

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Chinese EFL Classrooms

RuiFeng Lyu¹

¹(School of Foreign Studies, Guangdong University of Finance and Economics, PRC)

Abstract:

Background: The aim of this study was to discover what is actually happening in classrooms in China among different types of Chinese EFL teachers in response to the move towards communicative approaches to ELT.

Materials and Methods: Two different research methods, a questionnaire and classroom observation, were developed in order to obtain data from informants in different populations. The analysis of eighty-nine questionnaires and five observation transcripts yielded the following key findings.

Results: The results from the 89 questionnaires suggest three conclusions: younger teachers are more communicative in their teaching methodology than older teachers; teachers who graduated from universities with high prestige are more communicative in their teaching methodology than those who graduated from universities with low prestige; teachers who graduated from teacher-training oriented universities are more communicative in their teaching methodology than those who graduated from non-teacher-training oriented universities.

Conclusion: However, only the first two conclusions could be confirmed by analyzing the five selected lesson transcripts, while the last conclusion could not be drawn because of a lack of relevant data. In conclusion, the researcher provides some suggestions for Chinese EFL teachers and further research based on the results of this study.

Key Word: communicative language teaching (CLT); task-based learning (TBL); English as a foreign language (EFL).

Date of Submission: 29-03-2021

Date of acceptance: 12-04-2021

I. Introduction

With the development of global modernization, more and more people are becoming aware of the importance of the mastery of English. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is no exception. English education has been greatly emphasized by State Education Development Commission of China (SEDC) in Chinese nursery schools, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities. For this reason, the methodologies of English language teaching (ELT) have become a big concern in the Chinese educational field. China has experienced significant reform and innovation in ELT methodologies; one of the most impressive reforms is the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the real Chinese educational context. Another challenge for EFL teachers and students in China has been the implementation of Task Based Learning (TBL).

A lot of related research has come out covering CLT innovation in China, the factors constraining the implementation of CLT, and other research from the learners' perspective. In addition to this research, teacher-training programs have been carried out. The most recent literature available has shown that few researchers have seen what is actually happening in ELT classrooms in China: almost no research has been based on recordings of real lesson rather than on questionnaires or interviews. Since sometimes what a teacher says is quite different from what he or she actually does in their real classroom teaching, academic research based on anecdotal information cannot veritably reflect reality, at least not completely. This paper aims to check trained teachers' beliefs and attitudes about ELT in China first using a questionnaire, and then using observations from real ELT classrooms to verify what is actually happening there.

Research questions

In order to achieve the objectives of my study, I designed the following questions to help in my analysis of the data:

Q1: Has there been any evidence of change in the attitudes and practices of EFL teachers in China from one generation to the next?

Q2: What is actually happening in Chinese ELT classrooms? Are trained teachers adopting CLT and TBL approaches or do they still practice traditional Chinese teaching methods in classroom teaching? Is there evidence that teachers are beginning to use a more communicative approach in classroom teaching?

Q3: Does what the trained teachers say accord with what they in fact do in their real classroom teaching? Do the answers to question 1 accord with the answers to question 2?

Q4: What kind of teacher is more likely to use CLT and TBL in classroom teaching? Can the teachers' educational background, including their graduation year, the pedagogical courses they took in universities, the prestige of their universities, where they graduated, and the type of the universities they attended (teacher-training oriented or not) be identified as factors influencing their use of CLT and TBL?

The significance of this study

This research will give us a more accurate picture of the current situation of EFL instruction in Chinese classrooms. This study has the following implications:

1. It will allow us to get a general picture of the implementation of CLT and TBL in real classrooms in the target parts of the PRC.
2. If there is really a difference in teaching style, beliefs, and attitudes among different generations of teachers in China, we can arrange to do some research on the gap between them in the future.
3. If necessary, relevant institutions can organize more training for their professional teachers.
4. If possible, experts and linguists can do more classroom observations, and coach and instruct the teachers further.

II. Literature Review

The historical background of CLT

In the last quarter century, the English language has been gaining importance and popularity at a very fast speed in the PRC (Hu, 2002). There has been a clear recognition of the language as an important resource that the nation can harness in its drive to modernization (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996a). English is perceived as a key to promoting international exchange, acquiring scientific knowledge and technological expertise, fostering economic progress, and participating in international competition (Ross, 1992). Because of the high prestige English has accrued in relation to the nation's modernization and development, ELT has received a great deal of attention (Hu, 2002). China boasts the largest English-speaking population in the world, and a history of over six decades of English teaching and learning. Thus, EFL in China has become a tradition in its own right (Li, 1984). There has been an impressive top-down movement to innovate ELT in the PRC since the late 1980s. An important component of this reform has been an effort to import CLT and carry it out in the Chinese context (Hu, 2002).

CLT has been regarded as the major innovation in language teaching methodology since the 1970s (Habermas, 1970), and is now still the prevailing approach in TESL classrooms. The last decades bear witness to the fact that China's modernization program needs a huge number of people with a working command of the English language. Realizing that the traditional grammar-translation method and audiolingual method could not help much to develop learners' communicative competence or ability, EFL teachers in China started introducing CLT into English teaching at both the secondary school level and tertiary level in the early 1980s (Rao, 2002). It has now been over two decades since the CLT approach was introduced to Chinese foreign language teaching, affecting tens of millions of Chinese learners of English. In an arena previously dominated by the grammar-translation approach, these 20 years have witnessed great changes in FLT in China (Yu, 2001).

To promote CLT, tremendous efforts and resources have been expended on revamping curricula for various levels of education, updating English syllabuses to include principles and practices advocated by CLT, producing communication-oriented English textbooks, developing skill-oriented examinations, and upgrading teachers' knowledge of new language-learning theories and pedagogies (Adamson and Morris, 1997). "Accompanying the introduction of CLT was the publication of a series of new textbooks." (Rao, 2002: 88). Efforts to adopt CLT in China can be traced back to the work of Li Xiaojun, who compiled a series of communicative English textbooks in 1979. The new textbooks incorporated a communicative perspective and more listening and speaking materials. "The call for the adoption of CLT was not accidental. It came as a response to discontent with the traditional grammar-translation method. However, it was not until the early 1990s that substantial progress was made in applying CLT to teaching practice in China." (Yu, 2001: 195). By the mid-1990s, CLT had become "a general approach in teaching and learning," or "a principled communicative approach" (Gong, 1999: 116).

In 1992, the SEDC introduced a new English Teaching Syllabus, which stated that the aim of teaching English was to develop the students' communicative competence (Liao, 2000). In the same year, in cooperation with the British publisher Longman, the SEDC published a new textbook series – Junior English for China (Books I, II, and III) (Grant and Liu, 1992), which was designed for the development of communicative competence. Before this functional syllabus was introduced in 1992, the structural syllabus that set language

knowledge as the main teaching aim was still in effect. As a result of the traditional and analytical teaching method, “the students’ ability to use English was much lower than that of knowledge”. Students became almost “deaf and dumb” with little ability to speak and understand English (Ng and Tang, 1997). Therefore, in the functional syllabus, the “communication aim” was initiated: “training in listening, speaking, reading and writing, to teach students in order to gain basic knowledge of English and competence to use English for interaction and communication.” (English Teaching Syllabus, 1992).

Defining characteristics of CLT

There is debate as to suitable ways of defining CLT, and no single model of CLT is universally advocated as authoritative (McGroarty, 1984). However, according to Richards and Rodgers (1986), CLT begins with a theory of language as communication, and its final objective is to develop learners’ communicative competence. The main characteristics of CLT are presented below:

1. Almost everything that is done is done with a communicative purpose, and activities in the Communicative Approach are often carried out by students in small groups (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).
2. It is a learner-dominated and experience-based view of second language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).
3. “The English-using situations, in which the communicative activities are carried out in classrooms[,] must be ‘real’ to students, and learners’ role must be ‘real’ as well[;] communicative activities require students to interact with freedom and unpredictability[;] the use of language in order to achieve the purpose of communication is more important than the language form[;] the language students use in doing the communicative activities should be ‘real’, that is, authentic, appropriate, and ‘global’” (Li, 1984).
4. Communicative teaching activities are task-based (Brown, 1994).
5. It ensures that students have adequate exposure to the target language, and embraces all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It emphasizes two-way communication (Liao, 2000).
6. Some popular tasks include information gaps, problem solving, discussion, role play, simulation, improvisation, debating, survey, and project work (Hu, 2002).
7. Concentration on use and appropriateness rather than on language form; a tendency to favor fluency rather than accuracy; communicative tasks are achieved through the language rather than exercises on the language; an emphasis is placed on student initiative and interaction, rather than on teacher-centred direction; there is a sensitivity to learners’ differences; there is an awareness of variations in language use rather than attention to the language (Maley, 1984).

Conflicts between CLT and the traditional Chinese methods

According to Hu (2002: 102), “CLT and the traditional Chinese culture of learning are in potential conflict in several important respects, which embody different, even opposing, philosophies about the nature of teaching and learning (e.g. the interactive model of CLT vs. the Chinese epistemic model), which have largely contrary assumptions about the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students (e.g. learner-centeredness vs. teacher dominance/control), which encourage different learning strategies (e.g. verbal activeness vs. mental activeness), which reward different qualities in students (e.g. independence and individuality in CLT and receptiveness and conformity in the Chinese culture of learning) and value different classroom etiquettes.”

