

個案研究：溝通式英語教學法在台灣 A CASE STUDY : COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TAIWAN

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摘 要

本研究的目的是想要探索台灣國中教育者對於新的以溝通式教學法為基礎的英語教與政策實行的成效及看法，在政策與現實教育現況做個橋樑。本研究採質性研究藉以提供有關台灣中學英文教育者有關溝通式英語教育政策的觀點及實行成效。受訪者包含七位國中英語教師及兩位國中校長，受訪教師同時接受課室觀察。研究結果出自於受訪結果，觀察筆記，及政府文件的三角驗證。結果顯示全部受訪者對溝通式教學法持正面評價，雙峰現象是當中一個顯著的負面結果。此外，老師們在實行新的以溝通式教學法為基礎的英語教育政策時面臨數個困難。

關鍵詞：溝通式教學法、英語教育

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore Taiwanese junior high school educators' perspectives on the efficacy and implementation of the New Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)-based English Education Policy, bridging the gap between new government policy and the reality of teaching practice. This study utilized qualitative research methods to provide data about the opinions of Taiwanese junior high school English educators regarding CLT and how the new CLT-based policy is being implemented. The participants included seven Taiwanese junior high school English teachers, and two junior high school principals. In addition, all of the teachers were observed while conducting several lessons. Themes were extracted from the interviews, field notes, and government documents and were then triangulated. Results indicated that most of the nine educators agreed that CLT is an effective approach for teaching English. On the other hand, they believe that the implementation of the policy has several negative effects on students' English language learning. One of these negative effects is the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon, which divides students into a high and low proficiency group. In addition to having negative effects on students, the adoption of a CLT-based policy caused difficulties for teachers. They experienced a number of implementation challenges, including: (a) being restricted by large class sizes in which students' English proficiency levels varied, (b) feeling pressured by the demands of the grammar-based exam-oriented teaching schedule, (c) having an insufficient command of spoken English, (d) having limited teaching hours and resources, and (e) realizing that CLT is unsuitable for the Taiwanese EFL context. Participants felt that in-service teacher training and support should be improved to help teachers implement the new policy.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching、English Education

INTRODUCTION

To raise Taiwanese students' communicative competence in English, Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) has made changes in its English education policy. Among the more important moves in this direction were the 2001 decisions to introduce English learning at the elementary school level and the elimination of form-focused senior high school and college entrance examinations that became effective in 2001 and 2002, respectively (Savignon & Wang, 2003). In addition, in order to reflect features of communicative-based teaching and to guide material development and classroom practice, the MOE has published new curricula for English teaching in both junior and senior high schools (Wang, 2000).

Attempts to introduce Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) into EFL contexts on EFL countries' own initiatives and through international aid projects have prompted many innovations in L2 education. In general, such innovations have had a low rate of success (Brindley & Hood, 1990, as cited in Li, 1998). As difficult as it is, many EFL countries, including Taiwan, are still striving to introduce CLT, believing that it will improve English teaching in those places.

Why has CLT been so difficult to implement in EFL classrooms? How appropriate is CLT for EFL contexts? Do gaps exist between new government policies and the reality of teaching practice in terms of pedagogical goals? In order to answer all of the above questions, the author conducted a case study of Taiwanese junior high school teachers and students to investigate how CLT is implemented in Taiwan. Moreover, the author sought to discover potential problems with CLT's application so as to offer suggestions for improving English teaching in Taiwan.

Purpose of the Study

Given the problems that Taiwanese EFL learners present, language teachers should be concerned about providing students with an environment in which they can interact with others using the target language. The author found no previous studies which focus specifically on junior high schools. Therefore, the researcher aimed to study the efficacy of using CLT methods in junior high school EFL classrooms in Taiwan. This study proposed to answer four major research questions:

1. What are Taiwanese junior high school English teachers' opinions about the new Taiwanese government's CLT English policy?
2. To what extent do Taiwanese junior high school English teachers follow the government's guidelines for CLT English education?
3. What difficulties to teachers encounter when adopting CLT while teaching English?
4. What kind of support or professional development are Taiwanese junior high school teachers receiving to assist them in switching to CLT English education?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

CLT first emerged in Europe in the 1970's and flourished in the 1980s. European applied linguists saw the need for language instruction to focus on communicative competence rather than on the mastery of structures alone. Hymes (1967, 1972) was the first to use the term 'communicative competence' as being "that aspect of our competence that enables us to

convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts” (Brown, 2000). Subsequently, researchers have vigorously attempted to define and redefine the construct of communicative competence.

Canale and Swain (1980)'s definition of communicative competence is widely accepted. Savignon (1997) bases her model of communicative competence upon their theoretical framework. She divides this construct into four components:

1. *Grammatical competence*: Knowledge of the sentence structure of a language.
2. *Sociolinguistic competence*: The ability to use language in a given communicative context, taking into account the roles of the participants, the settings, and the purposes of the interaction.
3. *Discourse competence*: The ability to recognize different patterns of discourse and to connect sentences or utterances to an overall theme or topic; the ability to infer the meaning of large units of spoken or written texts; also called textual competence.
4. *Strategic competence*: The ability to compensate for imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules or limiting factors in their application such as fatigue, distraction, and inattention. Also, the effective use of coping strategies to sustain or enhance communication (Savignon, 1997).

