to carry out. When their students came to university, they had achieved some reading proficiency and a good command of grammar from their middle schools. As far as communicative ability was concerned, they had had little training. This made it challenging for teachers to do oral communicative activities with them.

> I asked my students to do discussion in groups. However, their lack of vocabulary and their poor oral communicative ability made it nearly impossible for the discussion to continue. The discussion could last for a few minutes, but then the classroom became quiet suddenly. Nobody spoke there. (Teacher 4, April 25, 2004).

Students' different language proficiency

Four teachers regarded low level students' strong resistance to communicative activities as a limitation in using CLT. Only some of the high level students enjoyed doing communicative activities. Poor students resented communicative activities. They had nothing to say or could understand little of what their peers said. This caused strong resistance to CLT.

> Most students from big cities like Beijing and Shanghai had good speaking ability and enjoyed CLT. But those low level students, especially those from rural areas, refused to participate in communicative activities. It was a torture for them to have nothing to say in English among

the groups. (Teacher 2, May 28, 2004).

This chapter presented the results of the open-ended and closed-ended questionnaire as well as the eight interviews. The next chapter will discuss these results and compare them with the literature reviewed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Based on the results in Chapter 4, this chapter compares the questionnaire results and the interview results with what is discussed in the previous relevant literature. Consistency and inconsistency among those results coming from different sources are evaluated.

CONSISTENCY BETWEEN QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

The results of the questionnaires and interviews are generally consistent with each other. All the ten difficulties listed in the closed-ended questionnaires, namely, lack of teacher training, large classes, grammar-based examination, students' passive learning style, students' lack of motivation to communicate, teachers' lack of sociolinguistic knowledge, lack of authentic material, the new role of teachers and learners, teachers' poor English proficiency, and difficulties in testing communicative ability, were mentioned and discussed by the interviewees. The first five constraints listed in the questionnaire, with 75% to 96% of mentions among the twenty-four participants, were emphasized by all eight participants in the interviews as well.

The four additional difficulties suggested by the questionnaire participants also had a high frequency of mention among the eight interview participants. At least half of the eight interview participants talked about each point of the four additional difficulties.

No other constraints were added in the interviews, which meant that the

questionnaire results already covered all the problems that these participants might think

of. The results of the questionnaires and interviews show that all the participants in the

study shared a consensus about the difficulties in implementing CLT in China.

CONSISTENCY BETWEEN RESEARCH RESULTS AND LITERATURE

The difficulties reported by the participants both from the interview and

questionnaire data are generally consistent with the difficulties covered by the literature

too. Such points as centralized exams, large classes and tight schedule, few opportunities

for teacher training, insufficient funding and resources, students' lack of communication

needs and passive learning style that have very high frequency or percentage of mention

in both questionnaires and interviews were discussed in the literature.

Campbell and Zhao (1993), Wu (2001), Rao (2002), Anderson (1993), and

Hird (1995) agreed that the centralized exam had a negative washback on the classroom

activity. 92% of the participants agreed that the nationwide grammar-based exam was

one of the most important constraints on the application of CLT to non-English major

students.

The difficulty "large classes and tight schedule", with 96% of mention in

the questionnaires and eight participants' mention in the interviews, was recognized as

an institutional factor that hindered the implementation of CLT in China by Holliday

(1994a), Hui (1997), Rao (2002) and Burnaby and Sun (1989).

In the literature, lack of teacher training was considered one key constraint

on CLT implementation in China (Wu, 2001; Campbell & Zhao, 1993; Penner, 1995;

Hui, 1997). In the study, this point, with the highest percentage, 96%, in the questionnaire data, was mentioned by all eight interviewees. Therefore, vast majority of the participants of the study agreed that lack of teacher training was one of the biggest problems they had in carrying out CLT in China.

Hui (1997), Burnaby and Sun (1989), Rao (2000), Sun and Cheng (2002) pointed out that the lack of financial support and resources would make it difficult for the practice of CLT. All eight interviewees also showed their concern about this issue. They felt that this obstacle compounded the difficulty in implementing CLT.

Hird (1995) reported that there were no communicative needs for the EFL learners outside the classroom. Brooks (1997), Hui (1997), Anderson (1993), Campbell and Zhao (1993), Rao (2002), and Willing (1998) analyzed the cultural and ideological influence on students' learning behavior and concluded that most of the Chinese students learnt in a passive way. These constraints concerning students' motivation and learning style were confirmed by the results from the study that more than 75% of the questionnaire participants and all the interview participants agreed on.

INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN RESEARCH RESULTS AND LITERATURE

Though there is overwhelming consistency regarding the constraints of CLT implementation in the questionnaire and interview results as well as in the literature, there is some degree of inconsistency between the literature and the teachers' reports. The inconsistency concerns teachers' academic ability, teacher and learner's role, and assessment of communicative language ability.

One factor that needs to be discussed is the difficulties associated with the teachers' own academic ability. In the literature review, teachers' low English proficiency, especially poor speaking proficiency as well as incapability of designing their own materials, managing group activities and answering spontaneous questions, is pointed out by researchers as one of the major constraints (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Penner, 1995). Although more than half of the participants in the study regarded it as a constraint, they only focused on their lack of socio-linguistic knowledge and non-native-like pronunciation. They did not say much about their own linguistic ability, especially with respect to spoken English and the ability to design their own materials, etc., which are covered by the literature. This could be explained by the fact that teachers' academic ability is a sensitive topic for the teachers. They are reluctant to comment too much on their own academic ability. The fact that all the interview participants chose to respond in Chinese during the interviews suggests that what the literature described may be true. Chinese teachers of English should bravely admit their deficiency in linguistic competence and try to overcome this problem to better implement CLT in their classrooms.

Another mismatch between the literature and teachers' perceptions is regarding the difficulties associated with the teacher and learner's role. In the literature, it is pointed out that teachers' authority could be threatened by CLT (Holliday, 1994a), and the new role of students in CLT may cause teacher resentment (Richards & Rogers, 2001). Only one participant added the new roles of teachers and students to the difficulty

list. It seems that most of the teachers who participated in this study have not used CLT as their dominant teaching method, so they do not feel their authority threatened.

In the interview, only one teacher, who was one of the participants who had done the course in "testing and evaluation in second languages" at McGill University, mentioned assessing communicative language ability as one of the difficulties. The other teachers did not realize it as a constraint, which was not consistent with the literature. Fulcher (2000) and Brindley (1991) point out that there are problems in assessing communicative ability. So, teacher training courses at McGill university may have broadened the theoretical concepts of those teachers who had been taking ESL courses in the Western academic setting. What they have learned from the ESL courses in Canada may more or less influence their understanding of CLT and their reports for the study. Therefore, future study could be done in China to obtain more front-line teachers' points of view. A possible direction for research in the future is to compare the perspectives of trained teachers and non-trained teachers' points of view on CLT.

Except for the minor mismatches discussed above, teachers' reports from this study and the published literature reach a consensus on most of the other individual difficulties. China appears to be experiencing difficulties stemming from historical, cultural, economic, political and educational factors. All those constraints interact with each other, making the implementation of CLT at Chinese universities a very complicated issue.

Considering these constraints, advocating the wholehearted adoption of CLT

at Chinese universities in a short time would be unrealistic. The university teachers cannot go back to traditional teaching either, as it would not meet the imperatives of modernization, globalization and China's integration into the big world family. Therefore, the feasible and appropriate way is to take into account local context, and integrate CLT into traditional teaching for the time being.

Nunan and Lamb (2001) suggest that teachers move back and forth, responding to the students' need by applying either Chinese traditional teaching or more communicative teaching. "A classroom cannot be defined exclusively in terms of a particular method" (p. 32). Teachers can integrate the traditional and communicative tasks by using high-structure (teachers have all the power) and low-structure (power and control are devolved to students) teaching. Successful teachers would know "where to locate themselves on the high to low continuum in relation to a given task" (p. 32-33). This could be the ideal Chinese way for the time being. Linguistic competence is necessary but not sufficient for communicative competence. For example, because the main purposes of learning English for non-English major students is to pass CET-4 to get a bachelor's degree in the short run and to be able to read and translate into their mother tongue scientific, and technical documents written in English in the long run, teachers of non-English major students should continue their emphasis on developing students' reading abilities. However, instead of spending much precious time on intensive reading and grammatical analysis, teachers might introduce some ideas from CLT, such as extensive reading and reading for meaning. So, gradually, CLT should be

made the prevailing teaching methodology.