1. The traditional Chinese model of teaching is one of an ‘empty vessel’ or a ‘pint pot’ (Maley, 1982). A traditional language lesson in China consists of a focus text and a list of language points drawn from the text. The language points are about grammar or vocabulary: they concern only the form of the language, since the sole objective of the course is to teach language form. In contrast, the objective of CLT is communicative competence, which, for pedagogical reasons, is broken down into communicative skills (Li, 1984).
2. “The traditional approach to ELT in the PRC has been a curious combination of the grammar-translation method and audio-lingualism, which is characterized by systematic and detailed study of grammar, extensive use of cross-linguistic comparison and translation, memorization of structural patterns and vocabulary, painstaking effort to form good verbal habits, and emphasis on written language, and a preference for literary classics” (Hu, 2002: 93). What distinguishes CLT from the traditional language teaching methodologies is its conception of communicative competence, rather than linguistic competence alone, as the primary goal of language teaching and learning (Brown, 2001). “The learning theory underlying CLT is humanistic in nature.” (Hu, 2002: 95)
3. As its name implies, CLT takes the position that meaning is primary and that teaching should be centered on communicative functions, rather than merely linguistic knowledge and the ability to manipulate structural patterns, on which the traditional Chinese teaching methods focused (Widdowson, 1990).

4. China is an example of ‘cultures with a long tradition of unconditional obedience to authority’, in which the teacher is seen not as a facilitator but as a ‘fount of knowledge to be delivered’ (Liu, 1998: 5). In contrast to the largely passive role students assume as receivers of knowledge and performers of teacher directions in traditional approaches, CLT proposes that students should be negotiators, communicators, discoverers, and contributors of knowledge and information (Nunan, 1991). “Instead of regarding the transmission of authoritative knowledge as the most important task of the teacher, most varieties of CLT define the role of the teacher as one of a co-communicator, a need analyst, an organizer of resources, a facilitator of procedures and activities, a negotiator, and/or a learner.” (Hu, 2002: 95-6).

Obstacles to the implementation of CLT in China

Because CLT innovation in China has involved a change from old to new, it has been fraught with obstacles as follows from the beginning.

1. The class size in Chinese middle schools is too large (50-70 students); most Chinese students will never visit an English-speaking country or interact with English-speaking people; supplementary books and materials are either non-existent, too expensive, or very difficult to find in China; Chinese English teachers have as their main responsibility the duty of preparing their students for the English section of the national examination (Anderson, 1993).
2. “The difficulties are related to the approach itself as well as the past teaching traditions and present situations of English language teaching and learning in China. They include the teachers’ lack of language proficiency and culture knowledge, no familiarity with the new method, and the negative influence of Chinese educational traditions on teachers” (Liao, 2000).
3. The low salary of English teachers drives some of them into taking a second or even a third part-time job (Yu, 2001). In this situation, few English teachers will spend time analyzing learners’ needs or designing their own syllabus, nor will they collect suitable materials to create communicative tasks and activities (Hui, 1997).
4. Rao (2002) summarized four obstacles to using CLT in EFL teaching in China: students’ lack of motivation for communicative competence, traditional learning styles and habits, EFL situations, and educational institutions’ lack of funding.

Some suggestions have been made by a few of the researchers to overcome these obstacles. For example Liao (2000) suggested teacher training, test reform to include communicative competence, and publicity of the advantages of using CLT. However, whether CLT is really a practical method in the Chinese context is still a question. It can be answered by observing real classroom practice, but the answer is yet unclear.

Recent developments: TBL

The new English curriculum: The recent publication of the English Curriculum Standards (Minister of Education, China, July 2001) has presented a great challenge to the whole TEFL profession: EFL educators, teacher trainers, material producers, and EFL teachers. The new English curriculum is based on a new approach to EFL teaching and learning and proposes some new teaching objectives. It devises a new framework for classroom teaching, in which the teacher and students each play different roles in the classroom than those they have played before:

1. The new approach: TBL – a student-centered, experiential, and interactive approach to language learning that emphasizes skill and the use of language through performing “tasks”. It encourages students’ autonomic learning with a positive learning attitude, active learning strategies, and cross-cultural awareness.
2. The new teaching objectives: To develop students’ integrated ability to use the English language, which includes knowledge, skills, learning strategies, attitudes and motivation, and cross-cultural awareness. All the objectives are specified at nine levels for students from primary to secondary school.
3. The new framework for classroom teaching: Instead of transmission-based learning, the new teaching model focuses on the students’ performance of tasks that are created, prepared, or adapted by the teacher according to the students’ needs. The teacher is seen as a designer, organizer, monitor, consultant, co-participant, prompter, resource-provider, and assessor, and he or she “must be concerned with providing an environment that will supply the appropriate sort of intake and in which the learner can engage in creative interaction” (Yalden, 1987)

Pedagogical and target tasks: According to Brown (2001), there are two kinds of tasks: “target tasks” and “pedagogical tasks”. The former refers to activities outside of the classroom in the real world; the latter refers to

the activities inside the classroom that may be a series of techniques designed ultimately to teach students to perform the target tasks. Thus, two important factors have to be noticed by EFL teachers:

1. Pedagogical tasks have specific goals that point to the related target task outside the language learning context (the classroom).
2. Pedagogical tasks can be “any of a series of techniques” that may include formal and functional techniques and learning activities.

According to William and Burden (1997), a pedagogical task is broadly defined as any activity that learners are engaged in to further the process of language learning. Pedagogical tasks possess the following common features:

1. Tasks are activities in which students work purposefully towards an objective.
2. The objective may be one that they have set for themselves or one that has been set by the teacher.
3. The objective may be language-focused, e.g. to discover a rule of grammar or complete an exercise, or function-focused, e.g. to carry out a project or reach a decision through discussion.
4. Tasks may be carried out individually or, more often, in groups.
5. Tasks may be carried out in competition or, more often, in collaboration.
6. The outcome may be something concrete (e.g. a report or presentation) or something intangible (e.g. an agreement or the solution to a problem).

In sum, when teachers highlight the target-task context in relation to a functional topic, the formal and functional practice of language in a series of pedagogical tasks becomes meaningfully related and integrated. A task-based lesson is organized around pedagogical tasks and activities that work together towards target tasks in the real world.

The challenges confronting EFL teachers: It is clear that the new curriculum, which emphasizes a “task-based approach,” has changed what we know about EFL teaching and learning and what we do in classrooms; it has affected teachers’ stance towards students and themselves and the criteria for “a good English lesson”. To conduct a task-based lesson, the teacher is supposed to do the following in the classroom:

1. The teacher should know his or her students well (e.g. their interests, needs, cognitive development, etc.) and believe that every student in class is able to learn English well;
2. The teacher should choose and adapt the teaching materials, and prepare tasks according to the students’ needs;
3. The teacher should be very clear about the lesson or task objectives in relation to the target tasks;
4. The teacher should create an enjoyable learning environment and stimulate students’ interest in the lesson;
5. The teacher should use tasks to involve students in thinking and doing things in English actively;
6. The teacher should make good use of group work or pair work to promote interaction and collaboration among students;
7. The “teacher talk” is meant to enhance interaction with students and help them with task performance;
8. The teacher should arrange the tasks and activities in a lesson well, e.g. with reasonable timing, and try to carry them out smoothly and naturally step by step.

From CLT to TBL: The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop “communicative competence” – the ability not only to use the grammar rules of a language in order to produce grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use them and with whom. TBL, the Task-Based Approach (Johnson 1982), and the development of the communicative paradigm, places more emphasis on communicative tasks, and poses a greater challenge to teachers by asking them to play a more important role in “foreign language engineering”. Teachers should not only enact their roles in the classroom in light of the course syllabus and textbooks produced by EFL educators and researchers, but also be educators and researchers themselves. TBL still lies within the communicative paradigm in terms of language teaching methodology. It is a development of the basic principles of CLT, and, some would argue, an advance on the ‘standard’ CLT techniques, but it is not a departure from CLT. It is relevant, however, that some claims have been made for the benefits of TBL, and that as a result of these claims, TBL is perceived by some as being the ‘latest’, most up-to-date approach to ELT. It is likely that this is how TBL is seen by some professional ELT teachers in China. However, as often happens, the term ‘task-based learning’ has been interpreted rather differently in China from the way most Western practitioners would interpret it. As a matter of fact, TBL is used more or less as a synonym for CLT in some contexts in China and in other parts of the world, but it is preferred because it seems more up-to-date. Since TBL is still within CLT, in this paper CLT and TBL will be used interchangeably to express an updated teaching methodology that is communication-oriented.