In sum, according to Larsen-Freeman (2000), “Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication” (p. 121). She also affirms that:

perhaps the greatest contribution of CLT is asking teachers to look closely at what is involved in communication. If teachers intend for students to use the target language, then they must truly understand all that being communicatively competent entails. (Larsen-Freeman; pp. 134-135)

Paulston (1992) further confirms that English is the major world language used today. While the English that is spoken in the U.S. has its own communicative competence rules, the English used as an international language typically functions with the rules of its native speakers.

Communicative Language Teaching

CLT first emerged in Europe in the 1970s and flourished in the 1980s. European applied linguists saw the need for language instructors to focus on communicative competence rather than on the mastery of structures alone. The term ‘communicative competence’ was first used by Hymes, who referred to it as “that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts” (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 246). Since then, researchers have worked diligently to define and redefine the construct of communicative competence. The most widely accepted definition is Canale and Swain’s (1980) version, which specifies that four different components make up the construct of communicative competence: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

In reaction to both the Grammar Translation Method and the Audiolingual Method, CLT aims at developing language learners’ communicative competence. It features interactive learning activities

that involve language use in meaningful contexts. According to Savignon and Berns (1984), a communicative classroom context is used to create activities that teach students how to react in a real-world situation. CLT has the following basic features:

1. Students learn to communicate through interaction in the target language; CLT activities engage learners in conversation, discussion, role play, and other meaningful exchanges. Authentic materials are often adapted for use in a communicative language classroom.
2. The traditional roles of teachers and students are altered in a CLT classroom. Teachers talk less and listen more. They are the facilitators of their students' learning (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). During interactive class activities, students do most of the speaking. Due to the increased responsibility to participate in classroom activities, students gain more opportunities to practice the target language.

CLT has developed procedures for teaching the four basic language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). In a CLT classroom, students do not simply learn linguistic structures and grammar rules; they learn how to use the language properly in daily life situations. Ellis (1994) indicates that, "communicative competence consists of the knowledge that users of a language have internalized to enable them to understand and produce messages in the language—it entails both linguistic competence and pragmatic competence" (p. 696).

CLT stresses the importance of providing language learners with more opportunities to interact directly with the target language, "to acquire it by using

it rather than learning it by studying it" (Taylor, 1987, p. 45). Language learning is treated as a process similar to that by which children acquire their first language. Many second language acquisition researchers argue that CLT better reflects the nature of language as well as the language acquisition process compared to other language teaching approaches (Liao, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). These communicative processes are information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction.

Research has shown that CLT is effective in promoting students' confidence and fluency in speech and writing (Liang, 1995; Lightbown & Spada, 1993). In this approach, all classroom activities, materials, and instructional strategies emphasize communication as a way to learn. Communicative classroom activities, such as cooperative learning and problem-solving tasks, can motivate learners to communicate as they work in groups and pairs. As Fotos (1998) indicates, interactive communicative tasks that are based on a pair or group participation pattern give learners the opportunity to engage in meaning-focused interaction in which they must both comprehend and produce the target language. These meaningful practice activities are usually connected with the real world and are designed to foster real communication—both oral and written—among the learners. It is believed that, when learning activities couple the focus on meaning with real life activities, the authenticity of the language used by teachers and students will increase (Brumfit, 1984; Johnson, 1995).

Some scholars recommend that the information gap technique be used in all communicative classroom activities (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989; Liao, 1997). In particular, Liao (1997) upholds the value of the use of information gap activities. He criticizes teachers for asking questions that have one predetermined answer because it creates an environment in which "students

lack opportunities to create and improve the language...Thus, communication becomes the echo of previously memorized dialogues” (p. 3). For Liao, questions whose answers are known by both teachers and students are not real classroom communication activities, for they introduce no real information gap. Furthermore, Cadorath and Harris (1998) greatly promote unplanned teacher-student interaction in communicative classroom activities. They hold that carefully planned information gap activities, which are designed to produce yes/no questions and short answers, fail to elicit turn-taking initiatives from teachers and students. They stress the fact that unplanned teacher-student interaction allows for the introduction of locally relevant topics and news with greater immediacy and flexibility than the course book can offer, thereby introducing a more authentic linguistic and social life into the classroom.

Since its spread in the 1980s, however, CLT has received growing criticism for its “linguistic content base” and its “pedagogical treatment of linguistic forms” (Celce-murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1997, p. 142). Celce-Murcia et al. note that without firm linguistic guidelines, various interpretations of CLT have appeared. Dublin and Olshtain (1986) concur that the “word ‘communicative’ has been applied so broadly that it has come to have different meanings for different people” (p. 69). The lack of a linguistic base also leads to problems in the assessment of CLT learning outcomes, as Savignon (1990) argues, because the existing communicative testing methods fail to provide sufficient precision. Celce-Murcia et al. further state:

Any language teaching approach must be accompanied by language tests that adequately measure the learning outcomes promoted by the particular programs; otherwise, the

washback effect of tests drawn from other approaches or methods will undermine the program’s effectiveness. (p. 143)

Other critics focus on the pedagogical treatment of linguistic forms in CLT, as Celce-Murcia et al. (1997) also note. Accordingly, many CLT proponents neglect conscious development of linguistic competence and accept the premise that linguistic form can be acquired subconsciously and will emerge as long as learners are given comprehensible input and engage in communicative activities (Krashen, 1976, 1981, 1985). As Schmidt (1991) criticizes, “linguistic form is learned incidentally rather than as a result of focusing directly on linguistic form” (p. 122). A number of researchers have addressed this issue by applying a range of conceptual frameworks: consciousness raising (Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1985), language awareness (Sharwood Smith, 1993), explicit instruction in second language acquisition (Ellis, 1994), and focus on form (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Spada, 1997).