CONSENSUS AMONG INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

As presented in the interview results, interview participants, whether less experienced or more experienced, responded in a similar way about their attitudes toward CLT and the difficulties in implementing CLT in their daily practice. The data collected show that most teachers participating in the study have a basic understanding of CLT in theory and welcome its introduction to the Chinese context. Their positive attitudes toward CLT confirm that Chinese traditional teaching of English to the non-English major students cannot meet the ever-growing demands from students and society, and that reform and changes are needed to improve the quality of language teaching, to foster students with stronger communicative competence.

Their complete agreement on the difficulties, such as grammar-based examination, large classes and schedule, lack of opportunities for teacher training, insufficient funding and resources, students' lack of communicative needs and their passive learning styles, indicates that all teachers interviewed found more constraints from these educational, cultural, and economic aspects. These obstacles are very obvious and have greatly impeded the adaptation of CLT in practice in the classroom. Therefore, overcoming the difficulties from these sources will expedite the application of CLT in non-English major programs at universities.

The other difficulties, with fewer mentions among the interviewees, do not show much difference between less experienced and more experienced teachers. There

were both younger and older teachers reporting each difficulty. Hence, it can be suggested that the age and experience of the teachers are not the key factors affecting their perceptions and implementation of CLT. If proper changes and support are made possible teachers of non-English major students, no matter whether teachers are younger and less experienced or older and more experienced, they can implement CLT properly in their classroom teaching.

In the present study, a comparison of the questionnaire and interview data with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 has clarified the uncertainty about the perceptions of teachers of non-English major students. This group of teachers teaching non-English major programs at the tertiary level in China got the chance to express their perceptions in this study, and specified that they agreed on the most of the difficulties that had been previously reported by teachers of English in a general sense. In addition, this group of teachers voiced some different opinions from those previously reviewed. All the information collected about this huge population of non-English major teachers can help us dig out the difficulties to be solved and facilitate the implementation of CLT for non-English major students.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter starts with suggestions for overcoming the difficulties and constraints in the implementation of CLT in China. Then, it lists the limitations of the study. Finally, I give directions for future research and conclude the study.

IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS

Although there are some problems hindering the integration of CLT into the traditional teaching of English in China, CLT is the direction for innovation and implementation in China in the long run. CLT has proved to be a very successful way of teaching because its underlying principle is communication. It has been well established that communication is the nature of language. The goal of language teaching in China should also shift toward communication. There are more and more communication needs arising as China opens up more; for example, its joining the WTO, its hosting of the Olympic games in 2008, and its attraction of more investment from worldwide sources. Therefore, the ultimate direction still should be toward CLT. But on the way toward CLT, some constraints must be overcome.

Educational reform

All the teachers agree, both from the questionnaire and interview data, that the Chinese educational system is the No.1 factor causing the difficulties in CLT implementation. Policy and decision makers are likely to hold the key to reform.

Communicative curriculum development

Communicative-based university curriculum development could be based on large-scale research to investigate the context of all universities, and then to investigate the process of adapting CLT to its context. Along with it, some CLT curriculum guidelines and textbooks could be developed. When the new curriculum is on trial, on-going evaluation could be carried out to find the problems at the trial phase so that the new curriculum could be continuously improved. An evaluation system could be established at the same time to help implement the new curriculum better.

Teacher training

Holliday (1994b) points out that teachers are the keys to the development of context-sensitive methodology (p. 9). Markee (2001) also suggests that teachers can more easily change their values and help bring about deeper changes if they understand why there is the need to change (p. 120). Hence, the most urgent and effective way to implement CLT is to train the teachers. If the teachers understand the nature and essence of CLT, they would be more motivated to meet the demands of CLT and actively get themselves involved in overcoming the constraints. They could probably not only change their own views about language teaching and learning, but also convince the students of the value of CLT and talk the students into changing their views and classroom behavior.

More research needs to be done to establish an effective university teacher training model so that all university teachers can receive on-going formal and

systematical training in the areas of linguistics and pedagogy as well as psychology. Attracting more foreign experts to work as teacher trainers or developers of a teacher training model may be necessary. Recruitment of new teachers needs to emphasize both the candidates' linguistic ability and their teaching potential. Through pre-service and in-service training, they could improve their linguistic competence and socio-linguistic competence. They could also grasp theoretical knowledge of CLT and other relevant teaching theories. Most important of all, they would be able to improve their practical ability of problem-solving and decision-making and learn to be more reflective teachers so that they could teach by using CLT, even if it results in more dynamic and unpredictable classrooms.