Since it is urgent for EFL teachers in China to adapt to newly developed ELT methodologies, teacher training programs organized by all kinds of Institutions of foreign language teaching have materialized all over Mainland China to train professional EFL teachers at different levels. The main purpose of all these teacher-training programs is not to force teachers to adopt TBL in their daily teaching, but to open their minds and try to use CLT in the real Chinese educational context to accord with realistic needs. The training programs are always quite short, lasting from several days to several weeks. According to the recently available literature in this field, most applied linguists and teacher educators often ignore the results of their training, that is, few experts have been to real classrooms to observe whether the trained teachers really have understood the new methodologies and have properly used them in real classroom practice. We have taken it for granted that it would be impossible for all the trained EFL teachers in China to totally agree with CLT and TBL as there are a lot of constraining factors preventing the implementation of these new methodologies. Therefore, the following questions are designed to facilitate a clearer look at the implementation of CLT and TBL in real classrooms:

1. What kind of teacher is more likely to adopt CLT and TBL in real classroom practice?
2. What is actually happening in real EFL classrooms in China?
3. Is there some evidence I can find that teachers are beginning to use a more communicative and a task-based approach in their teaching?

III. Methodology

In this section, I will outline the data collection procedures I have adopted, why I chose these particular methods, and how reliable and valid my procedures were. I will describe the questionnaire I used and justify its design. I will also justify the use of audio recording, and discuss any problems of reliability and validity which may have arisen from the use of recordings. I also will discuss the process of transcription of the recordings.

I did my own research based on transcripts of audio-tape recordings of five English lessons, which I made in several different schools in Jilin and Hainan provinces in Mainland China. I also administered a questionnaire to 89 trained Chinese middle school English teachers with between one to more than thirty years of teaching experience in the same district where the recordings were made. I used both qualitative and quantitative research methods, including classroom observation and questionnaires, to analyze the data.

Quantitative method

In order to check the trained teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards FLT in China, I administered a questionnaire. In fact, the questionnaire used for my data collection was not designed for this particular research, but was adopted from a Topic Task Reflection (TTR) teacher-training program for English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) in which I worked as an assistant group leader and which was organized by the Foreign Languages Department of Hainan Normal University, Haikou, Hainan province, PRC. I used this questionnaire in another city (Changchun, in the province of Jilin) to collect my own data. The original questionnaire (see Appendix 1) consisted of four sections:

1. Participants' personal information, including gender, graduation year and university, and the pedagogy-related courses they took in university.
2. Ten multiple choice questions to check how well the trained teachers could adapt the new teaching methodology in their day-to-day working environment.
3. Ten statement-choosing questions to check the trained teachers' beliefs and attitude towards ELT in the Chinese context.
4. Two open-ended short-answer questions to check their success and failure in their teaching after being trained.

It was quite clear that not all the questions in the questionnaire were useful for my dissertation. I decided to focus on sections one and three. These were pertinent to my research questions because I wanted to confirm whether teachers' beliefs and attitudes accorded with their educational background. This part of the study emphasized frequency analysis.

Qualitative method

In order to investigate "What is actually happening in classrooms in response to moves towards the implementation of TBL or CLT approach to ELT?", I observed and audio-recorded five English lessons in several different middle schools, both junior and senior, to find out "What evidence is there in the lesson transcripts that teachers are beginning to use a more TBL and CLT approach in their teaching of English?" The sample of teachers I observed was representative of the sample of those to whom the questionnaire was administered; out of the selected five Chinese EFL teachers, two were from the younger generation, two belonged to the middle generation, and one came from the older generation; also, two were from universities with high prestige, one was from a university with middle prestige, and two were from universities with low prestige. My observations were made impromptu to make sure the lessons were not 'live shows' that had been

prerehearsed. The lesson recordings were transcribed by following a particular transcription scheme developed by Peter Martin (1999) and coded using the COLT scheme. Unfortunately, some of teachers' and students' gestures, actions, behaviors, and expressions could not be understood clearly from the transcripts, and another disadvantage of transcription was that when the teachers and students were too far away from the recorder, their voices could not be clearly heard.

Relationship between the two methods

Actually, the two parts of my data analysis accord with each other closely and logically. I was able to get information from the questionnaire about the teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards ELT, and I could check in the lesson recordings what they really taught in their classrooms based on their beliefs and attitudes in the Chinese educational circumstances. If they matched each other, I could conclude that the data were, to some degree, reliable and valid. If they did not match, at least I could discover any discrepancies between teachers' actions and their reports.

IV. Questionnaire Results

Before I observed what was actually happening in ELT classrooms in China, it was necessary to check the participating trained teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards ELT: whether they accepted TBL and CLT was the first concern of my research. The questionnaire mentioned earlier was used to confirm teachers' beliefs. Of the 100 copies of the questionnaire given to teachers, 89 were returned. As noted earlier, the questionnaire was borrowed from a teacher-training program, and, in some senses, judging by the results, it raised more questions than it answered. However, I was still able to obtain a lot of evidence which was of interest. In order to do comparison, I grouped the teachers based on their graduation years: 1973-1988, 1989-1995, 1996-2004; the prestige of the universities from which they graduated (high, medium, low), and the type of college attended (teacher-training or other). All the tables of data below were formatted mechanically using SPSS.

Results of section one

The following Tables 1-4 show the results of section one of the questionnaire, relating to the pedagogic courses the teachers had taken at their universities:

Table no.1: Number of respondents who report taking particular ELT training courses, grouped by year of graduation.

		Year of graduation			Total (n =74)
		1973-1988 (n = 22)	1989-1995 (n = 25)	1996-2004 (n = 27)	
4a. English teaching methodology	yes	16	24	25	65
	percent	72.7	96.0	92.6	87.8
4c. English teaching psychology	yes	8	13	15	36
	percent	36.4	52.0	55.6	48.6
4d. Microteaching	yes	1	1	3	5
	percent	4.5	4.0	11.1	6.8
4e. English teacher oral English	yes	16	18	24	58
	percent	72.7	72.0	88.9	78.4

From Table 1, we can see that the number of teachers who had taken the four pedagogic courses (English teacher methodology, English teaching psychology, microteaching, and English teacher oral English) increased as the teachers became younger. For example, the number of teacher who had taken the English methodology course increased from 16 out of 22 in the 1973-1988 group to 25 out of 27 in the 1996-2004 group. The number of teachers who had attended a course on English teaching psychology went up to 15 out of 27 in the youngest group from the original 8 out of 22 in the oldest group via 13 out of 25 in the middle group. The number of teachers who had done microteaching rose slightly up to 11.1 percent in the youngest group from 4 percent in the middle-aged group. The number of teachers who had learnt English teacher oral English dropped down from 24 out of 27 in the 1996-2004 group to 16 out of 22 in the oldest group with 18 out of 25 in

the middle group. Theoretically, the more pedagogy-relevant courses teachers take, the more likely it is that they will accept updated teaching methodologies such as CLT and TBL, as they would be equipped with more teaching theories. Since teaching methodologies are developing very fast, the more recently teachers have taken pedagogic courses, the more updated theories they have learned. Therefore, we can superficially say that the younger teachers in this study were more likely to adopt CLE or TBL in their classroom teaching than the older teachers.

Results of section three

The next three tables, 2-4, present the results of section three of the questionnaire, which was about teachers' beliefs and attitudes to FLT. The participants needed to choose five out of ten statements espousing common ideas and opinions about FLT and then sequence them in order of their importance. All the statements with odd numbers expressed traditional Chinese ELT ideas, while the ones with even numbers represented TBL and CLT teaching opinions. First, let us look at Table 2 in which the teachers were grouped by their graduation year.

Table 2: Number of respondents selecting particular items as being of importance, grouped by graduation year (totals and percentages).

		Number selecting this item			Total (n=74)
		1973-1988 (n=22)	1989-1995 (n=25)	1996-2004 (n=27)	
3.1 Explain grammar clearly	N	13	11	12	36
	Percent	59.1	44.0	44.0	
3.2 Understand Students' problems	N	3	5	6	14
	Percent	13.6	20.0	22.2	
3.3 Take notes on language	N	8	8	5	21
	Percent	36.4	32.0	18.5	
3.6 Allow different opinions	N	6	8	12	26
	Percent	27.3	32.0	44.4	
3.7 Correct mistakes	N	13	10	13	36
	Percent	59.1	40.0	48.1	
3.8 Use different opinions	N	6	7	7	20
	Percent	27.3	28.0	29.9	
3.9 Know the textbook well	N	8	7	8	23
	Percent	36.4	28.0	29.6	
3.10 Know students' potential	N	8	10	13	31
	Percent	36.4	40.0	48.1	

The results of Table 2 show that there was a tendency for younger teachers to select items that reflected a communicative and task-based approach more than older teachers did (e.g. items 3.2, 3.6, 3.8 and 3.10, all of which reflected a kind of "humanistic" agenda). There was also evidence that older teachers preferred items that were more commonly associated with a traditional approach (e.g. items 3.1, 3.3, 3.7 and 3.9). The general picture was clear: younger teachers tended to place more importance on the individuality of their learners, and less on accuracy and error correction.

Table 3: Number of respondents selecting particular items as being of importance, grouped by prestige of the college attended.

		Prestige rating of college			Total (n=78)
		High (n=25)	Medium (n=29)	Low (n=24)	
3.1 Explain grammar clearly	N	9	12	17	38
	Percent	36.0	41.4	70.8	
3.3 Take notes on language	N	8	5	11	24
	Percent	32.0	17.2	45.8	
3.7 Correct mistakes	N	11	11	14	36
	Percent	44.0	37.9	58.3	
3.9 Know the textbook well	N	8	4	10	22
	Percent	32.0	13.8	41.7	

The most interesting point in this table was the fact that the teachers in the "Low" prestige group were much more likely to select item 3.1 (70.8 percent) than the teachers in the other two groups (36 percent and 41 percent for the High and Medium groups respectively). The teachers in the "Low" group were more likely to

select item 3.7 than the other two groups. The “Low” group were more likely to select item 3.3 than the other two groups. The same applied to 3.9, which the “Low” group selected much more frequently than the teachers in the other two groups. All these results above were consistent with the general picture in this table that the teachers from “Low” prestige colleges were more traditional in their English teaching approaches.

Table 4: Number of respondents selecting particular items as being of importance, grouped by the type of college attended.

		Type of college		Total (n=78)
		Teacher-training (n=50)	Others (n=28)	
3.3 Take notes on language	N	13	11	24
	Percent	26.0	39.3	30.8
3.7 Correct mistakes	N	21	15	36
	Percent	42.0	53.6	46.2
3.9 Know the textbook well	N	14	8	22
	Percent	28.0	28.6	28.2
3.10 Know students' potential	N	22	11	33
	Percent	44.0	39.3	42.3

The point that is worth mentioning in this table is that the teachers from teacher-training colleges were more likely to choose the statements with even numbers, which represented CLT and TBL approaches (e.g. 3.10). Meanwhile, the teachers from other colleges were more likely to select the odd number sentences, which represented traditional Chinese ELT methods (e.g. 3.3, 3.7 and 3.9). We can see that teachers who graduated from teachers' colleges or normal universities were more likely to use CLT and TBL in their classroom teaching than those from other types of universities.

Initial conclusions

The three main conclusions I could draw from the frequency analysis in this section were as follows:

- a. Younger teachers were more likely to use CLT and TBL in their classroom teaching; older teachers were more traditional in their teaching approaches.
- b. The teachers who graduated from key universities or colleges in China preferred CLT and TBL more in their day-to day teaching than those from colleges with low prestige.
- c. The teachers from teachers' colleges and normal universities were more likely to adopt CLT and TBL in their real-life teaching than those from non-teacher-training universities.

At this point in the study, these superficial conclusions were still not confirmed. In the next section, we will see what the teachers actually did in their classrooms. By analyzing the five English lesson transcripts (see appendix 2-6), I was able to check whether the younger teachers, the teachers from more prestigious universities, and the teachers from teacher-training colleges were truly more likely to adopt CLT and TBL in ELT than older teachers, those from universities with low prestige, and those from non-teacher-training colleges.

V. Analysis of the Lesson Transcripts

In this section, I will present the results of my analysis of the lesson transcripts. These will be presented under different headings (including use of the mother tongue, teacher-student interaction, etc.). The main question I tried to answer in this analysis was, “What evidence is there in the lesson transcripts that teachers are beginning to use a more communicative approach in their teaching of English?” In order to answer this question, I needed to compare the different types of teachers.

Description of the five lessons

1. This lesson was made up of five transactions. In the first transaction, which took 0.8 of a minute, the teacher and students greeted each other. In the second transaction, which took 4.9 minutes, the teacher elicited the target grammar point in the lesson, past simple tense, by asking students a question: What did you do yesterday? In the third transaction, which took 6.9 minutes, students played a game in groups: all the students in a group sat in a circle and were numbered, then took turns saying what they did yesterday, with each successive student adding to the list of activities. In the fourth transaction, which took 9.5 minutes, one representative from each group came to the front of the classroom to make up another group that played the same game in public with the other students as judges. In the last transaction, which took 0.7 of a minute, all the students and the teacher discussed the assignment of points to each of the groups.

2. This lesson consisted of three transactions. In the first transaction, which took 0.2 of a minute, the teacher and students greeted each other. In the second transaction, which took 43.2 minutes, the teacher interpreted a reading text about Charlie Chaplin by explaining grammar points and new words and phrases in Chinese. Clearly, there were three kinds of text coming out the teacher's mouth: reading of the original text, explanation of the language points, and examples. In the last transaction, which took 0.7 of a minute, the teacher and students said goodbye to each other.
3. This lesson contained three transactions. In the first transaction, which took 1.1 minutes, the teacher and students greeted each other. In the second transaction, which took 7.1 minutes, the teacher built the students' vocabulary by showing them real objects: a bag and books. In the third transaction, which took 6.8 minutes, the teacher drilled the students in pairs in asking and answering the question, What is your favorite subject?
4. This lesson included four transactions. In the first transaction, which took 0.1 of a minute, the teacher and students greeted each other. In the second transaction, which took 2.3 minutes, the teacher reminded the students of different Chinese festivals. In the third transaction, which took 14.7 minutes, the teacher got the students to work in pairs to describe pictures of some Western festivals in the textbook and then present them in public. In the fourth transaction, which took 17.9 minutes, students worked in four groups to play a game of listing as many Chinese festivals as possible and then present it in public.
5. This lesson consisted of six transactions. In the first transaction, which took 0.6 of a minute, the teacher introduced the main content of the lesson. In the second transaction, which took 8.9 minutes, the students listened to a dialogue about being late for an appointment and then answered some questions provided by their teacher about the dialogue. In the third transaction, which took 2.1 minutes, students talked about their experiences of being late for an appointment. In the fourth transaction, which took 4.1 minutes, students read the dialogue themselves and then raised their own questions or doubts about it for the teacher to answer. In the fifth transaction, which took 4.0 minutes, the teacher read some Chinese sentences and the students found suitable translations in English from the dialogue. In the last transaction, which took 4.4 minutes, the students did some fill-in-the-blank exercises in the textbook and then the teacher checked the answers.

Summary of the results in the COLT framework

All five lesson transcripts were coded by using the coding scheme COLT (part A) proposed by Spada and Frohlich (1995). This scheme is mainly used for checking whether an EFL lesson is communicative or not. The whole scheme consists of five sections: participant organization, content, content control, student modality, and materials. The COLT data (see Appendix 8) is presented in the form of tables of percentages of time spent for each dimension in each lesson.

In section one, participant organization, all five teachers spent time on teacher and students interaction with percentages ranging from 2 to 100, and only teacher A used student- to-student interaction. Teachers A and C combined teacher-students and student-student interaction while only teacher C combined teacher-student interaction and choral interaction. Teacher D had more variation, integrating teacher-student, student-student, and choral interaction with a high percentage of 93. Teacher A, C, and D organized some group work in their lessons. Activities done by individual students could be found in every lesson, but the time spent on this kind of activity was different from lesson to lesson: the highest percentage was 98 by teachers B and E; the lowest was 7 by teacher D. No teacher designed different tasks for different students.

In the second section, content, teachers B, D, and E spent all the class time on procedures, and teachers A and C spent nearly half of the class time on both procedures and discipline. All the teachers gave a very high percentage of time emphasizing language form except teacher E, who only spent 52 percent of the time on that. On the contrary, a very low percentage of emphasis on language function was given by all five teachers, including 0 by teacher D. It was surprising that none of the lesson content dealt with discourse or sociolinguistics. All the topics in the lessons were categorized as narrow except that of teacher B, whose topic was quite broad.

In the third section, content control, the content in the lessons taught by teachers A, B, D, and E was controlled by the teacher and the text with the percentages ranging from 3 by teacher A to 100 by teacher B, while teachers A and C had extremely high percentages for content control by a combination of teacher, text, and students. It was strange that no content was controlled only by the students.

In the fourth section, student modality, it was obvious that the teachers focused on a combination of different language skills. Teachers A, C, and D mainly combined listening and speaking, teacher B combined

listening, reading, and writing up to 98 percent, and teacher E used two combinations: 17 percent of listening, speaking, and reading; 18 percent of speaking, reading, and writing.

In the fifth section, materials, 18 percent of the material in lesson E was minimal and 71 percent was extended, while up to 98 percent of the material in lesson B was extended. Only teacher E used some audio material; visual material could be found in lessons B, C, and D. All the materials in the five lessons were specifically designed for second language teaching except lesson A, which did not use any material.

Similarities and differences in the framework

In this section, I will highlight the similarities and differences in the COLT data between the older generation of teachers and the younger generation. What I was looking for here was evidence to support or overthrow the hypothesis that younger teachers were more aware of communicative methods and made more use of them in their lessons.

Participant organization: It was clear that teacher B, who was from the older generation, seldom interacted with her students throughout the lesson; the only interaction was her greeting to her students. She only gave 2 percent of class time to interaction throughout the lesson; she just read the passage and interpreted it by explaining clearly every language point including both grammar and vocabulary. Once or twice during the lesson, she asked students several questions about grammar, but she soon told the students the correct answers instead of being patient enough to wait for the students to answer. In this case, the students did not really have any chance to speak in class. Therefore, teacher B used a very typically traditional Chinese teaching method, which was teacher-centered/dominated.

Teachers D and E, who were from the middle generation, taught more interactively than teacher B. Though teacher D also gave quite a low percentage of time to teacher-student interaction, she spent up to 93 percent of class time on the combination of teacher-student, student-student, and choral interaction. In her lesson, she interacted with students by asking them questions; students worked in pairs to describe pictures of Western festivals, worked in groups to list Chinese festivals, and read some new words after the teacher to practice pronouncing them correctly. Teacher E spent all the class time only teacher-student on interaction. Though interaction, which is a key feature in CLT and TBL, happened in this lesson, the form of interaction was a bit humdrum as the students just answered the questions provided by the teacher. The students did not have any opportunity to talk to each other.

Teachers A and C, who were from the younger generation, did well in this aspect. It can be seen from the statistics in the table that teacher A gave 28 percent of class time to teacher-student interaction, 30 to student-student interaction, and 41 to the combination of both of them. In lesson A, the teacher first asked the students the question “What did you do yesterday?” in order to elicit the target grammar point (past simple tense); this interaction was teacher-student. When the students did the game in groups, the interaction was among the students themselves without the teacher’s interference: the interaction was student-student. While the group representatives played the game in the front of the classroom, the interaction was a combination of both, because while the students were playing the game at the front, the teacher and the other students acted as judges to provide timely feedback, even though they had to argue with each other to reach an agreement. In this case, students had chances to interact with each other using the English language.

Teacher C gave 45 percent of class time to the combination of teacher-student and student-student interaction. Transaction three of lesson C actually can be divided into two sub-sections for the convenience of analysis. In the first section, the teacher asked “What is your favorite subject?” and then called on individual students to answer. In the second section, the students worked in pairs to ask each other the same thing. Therefore, both teacher-student and student-student interaction occurred. In the second transaction of lesson C, the teacher first showed students some course books in order to ask students the names of the subjects. After getting the names, the teacher wrote them on the blackboard, and then got the students to read the words after her in order to practice pronunciation and keep them in mind. Therefore, the interaction was a combination of teacher-student and choral.

A lot of pair/group work was carried out in lessons A and C from the young generation and D from the middle generation, as mentioned above, but these teachers gave low percentages of class time to students’ individual work. Teacher B from the older generation and teacher E from the middle generation spent 98 percent of class time on students’ individual work. In lesson B, the only thing the students did in class was to listen to the teacher’s explanation quietly and then take notes. In lesson E, the only interaction was teacher-student as mentioned above; all the students individually had to listen to the teacher’s speech carefully in order to be ready to answer questions at any time. Whether in group or individual work, all students did the same task at the same time: no different tasks were designed for different students in any of the five lessons.

Content: Teachers B, D, and E from the middle and the older generations all gave 100 percent of class time to procedure. It seems that these teachers' priority was to finish their lesson plans. They pushed themselves to teach as fast as possible to finish all the lesson procedure on time. The other two teachers, A and C from the younger generation, only gave roughly half of the class time to procedure and the other half to the combination of procedure and discipline. While the junior students in lessons A and C were doing the activities, the teachers disciplined them in order to create a good class learning environment and keep them on the right track. It could be said that these two teachers cared a lot about their students.

Though all the teachers in the five lessons gave a very high percentage of their time to emphasis on the form of language, which included grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and a very low percentage to the function of language, they did so in different contexts. Teacher A focused on both fluency and accuracy in order to review past simple tense using a game. Teacher B aimed to teach new vocabulary, new phrases, usage of words, and grammar points, so her emphasis on form was extremely abstract and mechanical. Teacher C aimed to teach new vocabulary by using real objects and practice a sentence pattern using pair work, so her focus on form was interactive.

Teacher D's focus on form was in a meaningful context because she got the students to be aware of the new vocabulary with the purpose of introducing different festivals and cultures. Teacher E solved the students' problems with language form and did some drilling on translation. All the five teachers spent a little time on language function in the greeting at the very beginning of their lesson. None of them covered anything on discourse or sociolinguistics. Based on the analysis above, form is still the main focus in ELT classes. The challenge is to teach it in an interactive way, in a meaningful context, and in an enlivened learning atmosphere as teachers A, C, D, and E did their lessons.

All the topics in the five lessons were narrow. They were all about personal information, school routines, family, and community, except lesson B, which was a biography of Charlie Chaplin. Most of the ELT lessons in Chinese public schools were taught based on the textbook designed by SEDC and the exam-oriented syllabus.

Content control: The content in lesson B was totally controlled by the textbook and the teacher, while the content in lessons A, C, D, and E was controlled by both teacher/textbook and the students themselves. In lesson B, all the language points came from the textbook and the teacher's head. In lesson A, though the teacher asked the same question to everybody, the students could choose what to answer, either based on fact or on their imagination. In transaction 2 of lesson C, the teacher gave the students chances to present more names of subjects: in this part, the content was decided by the students. In lesson D, the students were given chances to give examples of Chinese festivals; in this case, the content was controlled by the students. In lesson E, the students were given an opportunity to raise their problems in understanding the dialogue; therefore, the content was decided by the students at that moment. CLT and TBL encourage the use of materials made/controlled/decided by students rather than by the teacher only. It can be judged that the teachers from the middle and the young generations were more communicative in their teaching methods.

Student modality: From the statistics in the table, it can be seen clearly that integrated language rather than a single skill was emphasized in all the lessons, especially the combination of listening and speaking. In lessons A, C, and D, the combination of listening and speaking was practiced. In lesson A, in order to play the game successfully, students needed to speak; to repeat the previous sentences correctly, the students had to listen carefully to what the previous students had said. In lesson C, the pair work was done by practicing the dialogue orally; at the same time, the students had to listen to both the teacher and the other students in order to answer their questions. In lesson D, both the pair and the group work were done by speaking and listening, as students had to discuss with their friends to describe the pictures or collect information about Chinese festivals. In the circumstances above, both listening and speaking were drilled together, while lesson B mainly focused on the combination of listening, reading, and writing.

In lesson B, the students listened to the teacher's explanations of the grammar points while reading through their own text at the same time. For future reference, they also had to write down the important language points provided by the teacher: in this case, the combination of the three language skills was practiced. However, the students could not gain the reading skills of skimming or scanning by reading in this way. Teacher E's combination of language skills was complicated. In transaction 2, 3, and 5, the combination of listening and speaking was practiced because students listened to the teacher and then answered his questions. In transaction 4, the students practiced listening, speaking, and reading, as they had to scan the dialogue first, then raise their questions, and finally listen to the teacher's explanations. In transaction 6 of lesson E, reading and writing were drilled by the students: they had to do a fill-in-the-blank exercise first and then read it in public to check their answers. In general, young teachers such as teacher A and C emphasized listening and speaking more than the

older teachers such as teachers B and E, who emphasized reading and writing a lot. To some degree, it can be judged that younger teachers were more communicative in their teaching methods because speaking is the main way to communicate.

Materials: In lesson A, the teacher did not use any written materials; the objective of the lesson was taken from the English syllabus, but the materials and the organization were all designed by the teacher herself. Teacher B used the text in the coursebook all through the lesson: the text was regarded as extended in this study, as it was a long coherent written passage about Charlie Chaplin's biography. In fact, there was a picture of Charlie Chaplin. Unfortunately, the teacher did not make full use of it in her lesson; she even did not mention it. Teacher C used some visual materials in transaction 2 as she wanted to go over vocabulary by showing real objects in class. Teacher D also adapted some visual materials; she got the students to describe the pictures of Western festivals in pairs in the third transaction. Teacher E used both minimal and extended text materials, and audio material as well.

In transaction two of lesson 2, audio-recording material was used to practice students' listening. In transaction 4, the students read the dialogue, which was extended to raising their own questions. In transaction 6, the students did a fill-in-the-blank exercise, which was minimal because it was made up of several isolated sentences and a word list. All the materials used in the five lessons came from the textbook or English syllabus. However, one difference that emerged from the analysis above was that younger teachers like teachers A, C, and D were more likely to create or add more materials to the ones in the coursebook, while the older teachers such as teachers B and E generally focused on the textbook only.

Qualitative analysis of the lesson transcripts

In this analysis, I looked for evidence related to the dichotomies discussed below, by which CLT and TBL can be distinguished from traditional Chinese methods:

Accuracy vs. fluency: Accuracy was emphasized all through lesson A. The main objective of the lesson was to review the past simple tense by answering the question "What did you do yesterday?". When the students answered the teacher's questions or played the game in public, their mistakes were pointed out and corrected as well by both the teacher and the other students. For example:

T: Sunday, that's right. And, well, I'd like to know what did you do on Sunday? Yesterday was Sunday, right? What did you do? Can you tell me?

Ss: Sleep at home.

T: Can you say "I sleep at home yesterday"?

Ss: No.

T: Oh, no. Can you say it correctly? How to say it? "*wo zuo tian zai jia shui jiao*" <Yesterday I slept at home> How to say? Yesterday, do you remember? Can you say "I sleep"?

Ss: I slept.

T: Yeah, "I slept", ok. I slept yesterday. And what else did you do? What else did you do? Did you visit your friends?

In this example above, the correction of the student's mistake was done in an interactive way: the teacher pointed out the mistake about the past simple tense and then encouraged other students to correct it rather than correcting the mistake herself with the aim of reminding the other students of the correct form of past simple tense. In this case, the other students would pay attention to the right form of the past simple tense when answering the following questions.

At the same time, fluency was also emphasized in this lesson. When the teacher explained the game rules, she said when doing this game in the front of the classroom, the students could not hesitate more than five seconds. This meant the students had to repeat the previous sentences and say their own sentences as quickly and fluently as possible. Timing was also made a criterion for giving points to the students from different groups. This was one of the reasons why the game was so competitive.

Accuracy was also emphasized in lesson C, but it was not the main focus of the lesson. The teacher emphasized the correct spelling and pronunciation of vocabulary, and pronunciation was a criterion for giving points to students. For example:

T: How to spell? Can you tell me?

Ss: b-i o-l-o-g-y

T: No, subject, hou mian you yi ge shen mo a? <At the end of the word, there is a sound...>

Ss: /T/.

Fluency was emphasized more than accuracy in this lesson, especially during transaction three in which students in pairs practiced asking and answering the question “What is your favorite subject?”. This simple dialogue pattern made up of two sentences was the main focus of the whole lesson, so getting students to say it fluently was one of the objectives of the lesson. In order to achieve this objective, this pattern was drilled by pairs of students again and again.

In lesson B, it could be seen that language form was greatly emphasized from the very beginning to the end as the teacher explained every grammar point in the reading text. For example:

I choose a play and the actors”: ‘Choose’, *xuan ze* <choose>. ‘Choose’ *zhe ge xuan ze shi biao shi tong chang zhi fan zhi, jiu shi ta pu tong de yong ci yi ban wo men xuan ze shen mo wo men dou ke yi shi yong* <To choose in a general way we can use> ‘choose’. *yi ban dou shi zhi zhe na zhong ne ye ke yi biao shi you xing de ye ke yi biao shi wu xing de* <We can choose both concrete and abstract things>. *Bi ru shuo xuan ze zhi ye ke yi yong* <For example, to choose a job we can use> ‘choose’, ‘choose your job’, *shi bu shi a?* <yes or no?> *ran hou ne, hai ke yi biao shi you xing de dong xi, ni dao shang dian qu mai xie, xuan ze yi shuang xie ye ke yi yong* <Then, it can also indicate some concrete things. For example, if you want to buy a pair a shoes in a shop, you can use> choose, there are five pairs of shoes to choose from, *shang dian you wu shuang xie gong ni tiao xuan* <there are five pairs of shoes for you to choose from in the shop>, *na mo zhe ge ne wo men dou ke yi shi yong* <In this situation, we can use the word> choose, choose from *de yi si shi cong zhong tiao xuan* <means choose from> ...

In lesson D, about the tense of a sentence, the expression of numbers and the pronunciation of words were corrected by the teacher. For example:

S: I think it must be (...) from America, which is celebrated on Oct. thirty-one.

T: On Oct. thirty-one, thirty-one? Thirty-first, not thirty-one. Now go on.

S: Halloween.

T: Now I think your pronunciation is wrong. Now sit down please. Now let’s look at the festival in (...). Read after me please: Halloween.

S: Every family was very happy.

T: Was?

S: Were.

T: Are. Every family is very happy. Now go on.

In lesson E, fluency was emphasized more than accuracy. No corrections of students’ mistakes in language form were made as long as the meaning could get through. For example:

S: I will ask he or she to give me good reasons.

T: For good reasons, why? Why are you late? Yeah?

Obviously, the student’s sentence was grammatically incorrect. The correct form should be “I will ask him or her to give me good reasons”, but the teacher did not correct this as the focus of the activity was not on the form of language but the meaning of language. Since both the teacher and the other students could understand this without any difficulty, the teacher regarded it as fine.

Out of the five selected teachers, four emphasized accuracy in different degrees in their classroom teaching, but at the same time, very often, fluency was emphasized more than that. Sometimes whether accuracy should be emphasized or not depends on the main teaching objective of the lesson. If it is a grammar or a writing lesson like lesson A, accuracy should definitely be emphasized by both the teacher and students because of the pressure from the exam-oriented syllabus. If it is a speaking lesson like lesson D, fluency should come first as the meaning is more important than the form in that context.

Teacher-centredness vs learner-centredness: Lesson B, taught by a teacher from the older generation, was a typical teacher-centered class. The teacher talked for the majority of the class time in the front of the classroom, while all the students were keptsilent without any chance to raise their own questions or doubts. Though the students were asked questions by the teacher once or twice, they did not really have an opportunity to answer them as the teacher was not patient enough to wait for their answers. Instead, the teacher told the students the answers to their own questions directly. In this case, though the teacher seemed to have asked students some questions, there was still no real interaction between teacher and students.

Lessons A, C, D, and E, taught by teachers from the younger and middle generations, tended to be more learner-centered than teacher-centered. In all four of these lessons, students played important roles as participants or judges. The lessons were mainly made up of activities done by the students but not the teacher; most of the time, the teacher just facilitated the activities and organized the class. In order to help students master vocabulary, including spelling and pronunciation, grasp grammar, and play games, the teacher interacted with the students a lot. By doing this, the class atmosphere was enlivened.

Passive vs active learning: In lessons B, D, and E, taught by the teachers from the middle and older generations, the students were quite passive in their learning, especially in Lesson B. Sometimes, when the teacher asked the students questions, they did not feedback to the teacher though they knew the answers. In this case, the teacher had to call their names to force them to answer the questions. In lesson D, when the teacher asked the students to do the activity in groups, most of the students kept quiet. Perhaps they did not do the activity following the teacher's instructions because they were not used to group work, or for the reasons mentioned above.

In contrast, the students in lessons A and C were much more active than those in the other lessons. When the teacher asked them questions, they all wanted to be volunteers, and when they were asked to do the activities, they did them very actively. This was because the teacher created a very good environment for learning the English language by using the theory underlying CLT and TBL. Perhaps another reason was that the students were younger than those in the other lessons. Most Chinese students become shier as they grew older and more mature.

Teacher control vs. student control of turn-taking: In some of parts of lesson A and D, turn-taking was controlled by the students, while for the rest of the lessons, it was all decided by the teacher. For example, in transaction 4 of lesson A, the students were encouraged to choose their own representative to do the game in the front of the classroom. As well, in transaction 4 of lesson D, the students decided which group should do the presentation in public first rather than the teacher.

Meaningless vs. meaningful language use: The language in only lessons D and E was used in a meaningful context. In lesson D, the students used the English language to describe pictures of Western festivals. In this case, the students had a very clear objective: to know something about Western culture. In lesson E, they talked about personal experiences of "being late". In all the other activities in the other lessons, language was used without a meaningful language context.

Predictable vs. spontaneous use of language: In lessons D and E, the use of language was more spontaneous than that in the other lessons. In transaction 3 of lesson D, when the students had to describe pictures of several Western festivals in pairs, the students used spontaneous language because they did not know much about these festivals beforehand and they needed to discuss with their partners to reach an agreement. Also, in transaction 3 of lesson E, which featured personalization, the teacher asked the students to introduce some relatively personal experiences: the students used spontaneous language as well since they could not predict this activity.

On the contrary, in the other lessons, the language used could be predicted by the students. For example, in lesson A, the students knew at the beginning of the lesson that they were going to talk about what they did the day before, so they could be fully prepared before answering the teacher's questions. In lesson B, the students used almost no language in class. In lesson C, the main sentence pattern was "What is your favorite subject?"; all the activities were organized based on this pattern, so the students could predict what they would say beforehand.

Teacher control vs. learner autonomy: Lessons B and D, taught by teachers from the older and the middle generations, were teacher-controlled, especially lesson B. The students did not have any chance to raise their own questions or doubts, which implied that the teacher did not care about whether the students had understood the lesson.

In contrast, in lessons A, C, and E, taught by teachers who were mainly from the younger generation, the students acted as autonomous learners. In lesson A, before the students came to the front to play a game in public, the students autonomously raised a lot of questions to make sure of the rules of the game in order to win. In lesson C, the students in pairs actively wanted to be the volunteers who practiced the dialogue in public; the students were not afraid of taking risks and losing face. In lesson E, when the teacher asked the students to read a dialogue and then raise their questions or doubts, the students autonomously pointed out more questions than the teacher expected. From this, it can be seen that the students were really eager to solve any problems about the English language that they had.

Generally speaking, the evidence above showed that the teachers from the younger and the middle generations used a more communicative teaching method in their classroom teaching than the ones from the older generation because fluency, learner-centredness, active learning, student control of turn-taking, meaningful language use, spontaneous use of language, and learner autonomy are typical features of CLT and TBL.

L1 in Chinese ELT

There have always been contradicting views about whether to use the mother tongue in ELT classrooms in China. According to Tang (2002), limited and judicious use of the mother tongue when English does not work because of students' low level of English language proficiency in ELT does not reduce students' exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning of English in a supportive way. Tang also summarized the main purposes of using Chinese in ELT, such as classroom management, language analysis, presenting rules that govern grammar, discussing cross-cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, explaining errors, and checking for comprehension. However, none of these purposes were the focus of my study. In my study:

1. My data showed that the mother tongue was used in distinctive and different ways by teachers of different generations in China.
2. There was a difference in the amount of the mother tongue used by teachers from different generations.

Purposes of using L1: Teachers from the older generation used the mother tongue for the purposes of explanation of new vocabulary and grammar and giving examples. For instance:

Teacher B (explaining vocabulary):

“Dialogue. A journalist is interviewing the director of a play. ‘What do you do in the theatre?’ ‘I am a director. I direct plays.’ Direct means *shi dao yan* <is director>”.

Using Chinese to explain new words or phrases is a method frequently used by Chinese English teachers in ELT because for the teacher, it is easy; for the students, the words are also easy to understand in this way.

Teacher B (explaining grammar):

“I choose a play and the actors then for a period of several weeks practice doing the play’, ‘practice doing’, practice *zhe ge ci hou mian jia* <this word is followed by> gerund *dong ming ci zuo bin yu* <gerund as an object>, practice doing something.”

Because of both teacher's and students' low language proficiency, when explaining grammar in a traditional Chinese ELT classroom, teachers like to use Chinese. For example:

“*ran hou ne, hai ke yi biao shi you xing de dong xi, ni dao shang dian qu mai xie, xuan ze yi shuang xie ye ke yi yong* <Then, it can also indicate some concrete things. For example, if you want to buy a pair a shoes in a shop, you can use> choose.”

In this case, the only reason for the teacher to use Chinese to give examples instead of English is that Chinese comes out of her mouth easily.

Older generation teachers also used the mother tongue to provide interpretation of a reading text. For instance:

Teacher B:

“Equipment for adding sound to film had not yet been developed. The development of films with sound became a problem for Chaplin, as he was uncertain about making films with dialogue’. *na ge dialogue shi zhi de shi pei bai bing bu shi zhi de dui hua*, ‘be uncertain about’, we have learnt before, be certain about, be certain of, be sure about, be sure of, *que xin, na mo* uncertain *shi ta de fan yi ci, na bu zhun mei ba wo*, I am uncertain about my success, *guan yu wo de cheng gong wo mei you ba wo wo mei you ba wo cheng gong.*”

In this paragraph, the teacher explained in Chinese several difficulties including vocabulary, dialogue, and the sentence pattern of ‘be uncertain about’, with the purpose of interpreting the original sentence in order to help students understand it.

We found many of these kinds of examples in the transcript of Lesson B, because the teacher was typically traditional in her teaching methodology.

Teachers from the younger and the middle generations also used the mother tongue when explaining new vocabulary and grammar. For example:

Teacher D (explaining vocabulary):

“Lighting Festival means *yuan xiao jie, deng jie*”

Teacher E (explaining grammar):

“be angry *biao shi yi zhong zhuang tai* <in a fettle>, get angry *qiang diao yi zhong bian hua* <emphasize a change>, (...) *suo yi wo men shi yong le* <this is why we use> get angry. Any question?”

Teacher E (giving instructions):

“Yeah, ok. Now this time please open your books and turn to page 86. This is a very easy dialogue. Now please read it again, *da jia zai du yi bian*, <please read it again>. If you have any question, please let me know.”

The teacher used Chinese to give instructions in order to make sure everyone was clear on what to do next. It can be a little confusing if a teacher speaks in English, but most of the students can still understand. The only reason we can imagine to explain this phenomenon is that Chinese was easy for the teacher to use without effort, and at that time, the teacher cared more about the students with extremely low English language proficiency.

Teacher A (explaining the rules of a game, activity, or task):

“*You ji ge gui ze da jia ji zhu a* <There are some rules that you have to keep in mind to play this game>. Number one: *ni de zhe ge guo qu shi yi ding yao shuo dui le* <You must say the past tense of the verb correctly>. Number two: *qian mian ni chong fu qian mian tong xue de ju zi yi ding yao zheng que* <They must repeat the previous sentences correctly >. Clear? Number three: *si kao shi jian bu de chao guo wu miao zhong* <You cannot pause more than five seconds>.”

Because of students' low English language proficiency, when explaining the rules of an activity, the teachers in junior high schools always used Chinese. In this way, it was easy for the students to understand, and at the same time, it saved a lot of precious class time.

Younger generation teachers also used the mother tongue when repeating what a student or students had said:

Teacher C:

“I'm fine too, thank you. Ok, one of you said *wo bu hao* <I am not fine>. Why?”

When a teacher wanted to repeat what a student had said, he or she usually repeated the original sentence without any change in order to follow up on a question. If he or she changed the original question, the problem may be changed as well.

A third way these teachers used the mother tongue was when interpreting what he/she had said:

Teacher A:

“No, do you understand him? I can understand him. Sit down please. Sit down please. Thank you. I can understand it. But maybe we can say the sentence better. He said, “I was look books”. “I was look books”, do you understand the meaning? *Ni neng li jie ta de yi si ma? Qi shi ta shi xiang shuo...* <Do you understand him? In fact, he wants to say...>”

When a teacher said something in English and the students gave no feedback, the teacher interpreted it into Chinese in order to let all the students be sure of what was going on, especially the students with low English language proficiency.

It is not difficult to see that there was a trend for teachers from the older generation to use the mother tongue to explain the textbook clearly, while the teachers from the other two generations used the mother tongue to let students have a better understanding of the target language and to prompt more interaction and communication with students - in other words, to get feedback from the students. As was mentioned in the literature review, teacher-student two-way interaction is a very important characteristic of CLT and TBL, so it can be judged that the teachers from the younger and middle generations were more communicative in their teaching methodology; in contrast, the teachers from the older generation were more traditional in their teaching methods.

The amount of L1 in class: A comparison of the amount of use of the mother tongue in different transactions is presented in a table in Appendix 7. The table reveals two interesting points:

1. The overall percentage of mother tongue used by the five teachers in their lessons was 31. Respectively from teacher A to E they used 21, 57, 30, 1, and 7 percent of the time in their lessons. It was clear that, in the lessons, teachers used English most of the class time, except teacher B, who was from the older generation. It was found that the two middle-aged teachers used less Chinese than the two youngest teachers, which was a bit confusing. This may have been because the two lessons taught by the middle-aged teachers were more like ‘live shows’ than those by the younger teachers. Perhaps teachers D and E had prepared the lessons in English beforehand, and they tried not to speak English in class in purpose. Perhaps it had something to do with self-confidence, or with their comfort level with an observer present. Also, the middle-aged teachers had more experience, which could mean that they had taught this lesson before and had had a chance to refine it.
2. Another point which is worth mentioning is that out of the four lessons which had a greeting part at the beginning, three teachers did not use any Chinese in the greeting. The exception was teacher C, who was met some problems and questions that were worth further discussing with students in Chinese because of the students' low English language proficiency. In Chinese ELT classrooms, greetings are usually extremely simple and have become a classroom routine, done in English.

Teacher-student interaction

Teacher-student interaction is regarded as one of the most important distinctive features distinguishing CLT/TBL and the traditional Chinese teaching methods. Actually, there are two types of interaction in CLT and TBL: teacher <-> student and student <-> student. What is worthwhile discussing in my data is the phenomenon in which students very often kept silent when being asked questions by the teacher. For example:

Teacher D: (...) now go on

S: (silent)

Teacher E: Half past ten, do you think so? Half past ten?

Ss: (silent)

Teacher B: Consider *hai ke yi gen shen mo jie gou ne* <In what other ways is consider used>?

Ss: (silent)

Based on the examples above, it is clear that this phenomenon mostly happened in the lessons taught by the teachers from the middle and older generations. No doubt there were students who always knew the answer and were confident in their English but remained silent through a sense of modesty. The literature shows that a lot of research has been done to answer the question, "Why does this happen?" In fact, this phenomenon does not happen because the students do not want to participate, nor is it a negative attitude towards English as a medium of communication, but because of students' previous learning experiences and cultural attitudes towards learning. Liu and Littlewood (1997) gave the reasons below for this phenomenon:

1. Lack of experience in speaking English
2. Lack of confidence in spoken English
3. Anxiety from high performance expectations
4. Perception of learner role

Besides these factors, time is another important consideration. Generally speaking, EFL teachers in China plan to do a lot of things in a 40-minute lesson because of pressure from the heavy ELT curriculum and syllabus. In class, teachers aim to save as much time as possible for doing something else. Therefore, whenever they ask students questions, no matter how simple or difficult, they do not give students enough time to think about the answers and brainstorm. In this situation, very often before students can fully prepare for or get the answers to the teacher's questions, the teacher goes on to the next step by telling students the answer directly.

VI. Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

New findings

First, as discussed previously, it can be seen that all five of the teachers spoke Chinese in ELT but with different purposes: the teacher from the older generation used L1 in the classroom to interpret a text from a course book, including explaining vocabulary and grammar and giving examples. On the other hand, the teachers from the younger and the middle generations used L1 to build students' vocabulary, explain grammar points, give instructions, explain the rules of class activities, repeat what students said, and repeat what they themselves had said in order to make the lesson more interactive and motivating. It was also obvious that the teacher from the older generation used much more of the mother tongue than those from the younger and the middle generations. This had something to do with the target students' English language proficiency.

For example, teachers A and C were from the younger generation and teachers D and E were from the middle generation, but teacher D used less mother tongue in class than the other three teachers, probably because the target students in lesson D were senior and the target students in the other three lessons were junior. The senior students' English language proficiency was higher than those in the junior schools. Another point worth mentioning is that in the class routine parts of the lessons, such as greeting at the beginning of a lesson, teachers whether old or young usually spoke English instead of Chinese since the language was very simple. From this research, it appears that the younger teachers used L1 more effectively and efficiently than the older teachers.

Second, lessons A, C, D, and E, taught by teachers from the younger and the middle generations, were more interactive than lesson B taught by the teacher from the older generation. However, lessons D and E taught by the teachers from the middle generation were less interactive than lessons A and C. In lesson E, the only interaction pattern was when the teacher asked students questions and then students answered them, and in lesson D, though the teacher organized some interactive activities in class, most of the time the students kept silent rather than really discussing what they were asked to do. The most interactive lesson was lesson A, taught by the teacher from the younger generation, because there were various interaction patterns in her lesson: T<->S, S<->S and the combination of the two. In this case, the atmosphere in lessons A and C was more enlivened

than in the other three lessons. Therefore, the trend was that the younger the teacher, the more interactive his or her lesson was.

Third, the analysis presented in 5.4 showed that generally the teachers from the younger and the middle generations placed more emphasis on fluency, learner-centredness, active learning, student control of turn-taking, meaningful language use, spontaneous use of language, and learner autonomy (indicators of CLT and TBL) than on accuracy, teacher-centredness, passive learning, teacher control of turn-taking, meaningless language use, predictable use of language, and teacher control, which were demonstrated by the teacher from the older generation. In practice, teachers from the younger generation did not really do all the CLT and TBL indicators mentioned above, but at least they did most of them and did more than the older teachers did. Therefore, this implies that the younger teachers seemed more likely to use CLT or TBL in their classroom teaching than the older teachers.

Fourth, teachers A and C were from the younger generation and graduated from a university with high prestige. Teachers D and E were from the middle generation: teacher D graduated from a university with low prestige and teacher E from a university with medium prestige. Teacher B was from the older generation and graduated from a university with low prestige. Teacher E, who graduated from a better university than teacher D, used a less communicative methodology than teacher D. This probably had something to do with the teacher's own English language proficiency and experience in teaching English as a foreign language, and the target students' English language proficiency as well. Based on the above analysis, (the younger the teacher, the more communicative his or her methodology), it can be judged as a general picture that the teachers who graduated from good universities were more likely to use CLT or TBL in their classroom teaching than those from the universities with low prestige.

In short, there was a lot of evidence in both the questionnaires and the lesson transcripts to prove that EFL teachers in China are beginning to use a more communicative method in their classroom teaching. In particular, younger teachers are more communicative in their teaching methodology. However, we could still find the traditional Chinese English teaching methods in the lesson transcripts, even in the lessons taught by the younger teachers. Because of the real Chinese educational context (the examination-oriented curriculum), it is impossible for EFL teachers in China to ignore traditional methods totally. Some experts have argued that EFL teachers in China should combine Western teaching methodologies with their own, as purely Western ones do not work effectively in the Asian context, such as in China (Rao, 2002). Therefore, EFL teachers in China should be encouraged to be creative in their teaching methodologies.

Limitations of this study

This study can only reflect the implementation of CLT and TBL in China to some degree because the data were collected in only two of the provinces in China. To have a clearer picture of the implementation of TBL or CLT in China, data from questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations need to be collected in every province in China.

In the analysis of the questionnaire results, three hypotheses were made:

1. Younger teachers are more likely to use CLT and TBL in their classroom teaching; on the other hand, older teachers are more traditional in their teaching approaches.
2. The teachers who graduated from key universities or colleges in China prefer CLT and TBL more in their day-to-day teaching than those from colleges with low prestige.
3. The teachers from teachers' colleges and normal universities are more likely to adopt CLT and TBL in their real-life teaching than those from non-teacher-training universities.

Only the first two hypotheses could be confirmed during the analysis of the lesson transcripts. Unfortunately, the last one could not be explored in this paper because of the unfortunate selection of the data of lesson recordings; no lesson taught by teachers from the non-teacher-training universities was chosen. This academic conclusion can only be left for further research.

The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods, and the data was obtained through questionnaires and classroom observation. However, the shortcomings of using questionnaires, such as the length and depth of the survey, obstructed the collection of detailed information from informants, and the response rate was low. The disadvantages of using audio recording were their lack of clarity and the absence of gestures, behaviors, and actions.

After the classes were recorded, I did not ask the teachers why they designed and organized the activities they used. Though I tried my best to point out the most plausible reasons for what was happening in the lessons in my interpretation of the lesson transcripts, a little bias and inaccuracy could still not be avoided. Thus, interviewing teachers could be considered in a future study.

As was mentioned in the methodology section, the questionnaire was not designed in particular for this dissertation, but was adopted from another TESOL organization. In this case, I collected some non-pertinent

information and, at the same time, it took the participants more time to fill in the questionnaire. Therefore, to collect more authentic data, a questionnaire should be designed more precisely than the one used in this paper.

References

- [1]. Adamson, B., and Morris, P. (1997). The English curriculum in the People's Republic of China. *Comparative Education Review*, 41, 3-26.
- [2]. Anderson, J. (1993). Is a communicative approach practical for teaching English in China? Pros and cons. *System*, 21(4), 471-80.
- [3]. Brown, H. D. (1994a). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Regents.
- [4]. Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Longman.
- [5]. Cortazzi, M., and Jin, L. X. (1996a). English teaching and learning in China. *Language Teaching*, 29, 61-80.
- [6]. Gong, Y. (1999). To have a good grasp of communicative teaching. In Foreign Language Teaching Special Committee of China's Education Society (Ed.), *Foreign language teaching: Theory and practice* (pp. 113-122). Beijing, China: People's Education Press.
- [7]. Grant, H., and Liu, Y. (1992). *Junior English for China (books I, II, and III) and The Teachers' Book*. Beijing: People's Education Press and Longman.
- [8]. Habermas, J. (1970). Towards a theory of communicative competence. *Inquiry*, 13, 360-375.
- [9]. Hu, G. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 15(2), 93-105.
- [10]. Hui, L. (1997). New bottles, old wine: Communicative language teaching in China. *Forum*, 35(4), 38.
- [11]. Johnson, K. (1982). *Communicative syllabus design and methodology*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- [12]. Larsen-Freeman, D. (1986). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [13]. Li, X. (1984). In defense of the communicative approach. *ELT Journal*, 38(1), 2-13.
- [14]. Liao, X. Q. (2000). Communicative language teaching innovation in China: Difficulties and solutions. ED443294.
- [15]. Liu, D. (1998). Ethnocentrism in TESOL: Teacher education and neglected needs of international TESOL students. *ELT Journal*, 52(1), 3-10.
- [16]. Liu, N. F., and Littlewood, W. (1997). Why do many students appear reluctant to participate in classroom learning discourse? *System*, 25(3), 371-84.
- [17]. Maley, A. (1982). Foreign language learning and the search for a new paradigm. *Language Learning and Communication*, 1, 123-35.
- [18]. Maley, A. (1984). On chalk and cheese, babies and bathwater and squared circles: Can traditional and communicative approaches be reconciled? In Larson, P., Judd, E. and Messerschmitt, D. (Eds.), *On TESOL' 84: A brave new world for TESOL: Selected papers from the Eighteenth Annual Convention of TESOL, Houston, TX* (pp. 6-11).
- [19]. Martin, P. W. (1999). Bilingual unpacking of monolingual texts in two primary classrooms in Brunei Darussalam. *Language and Education*, 13(1), 38-58.
- [20]. McGroarty, M. (1984). Some meanings of communicative competence for second language students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 18, 257-272.
- [21]. Ng, C., and Tang, E. (1997). Teachers' needs in the process of EFL reform in China—a report from Shanghai. *Perspectives*, 9(1), 63-85.
- [22]. Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- [23]. Rao, Z. (2002). Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom. *System*, 30(1), 85-105.
- [24]. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [25]. Ross, H. A. (1992). Foreign language education as a barometer of modernization. In R. Hayhoe (Ed.), *Education and modernization: The Chinese experience* (pp. 239-54). Oxford: Pergamon.
- [26]. Spada, N., and Frohlich, M. (1995). *COLT: Communication Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme Coding Conventions and Applications*. Sydney: NCELTR (National Center for English Language Teaching and Research).
- [27]. State Education Development Commission of China. (1992). *Syllabus of teaching English for compulsory education in junior school of nine-year system*. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- [28]. Sun, G. and Cheng, L. (2000). From context to curriculum: A case study of communicative language teaching in China. ED443295.
- [29]. Tang, J. (2002). Using the L1 in the English classroom. *Forum*, 40(1), 36-43.
- [30]. Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [31]. Williams, M., and Burden, Robert. L. (1997). Psychology for language teachers: A social constructive approach. ED411699.
- [32]. Yalden, J. (1987). Principles of course design for language teaching: New directions in language teaching. ED356627.
- [33]. Yu, L. (2001). Communicative language teaching in China: Progress and resistance. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(1), 194-97.

RuiFeng Lyu. "Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Chinese EFL Classrooms." *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 11(2), (2021): pp. 22-41.