Teaching Difficulties Incurred when Adopting CLT

“Communicative language teaching in what we might broadly categorize as an EFL context is clearly a greater challenge for students and teachers” (Brown, 2001, p. 117). Studies show that teachers face numerous challenges when adopting CLT. The following are the teaching difficulties incurred when adopting CLT.

Grammar-based Exam-Oriented Teaching

A factor that hinders the implementation of CLT is grammar-based exam-oriented teaching. Ellis (1994),

Li (1998), Li (2004), Liao (2000), and Rao (2002) found that grammar-based exams, which concentrate exclusively on reading, writing, and grammar, have a negative effect on the implementation of CLT. As Savignon (1991) notes, curricular innovations are being undone by a failure to make equivalent changes in evaluation. In Chang and Huang's (2001) study, teachers list that helping students to receive higher scores on the college entrance examinations is their first priority in teaching.

Limited Teaching Hours

Previous studies (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Su, 2006; Wang, 2004) show that limited teaching hours and tight schedules are difficulties teachers encounter when implementing CLT. Similarly, Chu and Geary (1997) found that junior high school teachers were reluctant to take the time to implement newer methods because they already felt overwhelmed by their demanding curricula and examination schedules.

Student's Diverse Levels of English Proficiency

Some studies (Li, 1998; Wang, 2004) show that it is difficult for teachers to conduct oral communicative activities with students who have limited English proficiency. In these studies, teachers stopped using CLT when students who had limited English proficiency could not perform certain communicative activities.

Teachers' Insufficient English Speaking Ability

As indicated in several studies, teachers' limited English-speaking ability constrains them from adopting CLT in the classroom (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1998;

Li, 2004; Liao, 2000; Penner, 1995). Many non-native speaker (NNS) teachers are highly proficient in English grammar, reading, and writing; however, they claim their spoken English is not sufficient enough for them to use CLT. However, the teachers in this study spoke English fluently in their classrooms.

CLT's Unsuitability in the EFL Context

In the EFL context, "since students may have difficulties in seeing the relevance of learning English, intrinsic motivation is a big issue" (Brown, 2001, p. 117). Some studies also found that CLT was inadequate for EFL teaching (Anderson, 1993; Li, 1998). Students' immediate use of the language may seem far removed from their own circumstances, and classroom hours may be the only part of the day when they are exposed to English (Brown, 2001). Hird (1995) reported that outside of the classroom, "there are almost no real-life communicative target language needs for the EFL learner, especially in China" (p. 23). On the other hand, "the ESL learner has no way of avoiding them" (Hird, p. 22). In addition, Burnaby and Sun (1989) showed that Chinese teachers believed the communicative approach was only applicable in China for those students who planned to go to an English-speaking country.

Large Class Size and Classroom Management

Burnaby and Sun (1989), Ellis (1994), Li (1998), and Li (2004) reported that large class size was a factor that hindered teachers from adopting CLT because use of oral English and close monitoring of class activities for each group are essential in this method.

New English Education Policy

Faced with the increasing demand for English learning and teaching innovation, in 1993 and 1994 the MOE launched a new English curriculum for junior and senior high schools, which shifted the focus from skill to communication orientated instruction. The new curriculum posited communication-oriented teaching as the primary principle for classroom instruction and high school textbook writing. In 1999 the MOE revised the curriculum guide for grades 1-9 that had been promulgated in 1993 and 1994. The new curriculum guide (also called the Nine-year Joint Curriculum Plan) stresses that the goals of teaching English are to enhance oral and written communication and to increase cultural awareness.

The new CLT-based English Education Policy is under the Nine-Year Joint Curricula Plan for Elementary and Junior High Schools. It became effective in September 2001. The Nine-Year Joint Curricula Plan includes integrating separate school subjects into seven major subject areas, concentrating on ten basic learning capacities, instituting English instruction for all fifth graders, and shortening the school year to 200 days per year at five days per week. Based on this new curriculum, English is listed together with Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, and other local dialects as one of the subject areas called Language Arts (Chern, 2004).

As declared by the MOE (1998), the reasons for implementing English instruction in elementary schools were: (a) to develop students' international perspective, (b) to capitalize on students' critical period in language learning, (c) to optimize the timing of the implementation of the new curriculum, and (d) to

follow the trends of a new era and fulfill parents' expectations.

The English curriculum guidelines of the Nine-Year Joint Curricula Plan specified the curriculum goals as being a way to: (a) help students develop basic communication skills in English, (b) cultivate students' interests in English and develop in them a better method of learning English, and (c) promote students' understanding of local and foreign cultures and customs (Ministry of Education, 2000). According to Yeh and Shih (2000), the characteristics of the English curriculum guidelines include the adoption of a communicative approach to teaching, a direction that departs from a traditional structure-based language teaching approach for students.

Two stages of pedagogical emphasis on English instruction in the Nine-Year Joint Curricula Plan are identified, with the elementary stage focusing more on developing students' listening and speaking abilities in English and the junior high school stage focusing on developing and integrating the four language skills. Both stages emphasize developing students' interests in learning English by providing a natural and meaningful learning environment in the new English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum.