As a result of teacher training, more teachers could be encouraged to do research based on their classroom teaching. This classroom-based research could be of assistance to the decision makers.

Exam reform

There should be a shift from grammar-based exams to task-based exams. Attention should be given to such comprehensive abilities as speaking and writing. The National College English Band 4 & 6 Test Committee sets the regulation that only those who score over eighty-five in the written test of CET-4 can take the oral test (Da xue ying yu si liu ji kao shi [College English Test (CET)], 2001). Therefore, even though there are some changes already, much remains to be done in order to make more students take the oral test, not only those who score over eighty-five.

Universities should establish a system of formative assessment. Formative assessment could place an emphasis on communicative competence. In China, there is only summative assessment. This would bring about changes in both students' and teachers' motivation toward teaching or learning through CLT.

More funding

Funds are needed for conducting research, testing speaking ability of students, training teachers, buying equipment, or employing foreign experts. Decision makers hold the key to allocating funding.

Flexible classes

Those students who plan to study or work in an English-speaking country are more motivated to learn CLT. Those who wish to find a job in joint ventures also want to improve their communicative competence. Those students who do not have the motivation to interact with foreigners may prefer to learn in the traditional way. Therefore, there could be different classes catering for diverse students' needs.

Change values

Cultural tradition in China is also an important constraint. Not only teachers, but all concerned, including parents, students and administrators, must shift from their traditional ideas about what good language teaching is like. To change values, teachers have to play the major role. They could reorient their students to CLT so that students

could understand their new role and the teachers' new role and change their passive classroom behavior. They also need to understand that decontextualized grammar is not the goal of language learning; instead, communication is the goal. Reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar are all important. They need to pay more attention to speaking and writing.

Teachers' professional development

Li (2001) believes that "teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of a CLT innovation in a particular context are crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of that innovation" (p. 149). Carless (2001) also suggests that teacher attitudes, teacher training and teachers' understanding of the innovation may affect the implementation of an innovation (p. 264). But according to the data collected in this study, the university teachers seem to play a passive role in an educational innovation. This might be because they have tried to use CLT in China but met with great difficulties. Since teachers are the main implementers of an innovation and can decide whether or not to implement an innovation, they should play a more active role and help an innovation lead to fundamental changes. Just as the school authority and the dean of the department have always requested, teachers need to do their utmost as early adopters rather than "laggards" of an innovation (Markee, 2001, p. 123). They need to grasp every opportunity (of being trained, of learning from peers by observing each other's lessons, or observing foreign teachers' lessons) to improve themselves. Being creative

and open to new ideas should be the characteristics of a university teacher. All these expectations on teachers from the university administration side sound appropriate and reasonable, but the problem is that it may not be feasible for front-line teachers of English to meet these requirements because there are not enough help and resources given for their advancement. So this issue again overlaps with the funding factor of educational reform.

Pre-university English teaching reform

Getting students to change their views and learning behavior only at tertiary level will not be easy. If students were to start to learn English through the CLT method from the very first day of their schooling, they would definitely accept it easily and naturally when they were at university. Fortunately, reforms have been conducted at pre-university level. Students of the next generation may not feel so uprooted when they are taught by CLT at university.

Providing a friendly English learning environment

TV and radio need to broadcast more English programs. More English newspapers and magazines need to be more readily available.

To move from traditional teaching to CLT is a long and complex process. Fundamental changes may happen, but it will be slow and painful. Curriculum development takes a long time; changing values and beliefs takes a long time; creating a

friendly environment for English learning in an EFL context also takes a very long time. There is a long way to go to "alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together to introduce new goals, structure and roles that transform familiar ways of doing things into new ways of solving persistent problems" (Penner, 1995, p. 2).

Markee (2001) provides some innovation models and strategies which may be used in Chinese tertiary language education to promote more changes. Among them, the research, development and diffusion (RD and D) model, together with a power-coercive innovation strategy, could be best applied to China, because, according to Markee (Markee, 2001, p. 124), a power-coercive innovation strategy is a tactic that "involves the application of political, administrative, or economic power to resolve a problem".

Effective English teaching can meet economic needs and make it possible for more specialists and students to communicate with foreigners. This is crucial to Chinese economic development. To meet the changing language needs of a developing China, decision makers will be required to take some measures to reform. The Chinese economy is getting stronger; it is opening even more to the outside nations; more teachers will get trained; many teachers and researchers trained overseas will go back to China. All of the above facts will make teachers and students more exposed to CLT and better equipped to understand its benefits. It is hoped that CLT can be successfully implemented at Chinese universities in the future.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are some important limitations of the study. First of all, the sample size is not big enough to yield generalizable results. The patterns found in this study must be considered as hypotheses to be tested in future studies conducted with larger groups.

Second, some of the participants in the study have been here in Canada between six months to three years; therefore, their descriptions are not all based on the latest teaching conditions in China though I do not think there have been too many changes in the English teaching methodology there in the past three years. Moreover, what they have learned from their courses in Canada may more or less influence their understanding of CLT and their reports of difficulties. Hence, the participants would be better chosen from the teachers who are currently teaching at Chinese universities and are working at the front line of teaching in China.

Third, the study may have achieved more reliable results with multiple data collection incorporating a survey questionnaire for teachers, a survey questionnaire for the students, classroom observations, and in-depth interviews with the teachers observed or some other sources. The fact that students were not interviewed or questioned limited the analysis of the data, because students' perceptions and reactions to classroom activities would be beneficial in the overall understanding of teachers' perceptions. Data from multiple sources or a more in-depth investigation of students would reinforce and benefit the overall results of this study and allow triangulation. Since these kinds of data

can only be obtained in China, it is not feasible for a master's level study conducted from Canada to attain this ideal goal due to limitations on time and funds.

Fourth, the difficulties in implementing CLT reported by the teachers in this study may only be applicable to those Chinese universities where English is learnt by non-English major students, but may not be applicable to high schools and institutions of foreign language studies or other universities where English is learnt by English-major students.

Fifth, the teachers' perspectives may be subjective. It should not be assumed that their actual classroom practice followed the principles they reported. They may not actually do what they think they do.

Last but not least, as the investigator of the study, my interpretation of the data collected may mismatch with what the respondents really thought during the prompting, note-taking, translation, categorizing and coding process.

Addressing some of these limitations in the study would help produce a more reliable and satisfactory larger-scale study in the future.

FUTURE RESEARCH

As I conducted this study, it became apparent that there were many questions left unanswered, which would serve as research questions for other studies. Some of these questions include: (1) What are non-English major students' perceptions of CLT use in China? This answer would provide valuable information for teachers and assist them in implementing CLT in their classrooms. (2) What are the perceptions of

administrators of teaching methodologies used in Chinese classrooms? The answer to this question would provide a clear understanding of the perceptions and expectations of administrators. (3) What kind of guidance and training are provided to teachers at English workshops, conferences, and seminars in China? This information would help access the lack of awareness of CLT principles and would provide important solutions for existing limitations of such training sources.

CLOSING REMARKS

Many language teaching methodologies originated and developed in ESL contexts are difficult to introduce into EFL situations with different educational theories and realities. Rather than relying on expertise, methodology, and materials controlled and dispensed by the Western ESL countries, EFL countries should strive to establish their own research areas. They should develop language teaching methods that take into account local political, economic, social, and cultural factors. Many of the participants of this study suggested that CLT should be applied in teaching non-English major university students in a specifically Chinese way. Teachers, as the end users of an innovation, should take some action together with other stake-holders, especially policy makers, to overcome the constraints so that CLT could be further implemented and English language education could be improved. I hope that my research may enable some insights as to how teachers of non-English major students plan for future action after identifying difficulties, because teachers' perceptions and behavior are the crucial factor in the ultimate success or failure of the implementation of CLT at the tertiary level

in China.

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APPENDIX A:

QUESTIONNAIRES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: This questionnaire survey is designed for Chinese EFL teachers who teach in a university. The survey aims to explore the dimensions of the debate about the appropriateness and effectiveness of CLT in the Chinese context from the perceptions of experienced teachers. All information you provide will be confidential and used solely for research purposes.

There are three parts in this survey, Part A, Part B, and Part C. They ask for information about you, and go on to closed-ended questions concerning difficulties in implementing CLT, and open-ended questions about your opinions on CLT and its implementation.