As stated earlier, no standardized, nationally mandated textbooks were available either at the primary or secondary levels after the implementation of the new curriculum. Textbooks have recently been developed by private publishers and are reviewed by the National Institute of Compilation and Translation. On the market now are 15 different sets of textbooks from which elementary school teachers can choose and which were approved by the NICT (Ministry of Education, 2001). The new curriculum was simultaneously introduced in September 2001 to

students in elementary and junior high schools; therefore, three versions of the same textbooks were in use in the 2001 school year (Chern, 2004).

Research Methodology

This study utilizes qualitative research methods to provide ample and descriptive data about what is happening in Taiwanese middle school English education classes. The form of qualitative research adopted in this study, alternatively known as naturalistic, ethnographic, or interpretive research, is of current interest to researchers in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field. Providing an alternative to quantitative SLA studies, interpretive qualitative researchers view language acquisition not only as an individualistic mental process, but also as one embedded in the socio-cultural context in which it occurs (Davis, 1995).

In this framework, the goal of research is to understand the underlying perspectives of those individuals being studied and the meanings of their actions. The aim is to generate theory, rather than to verify it, in a naturalistic research design. Applied to the study of CLT-oriented English education, this paradigm allows for an exploration of Taiwanese middle school English teachers' perceptions about new English education policies in Taiwan.

Participants

The participants for this research study were nine Taiwanese junior high school English educators, including seven middle school English teachers, and two junior high school principals. These educators were experienced in the Taiwanese government's New CLT-based English Education Policy. In addition, the seven

teachers were asked to commit to the process of research for the duration of the study (e.g., classroom observation) in order to prevent the loss of subjects.

Interviews

In-depth interviews with these ten participants served to shed light on how educators are implementing Taiwanese government's New CLT-based English Education Policy. The interviews were designed to elicit these participants' perceptions of themselves as teachers, their views of language and language learning, and their perspectives on the quality and quantity of professional development they received to change to using the new CLT-based English education approach. All of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

Observations

Observation of second-language classrooms is intended to capture the essence of what transpires when the observer is present. Observers note whether or not their presence is especially useful in capturing a broad picture of a lesson or in focusing on a particular aspect of that lesson (Day, 1990). In this study, each of the seven teachers was observed within the time frame of their regular classes. Since every instructor taught different classes and different grades, the author observed at least five classes with each teacher for one week. In addition, the researcher's role in the classroom was that of a non-participant observer.

The students in the classrooms ranged in age from 13 to 15 years (first grade to third grade in the Taiwanese middle school system). Each class size consisted of about 30 students so that roughly 90 students were observed. In addition, their English

proficiency level was intermediate, as they had basic knowledge of grammar rules and vocabulary and had been learning English from the age of 11 (fifth grade in the Taiwanese elementary school system). Furthermore, a complete ethnographic observation often goes beyond observing the teacher, students, and the interaction between them. It also includes information about the classroom such as its size, seating arrangement, and physical equipment (Day, 1990).

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Teachers' Views of the New CLT Based

English Education Policy

Most interviewees have positive opinions about CLT, the central philosophy of the new English education policy. The results are in accordance with findings in Wang (2000) that high school teachers in Taiwan generally have positive beliefs about communication-oriented teaching. On the other hand, some of them also think this policy has various negative effects on students' English language learning. In addition, most of them feel that the new policy creates the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon, a very serious problem related to the policy's implementation.

Positive Opinions about the New Policy

Most of the interviewees think that implementation of CLT in the curriculum can benefit students. The following are the positive opinions about the new policy: "it improves students' listening and speaking ability," "it is more useful to students' daily lives," "it has improved teaching materials," and "the earlier the students learn English, the better English

they acquire." Therefore, the researcher concludes that junior high school educators accept and approve the direction and central philosophy of the New CLT-based Education Policy.

Negative Opinions about the New Policy

Although participants offered several positive opinions, they noted only two negative opinions regarding the Taiwanese government's New CLT-based English Education Policy: "there is no panacea in language teaching, so CLT should not be presented as one," and they mentioned "the mismatch between a CLT curriculum and a grammar-oriented exam."

These findings are in line with Chang and Huang (2001), who investigated the beliefs and practices of high school teachers in Taiwan. They surveyed 119 English teachers in Taipei's public senior schools. They found that, although the teachers as a group have relatively positive beliefs about CLT and the need to develop students' four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, they were not certain that CLT was helpful in developing of students' grammatical competence.

The researcher interprets this theme to mean that the Taiwanese government is looking for one teaching approach that will be a 'cure-all'. It is not considering the possibility that the use of multiple approaches might better solve the language education problem. Doing so might also manifest fewer side effects and incur a smaller backlash than might a 'cure-all' approach. In addition, a partial explanation for "the mismatch between a CLT curriculum and a grammar-oriented exam" may be that the Taiwanese government implemented the new policy without considering the implications of this mismatch. Although these negative voices may or may not make up the majority of

opinions, the Taiwanese government should respect and listen attentively to the voice of the minority.

Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon

The new policy causes the unique Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon, about which all interviewees were most concerned. The researcher did not find this phenomenon in the related literature. Occurring within a classroom setting, the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon results in the widening of the proficiency gap that exists between the lower and higher ranked student groups.

Causes of the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon. Most interviewees think the Double-Curve Distribution is a social environment phenomenon caused by the implementation of the new CLT-based policy. It avoids assigning grades at the elementary level in an attempt to both reduce pressure on students and to increase their interest in the English language. Without grades, however, some students are unmotivated to perform well, lose interest in the subject, and choose not to pursue English in junior high.

One of the teachers pointed out that those elementary students whose parents support them are more interested and achieve better in English classes. Often, as one of the principles noted, these parents are in a higher socioeconomic class, which allows them to send their children to cram schools. Conversely, children whose parents cannot, or are not willing to, support them fall behind the other students.

The Double-Curve Distribution is an unexpected consequence of the new CLT-based English Policy. This trend indicates that the number of students who fall behind the standard proficiency levels is increasing.

Using English skills in the workplace is becoming a current international trend, so students with poor English language skills might be at a disadvantage in a competitive global job market. The researcher believes the government needs to solve the problem immediately to prevent it from getting worse.

In addition, since the Double-Curve Distribution is a phenomenon of the social environment caused by the implementation of the new policy, the researcher suggests that the Taiwanese government take the social environment into consideration when attempting to improve the policy. For example, even though the government has primarily been concerned with the effects of student-teacher interactions on students' English acquisition, research shows that broader contextual factors play a role in the CLT learning process. One such factor is that parents' expectations strongly influence the quality of student learning. Further, this study showed that moderating factors in the environment significantly affect the outcomes of the new policy. Thus, the Taiwanese government should increase its consideration of various contextual factors when implementing and evaluating new education policies, as they may precipitate effects inconsistent with expectations.

2. Teaching Difficulties Incurred when Adopting CLT

No interviewees admitted to fully adhering to the guidelines of the new CLT-based English Education Policy, as they encountered several difficulties when teaching according to this method.

Grammar-based Exam-Oriented Teaching

By observing classrooms and conducting interviews, the researcher found that the most important factor that hinders the implementation of CLT is grammar-based exam-oriented teaching. This result echoes those found by Ellis (1994), Li (1998), Liao (2000), Rao (2002), and Li (2004). They showed that grammar-based exams, which concentrate exclusively on reading, writing, and grammar, have a negative backlash on the implementation of CLT. These results are also consistent with those reported by Chu and Geary (1998), who show that the newer methods do not prepare students for taking entrance examinations. Interviewees revealed that this lack of preparation forces them to resort back to using the Grammar Translation Method. As Savignon (1991) notes, curricular innovations are being undone by a failure to make equivalent changes in evaluation.

In Chang and Huang's (2001) study, teachers list helping students receive higher scores on the college entrance examinations as the first priority in teaching. In response to exam pressure, some teachers, especially two younger teachers, reported that they went back to using the Grammar Translation Method instead of the CLT approach.

Another reason that grammar based exam-oriented teaching negatively influences the implementation of CLT could be that the policy makers and the entrance exam makers hold different teaching philosophies. They may also engage in insufficient communication. The researcher believes that Taiwanese exam makers, which are senior high school teachers, lack information regarding the new policy, as it is only implemented in elementary and junior level schools. Hence, when making the exam, they might make erroneous

subjective judgments based upon stereotypes about traditional teaching methods instead of applying concepts from the new policy.

Finally, practitioners such as junior high school teachers are also supposed to follow the instruction methods established by the new education policy. At the same time, they face pressures to teach using the style of the high school entrance exam so as to ensure that their students will perform well on it. Consequently, these teaching difficulties arise when the new education policy guidelines conflict with instructors' needs to teach according to exams.

Limited Teaching Hours

The researcher also found that the need to cover an entire textbook by the end of the grading term caused teachers to feel rushed. Because CLT activities can be very time-consuming, teachers often fall behind schedule. These results are in line with those from previous studies (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Su, 2006; Wang, 2004), which show that limited teaching hours and tight schedules are difficulties encountered when implementing CLT. Similarly, Chu and Geary (1997) found that junior high school teachers were reluctant to take the time to implement newer methods because they already felt overwhelmed by their demanding curricula and examination schedules.

In response, most teachers interviewed in this study claimed that since they cannot increase their teaching hours, they preferred to teach fewer classes. Thus, this approach would not only increase the amount of time allotted to each class, but it also would increase students' exposure to English and give them more opportunities to do communicative activities.

Although one of the difficulties teachers face when implementing CLT is having 'limited teaching hours', the researcher still found that some teachers conduct CLT activities when breaks in the schedule appear. Most of the interviewees think that the implementation of CLT in the curriculum can benefit students. Therefore, the researcher suggests that in order to improve students' communicative competence, English teachers should be encouraged to utilize CLT in classes even though they feel more time is necessary to do their best job.

Student's Diverse Levels of English

All ten educators asserted that grouping students with diverse English proficiency levels into one class was a barrier to effective CLT teaching. All agreed that CLT can only be successfully adopted in a class with students who have higher English language proficiency. One of the teachers explained that students with low English proficiency cannot comprehend the English spoken by their teachers or classmates, nor can they communicate with each other. These results are consistent with those found in other studies (Li, 1998; Wang, 2004), which show that it is difficult for teachers to conduct oral communicative activities with students who have limited English proficiency. In these studies, teachers gave up using CLT when using communicative activities became too difficult for the students who had limited English proficiency.

A possible explanation for the teachers' belief that "CLT can only be adopted in a class with students who have higher English language proficiency" is that the teachers might need training in how to meet the needs of lower proficiency level students. For example, teachers might possibly use simpler language or

teaching aids such as realia instead of using abstract verbal explanation.

Teachers' Insufficient English Speaking

Ability

As indicated in my interviews, as well as in several other studies, teachers' limited spoken English is a constraint for adopting CLT in the classroom (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1998; Li, 2004; Liao, 2000; Penner, 1995). Many non-native speaker (NNS) teachers are highly proficient in English grammar, reading, and writing; however, they claim their spoken English is not sufficient to use CLT. However, the teachers in this study spoke English fluently in their classrooms. The researcher interprets this observation to mean that perhaps these teachers are reluctant to use CLT not because of their skill level, but because they are too humble. Being humble is a typical Taiwanese trait, however, and does not appear to negatively affect teaching competence. To compensate for the weaknesses of those teachers who cannot speak English fluently, the researcher suggests that they use technology, such as authentic audio/video teaching aids, and expose students to more authentic English language experiences to enhance students' CLT activities. Also, they should be encouraged continue to improve their own English skills. In addition, plenty of authentic audio/video teaching aids are available in the current market. The researcher believes that a good English teacher is just like a good broker of English knowledge. Helping students and adopting good English teaching aids to enhance students' English communicative competence are very important tasks.

CLT's Unsuitability in the EFL Context

Typical Taiwanese personality. One of the teachers shared some opinions regarding how the typical Taiwanese personality impedes the implementation of CLT in Taiwan. She said Taiwanese students are shy in expressing their feelings, especially in public places. In addition, she mentioned that many Taiwanese students are not confident enough to speak in class. Consistent with the researcher's observations, these assertions convey that specific culture-related personality traits are obstacles impeding Taiwanese teachers' ability to adopt CLT. The researcher interprets this finding to mean that Western scholars might be neglecting to consider that differences exist between Eastern and Western personalities when introducing CLT to other countries such as Taiwan.

Large Class Size and Classroom Management

According to this researcher's field notes, each classroom contained at least 30 students. The author also observed that large class size is an obstacle in the implementation of CLT, although most teachers interviewed did not report this difficulty. Ellis (1994), Li (1998), Li (2004), and Burnaby and Sun (1989) supported these findings. They showed that large class size was a factor hindering the implementation of CLT because use of oral English and close monitoring of class activities for each group are essential in this method.

The researcher interprets this result to mean that if it is feasible to reduce class size, the students have more opportunities to practice and improve their communicative competence through the use of CLT activities. In addition, the teacher will have more time

to monitor each group. Therefore, class management would not hinder teachers' implementation of CLT.

3.Support or Professional Development for Implementing the New Policy

Teachers' Perceptions about, and Problems with, In-Service Training

Teachers have positive and negative opinions about in-service trainings. Most teachers interviewed claimed that the Compulsory Education Advisory Group (CEAG)'s in-service training is beneficial, although most also complained that it is insufficient. For example, one of the principals noted that in the beginning, many workshops/seminars are offered regarding the new CLT-based English Education policy, but they thin out as time passes. The other principal also thinks teachers lack support in the implementation of the new CLT-based English Education Policy. She doubts the effectiveness of CEAG because no follow-up interactions with teachers or CEAG employees are offered. She argues that teachers should have access to help regarding the new policy at all times. These findings confirm what previous researchers have discovered, that the lack of teacher training was one of the biggest problems teachers faced in carrying out CLT (Hui, 1997; Li, 1998; Liao, 2000; Pinner, 1995).

A partial explanation for this lack of support may stem from the fact that the position of Taiwanese Minister of Education rotates every couple of years. The new Minister might dislike the policy issued by the former Minister or might be unwilling to carry it through. Therefore, the effectiveness of the education policy's implementation might be diminished.

Suggestions for in-service training: practical is more useful. Most teachers think that they would benefit more from observing practical demonstrations of new teaching methods than they would from receiving lecturing on teaching theories. They believe in-service training should offer more demonstrations on how to teach every lesson with CLT. This training approach would allow teachers to imitate or apply the demonstration to their daily routine instead of forcing them to follow abstract guidelines. The researcher did not find this suggestion in the related literature. It is a unique recommendation that can be employed in future in-service trainings.

Inconvenient Time of In-service Trainings/Insufficient Support of Class Arrangement

All the interviewees claimed that the inconvenient timing of in-service trainings and the lack of assistance in rearranging their class schedules impeded their motivation to attend the workshops. Junior high school English teachers' workloads are very heavy; every English teacher has at least twenty classes per week. It is unfair and unreasonable to ask them to rearrange their classes or to use their personal time without receiving pay to attend in-service training. The researcher did not find this phenomenon in the related literature. It might be a problem unique to Taiwan as compared to other countries. The researcher suggests that if the government or the school can help English teachers to rearrange their classes, or if they would allow them official leave, English teachers would be willing to attend each in-service training.

In order to implement the new CLT-based policy successfully, providing sufficient support or

professional development for English teachers is also the Taiwanese government's responsibility. To use a military analogy, having good supplies is always critical to winning the battle. No matter how excellent the troops are, without sufficient supplies, they will never accomplish the mission. In other words, Taiwanese English teachers cannot carry out the new English education policy well without receiving sufficient support or professional development from the Taiwanese government.

Pedagogical Implications

This study's findings lead to a number of pedagogical implications for improving English education in junior high school in Taiwan. To ensure the successful implementation of the New CLT-based English Education Policy, the author makes the following recommendations to the Taiwanese government education policy makers. By attending to these issues, Taiwan will likely experience future improvements in its junior high school English education program. It is understood that the government may not be able to make national curriculum changes quickly and easily. Therefore, the researcher has listed the following recommendations according to what is most 'do-able' and 'practical' for the government to execute. The sequence reflects the increasing level of the difficulty that the Taiwanese government might encounter when adopting these suggestions.

1. Exam Modification

According to the present findings, teachers claimed that the influence exams have on the way they

teach is the most serious hinder once the adoption of CLT in Taiwanese junior high schools. No teacher wants to be a 'bad teacher', someone whose students score poorly on exams. Thus, in order to ensure good scores, the teachers structure their classes around the content of the entrance exams.

Savignon (1991) points out that many curricular innovations have been undone by a failure to make equivalent changes in evaluation. Therefore, if the Taiwanese government wants to direct the junior high school instructors' teaching toward CLT, the modification of the entrance exam is unavoidable. Communicative competence tests incorporating speaking and listening should be included in the exam. Although this approach is a passive way to force teachers to change their teaching methods, the researcher believes it is a fundamental and reasonable. In contrast, it is counterproductive to ask teachers to adopt CLT while still forcing students to take the grammar-based exam. In order to achieve the implementation of CLT, which will enhance Taiwan's internationally competitive position, 'exam modification' must lead the way. Since the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) assesses communicative competence such as listening and speaking, using it as a model for the exam medication is suggested.

2. Interactive Language Activities through Technology

Because Taiwan is an isolated island with limited resources, it places a high value on international trading. Consequently, Taiwan also understands the significance of its citizens in being able to converse using English, the primary international language, as a communicative

tool for commerce. However, learning English in Taiwan constitutes an EFL environment, so students lack opportunities to engage with authentic English. Hence, developing students' communicative competence in English in an EFL environment is one of the difficulties teachers face when adopting CLT.

In order to change Taiwan's EFL environment to become more like an ESL setting, students need exposure to more real-life communicative target language needs outside of the classroom. Technology is a valuable tool by which students can conduct this kind of activity. For example, excellent technology-based language interchange activities include using email with native English-speaking pen pals, hosting a language partner club, and offering language chatting rooms on the internet. All of these activities give students more opportunities to practice the target language as a communicative tool outside the classroom, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the CLT approach. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the Taiwanese government supply schools with more technology equipment such as computers and train teachers to use this technology. Hence, the incorporation of technology as a learning tool will increase teachers' effective utilization of CLT and will improve students' communicative competence in English.

3. More Practical In-service Trainings Should be Provided

This study found that most of the participants felt dissatisfied with the workshops or seminars held by the Compulsory Education Advisory Group and believed that the in-service training for the new CLT-based English Education Policy is insufficient. In addition,

most teachers thought that observing practical demonstrations of teaching methods would be more useful to them than would listening to lectures on teaching theories.

Therefore, the researcher suggests that the Taiwanese government provide more practical in-service trainings. It should extend enthusiasm in supporting teachers to implement the new policy beyond 'three minutes'; it needs to do more than provide many workshops/seminars regarding the new CLT-based English Education policy in the beginning. In addition, the booksellers' and publishers' workshops are usually much more practical and useful. If it is possible, the researcher recommends that the government consider authorizing the sellers or publishers to do the in-service trainings.

A further goal of the Taiwanese government should be to offer principals and administrators in-service workshops on how to implement and support the new CLT-based policy. Offering this broad array of workshops can enhance the effectiveness of the new policy.

4. In-service Training on Differentiated Learning/Teaching Techniques and Strategies for Handling Varying Levels of Proficiency within a Class are Needed

The findings of this study indicate that a class comprised of students with diverse levels of English proficiency creates a barrier to effective CLT teaching. All the teachers interviewed agreed that they would only be able to adopt fully CLT if every student

performed at the higher English language proficiency level.

To reiterate, a possible explanation for the teachers' belief that CLT can only be adopted in a class with students who have higher English language proficiency' is that the teachers might need training in how to meet the needs of lower proficiency level students. In addition, all interviewees mentioned and are anxious about the occurrence of the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon, which appears after implementing the new policy and makes teaching difficult. Educators are concerned about how to solve the problems stemming from this phenomenon because they think helping each student to learn English well is the teachers' responsibility even though they face difficulties. English educators are still grappling with important questions, such as how to help students who fall behind from the start and how to help the lower-proficiency group catch up to their more advanced classmates. Therefore, the need for teachers to have training not just in CLT but also in Differentiated Learning/teaching techniques and strategies to handle varying levels of proficiency within a class is suggested, so they can better address the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon. In addition, English teachers need to be trained to scaffold language and use realia more effectively to meet the needs of lower proficiency level students. Once students have a target language frame, they will be able to produce English more easily. These recommendations only change the content of the in-service training. The researcher believes that it is an effective way to solve the dual problem of having to teach students with diverse levels of English proficiency within the same class and countering the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon.

5. Group Students by Proficiency Levels

Starting from Grade Seven

Furthermore, teachers could administer a standardized English test and subsequently assign students to proficiency group levels based upon their scores. This procedure conveniently addresses the problem of teachers having to instruct a single class in which students' English proficiency levels are incongruent. For example, if they can divide students into three groups, they can better serve both Double-Curve groups, not only the middle group. In other words, they could help not only the high proficiency group, but they could also assist the low proficiency group. In the 'lower-proficiency group' class, teachers can use simple English in their instruction and can try to make up for their students' deficiency with the intention of catching them up to the 'higher-proficiency' group. In the 'higher-proficiency group' class, teachers can adopt CLT without the interruption caused by low English proficiency. In addition, different grades can be combined according to students' proficiency levels, thereby nullifying the need to hire many additional English teachers. Although the administrator's viewpoint would suggest that it is very difficult to divide English classes into several groups according to the students' proficiency level because a limited number of English teachers exists, the Taiwanese government still needs to try to overcome these difficulties in order to improve English education in Taiwan.

6. Teaching from Level Zero

Instead of grouping students by proficiency levels, the researcher offers another, though imperfect,

solution. Challenges with implementing this new recommendation are especially likely to occur if the Taiwanese government finds that it only has a limited supply of English teachers to head English classes grouped according to students' proficiency levels. Nonetheless, based on this study's findings, it is recommended that all students receive English instruction from ground zero when they enter junior high school. In other words, teachers should presume that their students have never learned English before and, therefore, should teach from the beginning. This solution is both possible and easy to implement. However, higher proficiency group students might feel bored because they have to review something they already know. On the other hand, when their lower proficiency group classmates catch up to them, the competency level of teachers and classmates will create a better English learning environment compatible with the adoption of CLT practices.

In sum, the researcher believes that asking English teachers to behave as if students have never learned English before and to teach from them from the beginning can reduce students' frustration and enhance their interest in learning English. It will save students who have fallen behind in English learning and will convey that their teachers will never give up on them. At some point soon, the Double-Curve Distribution Phenomenon will disappear.

7. English Teaching Hours Should be

Increased

All of the interviewees claimed that the limited numbers of teaching hours they have in which to teach English is one of the obstacles to their adopting CLT. They stated that the instruction schedule is too packed

to permit them to finish teaching all of the textbook material relevant to the exams. Second, in the CLT class, teachers are expected to have students do communicative activities. In this approach, all classroom activities, materials, and instructional strategies emphasize communication as a way to learn. Communicative classroom activities, such as cooperative learning and problem-solving tasks, can motivate learners to communicate as they work in groups and pairs. However, the findings indicated that CLT activities can be very time-consuming and make teachers fall behind schedule. Hence, it lowers teachers' inclination to adopt CLT.

According to Dolly and Faith, a private high school in Taiwan adopts CLT very well. The most important reason why the school can successfully adopt CLT is because it offers two times the number of English classes as compared to non-English classes. Therefore, increasing English teaching hours is suggested.

In addition, most instructors interviewed claimed that since they cannot reduce their teaching hours, they prefer to reduce their number of classes so that each instructor has more hours to devote to teaching each class. In other words, this practice ensures that each student receives more English classes. Giving students more exposure to English can make learning the language a habit. Findings underscore the importance of increasing English Teaching Hours. While administrators claimed that they have difficulties in helping teachers to provide more English classes, the government should try its best to solve the problem in order to improve the quality of English education in junior high schools as well as enhancing the implementation of CLT. For example, administrators and/or the government should consider reducing the

amount of instruction time allotted for subjects deemed less important than English language instruction.

8. More English Native Speaker Teachers should be imported into the Junior High School

Most interviewees reported that English teachers might be limited in their English speaking ability. However, this researcher's observations revealed that all of them spoke English fluently in their English classrooms. Some of these teachers may simply be too humble or may not feel confident enough about their ability to speak English. Nonetheless, it remains vital to expose students to an authentic English environment, as stimulation is important. Therefore, the author recommends that junior high schools employ more native English speaking teachers.

Hiring more native speakers to teach in Taiwan's junior high schools is possible given the government's access to exchange programs such as MA TESOL in the U.S. and other English speaking countries. In addition, if each school site hires just one native speaker (NS) teacher, then that person could serve as a mentor to the NNS teachers, rotate among the various classes, and provide in-service trainings. This practice will not only increase the level of authentic English stimulation, but it can also improve students' EFL environment, making EFL become more like ESL. Students and teachers will have more opportunities to communicate with native speakers and learn authentic intonation and accent. If students can use the target language, English, more frequently, they can subconsciously create proper sentence structures. If they regularly hear similar sentences, they do not have

to learn grammar rules. Because they hear how to use the language, they will have fewer difficulties while reading and writing in English. Therefore, teachers might not have to spend as much time teaching grammar.

9. Class Size should be Reduced

According to this study's findings, each classroom usually contained at least 30 students. Direct observation led the researcher to conclude that large class size is an obstacle in the implementation of CLT. It especially affects classroom management. Most teachers interviewed expressed the same problems. The findings also indicate that large class sizes hinder teachers' execution of CLT such as managing group activities. Having to manage large classes in tandem with having limited teaching hours is inefficient, as teachers must spend a lot of time lecturing students regarding class discipline. In order to ensure higher teaching quality and the implementation of CLT, the researcher suggests that the government should try to reduce class sizes.

10. More Support of Class Arrangement

The results indicated that all the teachers interviewed are very willing to attend in-service trainings. However, all of them also claimed that in-service trainings are offered at inconvenient times and that they receive insufficient support for making class arrangements. Both of these issues impede their motivation to attend in-service trainings.

Thus, the researcher suggests that the government or school should assist teachers more in accomplishing the implementation the new CLT-based English Education Policy. For example, if the government or

the school can help them to rearrange their classes or allow them official leave, English teachers would be very willing to attend each in-service training in order to improve their teaching methods.

Conclusion

These recommendations may not be easy to implement. Some, such as reducing class size, need to be addressed on a national level. However, with the goal of improving English language education in the Taiwanese educational system, it is hoped that this study, as well as future research, may serve to advance change toward that end.

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