It will take you 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. There is no **correct** or **best** response to the statements. Please answer them based on your thinking at this time.

Part A: Please put a tick [√] to your answer.

A1. What is your age?
    [ ] 21-29   [ ] 30-39   [ ] 40-49
    [ ] 50-59   [ ] over 60

A2. What is your gender?
    [ ] Female   [ ] Male

A3. What is your educational qualification?
    [ ] B.A.
    [ ] Advanced /Assistant Teacher Training Certificate (高级教师/助教进修班)
    [ ] M.A.
    [ ] M.Ed.
    [ ] Ph.D.

A4. How many years of EFL teaching experience do you have at university in China?
    [ ] 1-4   [ ] 5-9   [ ] 10-14
    [ ] 15-19   [ ] over 20

A5. How many class hours per week are you required to teach English in your university?
    [ ] 8-9   [ ] 10   [ ] 11-12
    [ ] 13-14   [ ] over 15

A6. How many students on average are there in your class?

[   ] 21-29   [   ] 30-39   [   ] 40-49

[   ] 50-59   [   ] over 60

Part B: The following are the difficulties that other EFL teachers have encountered in implementing CLT. Do you agree that these are also the difficulties in implementing CLT in your teaching context? Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the statement in this section by circling the following response scale:

5 = Strongly Agree

4 = Agree

3 = Neutral (Neither agree nor disagree)

2 = Disagree

1 = Strongly Disagree

B1. Teachers' English proficiency is not good enough.

5   4   3   2   1

B2. Teachers do not have enough knowledge about the appropriate use of language in context.

5   4   3   2   1

B3. There are few opportunities for teachers to get CLT training.

5   4   3   2   1

B4. There are not enough authentic materials.

5   4   3   2   1

B5. Classes are too large for CLT.

5   4   3   2   1

B6. It is difficult to test speaking proficiency.

5   4   3   2   1

B7. Traditional learning styles and habits of students are passive.

5   4   3   2   1

B8. Traditional view on teachers' and learners' role is not compatible with CLT.

5   4   3   2   1

B9. Students are lacking motivation to participate in communicative activities.

5   4   3   2   1

B10. Grammar-based examination has negative washback in implementing CLT.

          5   4   3   2   1

B11. Other difficulties: (Please list)

_____

_____

_____

Part C: Please complete the following questions as appropriate.

C1. What is your attitude towards CLT?

C2. What do you think about the implementation of CLT in China in the future?

End of the questionnaire.
Thank you very much for your help.

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(ORIGINAL CHINESE VERSION)

面谈问题：

请在面谈前阅读以下九个问题。面谈时，您可用中文或英文自由表达您的意见、观点,补充相关信息，以确保面谈双方的交流和理解充分、准确、完整。整个面谈时间为 20-40 分钟。

1. 您在中国有多少年教授大学非英语专业学生英文的经验？

2. 您教授哪一级别的大学生？请说明您教授的课程的基本情况。

3. 您认为什么是交际教学法(Communicative language teaching: CLT)？如用自己的话描述,您如何定义交际教学法？

4. 您在日常英语教学中有否应用交际教学法？

5. 您为什么应用或不应用交际教学法？

6. 您认为有些什么因素限制或影响交际教学法在中国的应用与推广？

7. 您如何看待交际教学法？

8. 您认为交际教学法在中国的前景如何？

9. 您对促进中国大学英语教学有无什么建议?如有,能否简单阐述？

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(ENGLISH TRANSLATION FROM CHINESE VERSION)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Instruction: Please review the questions briefly before the interview. You are free to speak your minds and add additional information either in Chinese or English so that complete understanding between the researcher and you will be ensured and also so that you can express yourself fully. The interview will last between twenty to forty minutes.

1 How long have you taught English to non-English major university students in China?

2 What level did you teach? Please describe the program that you have taught.

3 What do you think communicative language teaching (CLT) is? How do you define it in your own words?

4 Have you tried to apply CLT in your daily classroom teaching in China?

5 Why did you try or not try CLT?

6 What constraints do you think limit the adoption of CLT in EFL teaching?

7 What is your attitude towards CLT?

8 What do you think is the future of CLT in China?

9 Do you have some suggestions for improving EFL teaching at tertiary level in China? If so, what are they?

APPENDIX C:

ETHICAL CERTIFICATE

APPENDIX D:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM