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Framing communicative language teaching for better teacher understanding

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Studies of the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches in foreign language classrooms have frequently raised doubts about the adequacy of elementary and secondary teachers' understanding of CLT and their use of this approach in classrooms at those levels. Reasons for this alleged state of affairs are reviewed, with one potential cause selected as the focus for further examination in this paper, namely the quality of written texts on the nature and use of CLT approaches as a learning resource for teachers. To assess the merits of this resource from the perspective of elementary and secondary teachers, a sample of written texts is analysed. This analysis reveals that the range of concepts used by individual authors to describe CLT and the use of CLT approaches in classrooms is somewhat limited and may not serve well the practical needs of teachers. To alleviate this alleged problem, a framework is proposed, within which, it is argued, the development of teacher understanding of communicative approaches can be achieved more effectively. Of course, this framework also has much wider applicability and could be used to facilitate teacher understanding of other approaches to teaching second languages.

Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as an approach to teaching second languages in elementary and secondary schools, has been in vogue since the early 1970s (Markee, 1993; Swarbrick, 1994; Wolf, 1994), as a result of a greater focus on communication in second language education. This approach features extensive interaction in the second language between students and teacher and among students, with advocacy of this method resting on a number of key assumptions such as the following: learning a second language can be facilitated through using the language for communication purposes; such communication should be both authentic and meaningful; a greater emphasis should be placed on language use rather than language knowledge; learner autonomy in language use and learner risk-taking should be encouraged; and fluency and appropriacy in the use of the second language should take precedence over structural correctness. CLT thus encompasses a number of different techniques and does not have a structured set of procedures that teachers should follow.

Despite the use of CLT approaches in schools over three decades, claims are still being made that CLT approaches are not finding full expression in elementary and secondary classrooms and that many teachers remain uncertain about what CLT is and

are unsure about how to implement it in classrooms (Duquette, 1995). Such claims have been indeed a constant refrain in the CLT literature over the last twenty years (eg, Mitchell, 1988; Savignon, 2002a, 2002b; Thompson, 1996). Studies from the early 80s to 1993 have been cited by Karavas-Doukas (1996) in support of her claim that communicative classrooms are rare and that "while most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice, they are following more traditional approaches" (p.187). In similar vein, Thornbury (1998) claimed that the version of CLT that appears in most classrooms "has been and remains a chimera", a hybrid of communicative and non-communicative approaches. He further claimed that "from a communicative approach, CLT (in classroom usage) is not only weak but very weak" (p.110), a judgment based on his observations of EFL classrooms in elementary and secondary schools and pre- and in-service teacher education courses over 20 years. A similar comment surfaced again in 2002: "Despite the theoretical development of communicative language teaching (CLT), understanding among practitioners remains limited. Moreover, a growing number of studies indicate that classrooms in which CLT is effectively used are rare" (Sato, 2002, p.41).

This rather depressing assessment of teacher knowledge and use of CLT has been rarely challenged. However, a recent, small-scale study of six elementary and secondary LOTE (language other than English or foreign language) teachers by Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood and Son (2005) yielded findings quite at odds with those making pejorative comments of such teachers. It showed that five[1] of the six teachers, all but two quite experienced LOTE teachers, held quite robust understandings of CLT and that these were closely aligned with theoretical conceptions of CLT appearing in the literature. Moreover, the authors claimed that the classroom practices of these teachers reflected their practical theories about how to use CLT approaches but also included a relatively large number of non-CLT features, not generally associated with foreign language teaching but with teaching in general. It is possible that these counter-customary findings could be the result of the participant recruitment procedures (all six teachers were volunteers), or the experience of the teachers, or the particular methodology used to collect and analyse the data. The methodology in this study, one previously not used in research into teachers' use and knowledge of CLT, involved accessing the teachers' understanding of CLT through an analysis of their practical theories of CLT, constructed from self-report data obtained during in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Despite this one different finding, the overall assessment of teacher knowledge and practice of CLT remains an overwhelmingly pessimistic one that may, itself, be an artefact of the types of written materials that are in print. At this time, given the smallness of the teacher sample and its volunteer nature, the findings of this study are not seen as extensive enough to challenge the long-established claims about the state of teacher knowledge and use of CLT. Rather, the findings are seen as pointing to the need for further research in this area.

Several reasons have been proposed to account for this overwhelmingly unfavourable assessment of teacher knowledge and usage of CLT. First, there is a claim that the paucity of teacher knowledge and practice of CLT is the result of ambiguity or disputation about the meaning of CLT. According to Nattinger (1984), while there is general agreement about some of the characteristics of CLT, other aspects lack consensus or even clear definition. Almost a decade later, Whitley (1993) made a similar assessment, attributing a lack of definitional clarity and confusion among

teachers as to the meaning of CLT to static from scholarly debate that, in his opinion, featured garbled messages from researchers and disagreements among them. He claimed that "scholars accentuated their differences, staked out extreme, conflicting positions and launched a counter-productive debate" (p.141), features that would not contribute to clarity of understanding in readers. A decade later, we read that the "problem with communicative language teaching (CLT) is that the term has always meant a multitude of different things to different people" (Harmer, 2003, p.289).

A second reason, closely related to the first, is an argument put forward by Grenfell and Harris (1999) who have claimed that CLT describes competence or proficiency, or what it consists of, but is not, itself, a means to acquiring it. They argue that statements of the type, "[U]sing skills is the means to learning them and learning is the means to their use" (p.28), are circular. Their circularity makes them devoid of any meaning that can be used practically by teachers in classrooms.

A third reason for the alleged deficits in teacher knowledge and practice of CLT is related to the contexts in which it has been used. In some Asian contexts, there has been only a partial acceptance by teachers of the legitimacy of CLT, a predominantly Euro-centric approach to language teaching. The less than enthusiastic adoption of CLT in China, Korea and Vietnam, for example, is regarded by some as stemming from its cultural inappropriateness in those contexts (Anderson, 1993; Chowdhury, 2003; George Ellis, 1994; Hird, 1995; Mitchell & Lee, 2003; Rao, 1996, 2002). These authors consider its reception in those countries to be lukewarm at best because it challenges traditional cultural beliefs and values and is at odds with traditional relationships between teachers and students[2]. They point out, further, that emphasis on oral skills may not meet the requirements of curricula in those countries.

A fourth reason has been proposed by Savignon (2002b) who holds that teacher education in the use of CLT approaches has not received the attention it warrants and that teachers have not been given the necessary tools for using CLT by teacher educators. A similar viewpoint was expressed earlier by Whitley (1993) who argued that the needs of teachers have not been well researched and that CLT approaches have not been disseminated in ways which are sensitive to the problems teachers confront in local programs and classrooms. Related to this idea of dissemination of information about CLT approaches is the notion put forward by Bartels (2005, p.748) that "researchers and teachers ... have different ways of validating ideas in journal articles and [have] different ways of using and incorporating information in the articles into their professional knowledge" and that appropriate (or appropriately designed) experiences may provide better assistance to teachers to transfer knowledge about CLT approaches into actual practices (Bartels, 2005).

Fifth, the negative assessment of teachers' knowledge and use of CLT may also have arisen because, as two studies indicate (Mangubhai et al, 2005; Thornbury, 1997), teachers probably use a mixture of CLT and non-CLT features in what they call CLT approaches. Researchers looking for a clear, unambiguous expression of CLT approaches in either classroom practice or data on teacher knowledge and understanding of CLT would have seen evidence of CLT approaches along with much that was from general principles of teaching, such as those relating to motivation and classroom management, with the latter sometimes 'drowning out' the former. It is easy to see how such data could lead to the researcher view that teacher understanding and

practice of CLT approaches are wayward or deficient. However, from a purely practical point of view, it would be difficult for teachers to overlook or avoid the appropriate use, in CLT lessons, of non-CLT features emanating from the conventional wisdom about teaching. In fact, an integration of CLT and non-CLT approaches would appear eminently sensible and justifiable, where non-CLT features have been a successful part of their teaching and do not run counter to the general philosophy underlying CLT approaches.

The reasons outlined above point to a number of potentially useful lines of inquiry in further investigations into the cause of the alleged teacher uncertainty and confusion about the meaning and use of CLT. The first, third and fourth of the above reasons suggest that a root cause of the problem may lie with deficiencies in the material on CLT available to teachers or ways that CLT is presented to them. Such a proposition assumes that a link exists between teachers' classroom practices and textual conceptualisations of CLT, a link that is the focus of investigation in this paper. Is there a sound basis for such a proposition? The authors of this article believe so, while acknowledging that more robust data are likely to arise from a direct elicitation from teachers themselves about whether and to what extent textual material on CLT actually does inform their classroom practice.

In the first place, as Hadley (2001) points out, CLT was a product of "... the writings of British applied linguists such as Wilkins, Widdowson, Brumfit, Candlin, and others as well as American (tertiary) educators such as Savignon" (p.116) who foresaw movements of large number of peoples, especially in Europe as the result of European Union. The move to CLT approaches was advocated by a group of academics and was not school-based or teacher-initiated, though this academic initiative won the support of reformers in language education and curriculum designers. Therefore, teachers wanting to adopt, or encouraged to adopt, CLT approaches would almost certainly be obliged to make contact, directly or indirectly, with the written works of these authors (or other like-minded authors), or non-text resources derived from them. It is unlikely that the practice of foreign language teaching in classrooms would have moved naturally towards CLT approaches on such a broad scale without teacher access to textual and/or non-textual resources on CLT. If, as the above critics have claimed, textual resources on CLT are bedevilled by lack of clarity, disagreement, incompleteness and confusion or do not attend to the needs of teachers, then these deficiencies could well account for the classroom practices that so many observers have cited as deviating from CLT[3].

However, what also needs to be borne in mind is that, for teachers, learning about a theory from text and non-text resources is not the same as learning to use the theory in classrooms. As Bartels (2005) has noted, helping teachers acquire knowledge about new approaches to second language teaching "... is not enough to significantly change their teaching ..." (p.408), a point also made by Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon (1998), following their meta-analysis of research on teacher education. Instead, learning to use a new theory, if a teacher sees it worth learning, involves a variety of steps over a considerable period of time, with no guarantee that how they use the theory in practice will match the prescriptions of the advocates of the theory. These steps, on the part of individual teachers, amount to a process of building personal theories about how to use the new approach in their own classroom contexts. Indeed, teachers have been represented as theory builders who continually construct,

elaborate, test and refine their own practical theories (Busher, Clarke & Taggart, 1988; Richardson, 1997; Schubert, 1992). It is clear that teachers do not simply adopt theories-in-print uncritically and apply them without change in their classrooms. Rather, the new ideas that teachers encounter are individually interpreted and assessed, and, if found acceptable partially or totally, are domesticated to suit their own selves, teaching styles and teaching contexts before undergoing a succession of trials and possible refinements to meet the exigencies of practice (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). Thus, a theory-in-print about how to teach can serve only as a resource to teachers interested in finding out about how to use the theory in practice. Learning the theory through an academic study of textual materials does not automatically provide teachers with the know-how, beliefs and commitments they need to use the theory in practice. Theories-in-print do not provide action templates that allow teachers, in the multitude of classroom contexts in which they serve, to produce lessons that are perfect mirrors of the theories. Theories about teaching are generalisations about how to facilitate learning that then need to be customised to match the specific requirements of users, their teaching styles and classroom contexts in which they will be used.

Therefore, there will always be differences, sometimes significant differences, between theories about teaching, such as CLT, and the practical expressions of those theories in classrooms, even where theories are relatively clear and complete and attuned to the needs of teachers. Thus, classroom deviations from theory cannot be attributed simply to inadequacies in the verbal or non-verbal descriptions of theories. The processes of interpretation, assessment and domestication can also produce divergences from theory even before the realities of practice prompt others.

Nevertheless, it is argued that what is published about CLT is still likely to impact, directly or indirectly, teacher conceptualisations of CLT and their generation of classroom versions of their understandings of CLT, Therefore, if definitions and explanations by the proponents of CLT are incomplete, lack clarity, and exhibit ambiguity and a confusing degree of divergence and ignore the practical needs of teachers, as claimed about CLT in the literature, then teachers cannot be expected to remedy the problems and create practical versions that mirror the 'true' meaning of CLT, whatever that is.

For this reason, it was decided to examine textual material on CLT to assess whether it could be a source of teacher uncertainty and confusion about the meaning and use of this approach. Though aware of post-CLT developments in second language teaching such as the use of task-based learning, the authors have chosen to focus on CLT because of the wealth of literature, both research and discursive, in this field. This corpus of literature, extending as it does over at least three decades, provides ample resources for an exploration of the potential impact of textual materials on promoting teacher understanding of an approach to second language teaching. Oral presentations to teachers on CLT were excluded because they are rarely documented and so are impossible to access retrospectively. Such an analysis could also suggest alternative ways of approaching teacher education, both pre- and in-service, so that teachers achieve an understanding of CLT that is more holistic and closer to the real essence of CLT. As indicated above, an underlying premise to the achievement of such an understanding is that it is constructed by teachers themselves out of

"experiences and classrooms from which (they) have come" (Johnson, 1996, p.767) and is informed, directly or indirectly, by the content of textual material on CLT.

Focus of study

Though there are many dimensions to the quality of written text, it was decided, in the current analysis of textual material on CLT, to focus on just one basic issue related to the facilitation of teachers' understanding of CLT and its classroom use: how fully do textual materials on CLT define the term and explain features of its practical expression in classrooms? To research this issue, a decision was made to identify constructs used in defining CLT and describing its classroom use. Doing so would allow constructs appearing in the literature to be compared with those used in teacher education for describing different ways of teaching and helping teachers to learn to use these approaches.

With this in mind, a selective review of research and discursive literature on CLT over the last twenty years was undertaken to identify the concepts used to describe the nature of CLT and its use in classrooms.

Selection and analysis of written material on CLT

First, a search was made for literature in which authors attempted to define or explain CLT, or some components of it, or to describe how to use it in classrooms. In selecting journal articles and texts for the survey sample, the following criteria were used. First, only texts and articles in mostly refereed journals written over the last two decades would be used. Such a time-span would also accommodate evolutionary changes in conceptualisations of CLT and avoid the use of outdated presentations of this concept. Second, the material to be reviewed would include that written by at least some of the principal proponents of the use of CLT approaches. Third, only material that provided an in-depth treatment of the meaning and use of CLT would be used. Consequently, many textual items were passed over because treatment of either or both issues, the meaning of CLT and its implementation in classrooms, was marginal and fleeting (see, for example, Nunan, 1991; Scarcella, Anderson, & Krashen, 1990; Tarvin & Al Arishi, 1991). Each item of text was then scanned to identify the constructs or terms used by the author(s) in their explanations and descriptions.

A preliminary survey of materials revealed that authors used a variety of different terms for what appeared to be the same component of CLT. For example, teaching methods appropriate to CLT classrooms were variously referred to as 'procedures' (Richards & Rodgers, 1986), 'strategies' (Bloomfield, 1992; Nattinger, 1984), 'macro-strategies' (Kumaravadivelu, 1993), 'approaches' (Dicter, 1994), 'methodologies' (R. Ellis, 1982; Littlewood, 1981) and 'techniques' (Wright, 1990). Where constructs were deemed to be of similar meaning, they were grouped together under one label. In this survey, the rubric used for all these terms was 'methods'. Similarly, in attempts to capture the essence of CLT, some authors listed the basic 'guidelines' (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1997) that should be observed in CLT lessons. In doing likewise, other authors used terms such as 'characteristics' (Nattinger, 1984), 'principles' (Dicter, 1994; Wright, 1990), 'features' (Greg Ellis, 1996; Williams, 1995);

and 'tenets' (Swarbrick, 1994). In this analysis, all such references were coded under 'guidelines'.

Another feature of written material was that there were considerable variations in the focus of articles. Some authors dealt with a wide range of CLT features while others focused on just one or two. For example, some authors attempted to detail a wide range of guidelines. This was coded only once under 'guidelines'. Others, however, chose to focus only on one specific guideline such as 'treatment of student errors' or 'place of grammar instruction' in CLT approaches, or a limited number of guidelines. References to just one or two specific guidelines were coded, not under the general rubric, 'guidelines', but under the relevant specific guideline, for example, 'treatment of student errors' or 'place of grammar instruction'. In one case, (Lee & VanPatten, 2003), constructs used to describe CLT were embedded in discussions of activities in classroom that drew upon our current understanding of second language acquisition.

The results of this analysis of written texts are provided in Table 1 which displays the names of authors and date of publication along the vertical axis and the range of constructs used by these authors on the horizontal axis.

Analysis of texts: Results

In Table 1, 24 entries appear along the horizontal axis. However, two of these, 'Treatment of errors' and 'Place of grammar instruction', are both specific examples of 'Guidelines'. Regarding these three separate entries as one single construct reduces the number of constructs used to detail the meaning and classroom use of CLT to 22. Most of these constructs are unidimensional, the one exception being 'task' which subsumes other constructs. 'Tasks' are defined by Nunan (1989), for example, as incorporating the following components: goals, input, activities, teacher role, learner role and settings.

Table 1: Focus on various elements of CLT by various writers

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
Littlewood 81		X	X			X	X	X						X											6
Ellis, R. 82		X	X			X				X				X											5
Wilkins 83	X	X				X	X																X		5
Savignon 83	X	X	X			X	X					L				P					U				8
Dolle & W 84	X	X			E				I	J		L													6
Nattinger 84	X			D			X											R		T					5
Brumfit 84																		X							1
Medgyes 86			X						X		K														3
Richards & R 86	X		X	X			X	X			K										U				7
Nunan 87															O						U				2
Nunan 88								X																	1
Mitchell 88	X					X	X	X	X	X											U	V		X	9

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
Wright 90			X	X			X								X										4
Terrell 91																						X			1
Bloomfield 92			X				X				X											X			4
Kumaravadivelu							X																		1
Wolf 94						X	X				X									X					4
Rollman 94	X														X										2
Mitchell 94							X													X					2
Little et al.94							X	X			X		X							X					5
Williams 95																				X					1
Jones 95			X																						1
Duquette 95		X					X				X						X								4
Ellis, G. 96			X			X	X							X						X					5
Karavas-D 96			X	X			X						X										X	X	6
Skehan 96							X																		1
C-Murcia et al 97							X	X								X				X					4
Richards 98																				X					1
Grenfell & H 99							X													X					2
Larsen-Freem 00			X	X		X	X						X			X	X			X			X	X	10
Brumfit 01																				X					1
Hadley 01		X					X	X																	3
Savignon 02																				X					1
Lee & VanPatt 03	X		X	X			X	X								X	X						X	X	9
Totals	8	7	12	6	2	4	19	13	3	2	8	1	3	4	3	3	4	1	1	14	4	5	2	1	

A   Goals
B   Classroom environment
C   Teacher roles
D   Student roles
E   Student states
F   Tchr-stud relationships
G   Methods
H   Tasks, activities
I   Teacher attributes
J   Teaching skills
K   Materials, resources
L   Knowledge of students
M   Identification of needs
N   Feedback to students
O   Beliefs, attitudes
P   Genuine communicat's
Q   Evaluation, testing
R   Metaphor for CLT
S   Model of CLT
T   Guidelines
U   Treatment of errors
V   Grammar instruction
W   Mental processes
X   Teacher knowledge
Y   Totals

Constructs used most frequently by the authors in the sample include 'methods' (used by 19), 'guidelines' (14 plus 8 references to two specific guidelines), 'tasks and activities' (13), 'teacher roles' (12), 'materials and resources' (8), 'goals' (8), and 'classroom environment' (7). Another construct, 'student roles' appear in six texts but each of the remaining 14 terms appear only one to four times across the sample of texts used in the survey.

Furthermore, as Table 1 shows, the authors listed tend to use only a restricted set of constructs in their written material. Twelve of the 34 texts contained references to from 5 to 9 of the 22 constructs (Mean = 6.3; mode = 5), with references to 4, 3, 2 and 1 constructs being made in 5, 2, 4 and 10 of the texts respectively. Thus, only about one-third of the authors in the above sample of CLT literature used 5 or more of the 22 constructs. Even then, no author used more than 11 of these constructs. Obviously, valid reasons do exist for limiting the range of constructs used in a text. Some authors elect to deal in depth with only one aspect of a CLT approach such as teacher attitudes to CLT (eg, Karavas-Doukas, 1996) or tasks (eg, Skehan, 1996) while other authors opt for a much broader focus (eg, Dolle & Willems, 1984). Other factors that could conceivably impinge on the range of concepts used include intended depth of treatment, budgetary, time and resource limits and restrictions on word length. Hence, the above data on frequency of usage of constructs should not be read as conveying or implying any criticism of the authors whose works have been used in this investigation.

Discussion

The data presented above highlight the challenge confronting teachers wishing to gain a comprehensive insight into the nature of CLT and its use in classrooms. While, collectively, the sample of 34 texts may provide teachers with a very rich and diverse set of insights into the nature and use of CLT approaches, no single text in the above sample covers anywhere near all of the constructs identified in the textual analysis. The most extensive use of constructs was found in the book by Larsen-Freeman (2000) where 11 of the 22 constructs were located though the treatment was rather brief. Individually, each item of text provides a restricted, sometimes a very restricted, perspective on the meaning and use of CLT. This could well impede the development by teachers of a well-rounded understanding of CLT. More importantly, there does not seem to be an overall schema for understanding communicative approaches - a schema that would allow a principled development of understanding amongst teachers of the elements of communicative approaches. It would seem then that assembling, from the literature on CLT, a comprehensive view of what CLT is and how to implement it in foreign language classrooms would be a daunting task for teachers. As Table 1 reveals, no single text offers such a view. To obtain it, teachers would need to consult many items of text. Doing so, could well expose readers to features of the literature on CLT that commentators, such as Nattinger (1984), Whitley (1993) and Harmer (2003), regard as potentially confusing - garbled messages, disputes among authors and a lack of definitional clarity as to the nature of CLT.

What would be of help to teachers is a framework within which CLT approaches could be discussed in comprehensive fashion and that would address most, if not all, of the practical issues facing teachers implementing CLT approaches. The range of practical issues that teachers confront when they are required to put teaching

approaches into effect, are indicated to an extent in research on teacher thinking. This corpus of research suggests that the practical issues that teachers think about in teaching relate to the following constructs: aims or goals of lessons towards which they need to work (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996; Marland & Osborne, 1990); principles and rules that should be adhered to in classroom activities (Elbaz, 1983); values to be reflected in classroom behaviours (Halstead, 1996; Marland & Osborne, 1990); the kinds of student cognitive and affective states to be encouraged (Brown & McIntyre, 1988); signs or cues that indicate the nature of student states (Batten, Marland & Khamis, 1993) and student progress (Brown & McIntyre, 1988); strategies and actions to be used by classroom participants (Brown & McIntyre, 1988; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996) including the roles of teachers and students; teacher attributes that complement, and can increase the potency of, strategies (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996); and contextual conditions that impinge on the success of lessons (Batten, Marland & Khamis, 1993; Brown & McIntyre, 1988). These findings prompt the question: What set of constructs should authors use to provide accounts of CLT and its use in classrooms that would address the practical needs of teachers?

One framework that may come close to satisfying this need is that found in the work of Joyce and Weil (1994). These authors developed a framework for familiarising teachers with different models of, or approaches to, teaching and for helping them to master the use of such models in classrooms. They describe each model of teaching in terms of the following constructs that have many parallels to those described above that have emerged from research into teacher thinking and theories, as follows

- goals or goal focus
- theoretical assumptions
- principles and underlying concepts
- syntax or phasing, that is, the particular sequence of activities within a model
- social system, characterised by teacher roles, student roles, teacher-student relationships and norms of student behaviours
- principles of teacher reaction that tell the teacher how to regard students and how to respond to what the students do
- support system or additional supporting conditions such as teacher skills, teacher attributes and special resources that are above the regular or "usual human skills, capacities and technical facilities" (p.15)
- instructional (intended or direct) effects and nurturant (or implicit) effects arising from the classroom environment.

This set of constructs has been used with some success over two decades in familiarising teachers with details of various models of teaching and has been used successfully to coach teachers in their use (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Joyce , Weil, & Wald, 1981). Use of this set of constructs involves, as demonstrated in Joyce and Weil (1994), providing a description, in terms of all constructs, of a particular approach to teaching, such as role play, inquiry training, group investigation, direct instruction and non-directive teaching. Though the extent of research on the merits of using this set of constructs is very limited, the level of acceptance of the set of constructs promoted by Joyce and Weil is indicated by the fact that five editions of their book have been printed since the first edition appeared in 1972. Indeed, Dillon (1998), despite his criticisms of it, admits that their text is "one of the most widely used textbooks on teaching" (p.503). One particular advantage of using this set of

constructs is that it offers a broad range of insights into the theory and beliefs underpinning a model and what adoption of a model means for the classroom teacher in terms of practical issues. Another advantage is that it provides clear bases for delineating similarities and differences across the different models of teaching. Moreover, the constructs can be used by teachers and their supervisors in reviews of lesson plans and actual lessons to focus on key aspects of the planning and teaching.

A comparison of Joyce and Weil's set of constructs and those emerging from the analysis of texts (see Table 1) reveals a marked similarity. Indeed, the list in Table 1 is more extensive than the Joyce and Weil set. This suggests that authors who define and describe CLT are aware of constructs that are important to teachers but, individually, are using a limited range of constructs when defining CLT and its use in classrooms.

While it is acknowledged that Joyce and Weil's set of constructs may not refer to all aspects of a teaching approach, for example, it does not explicitly include students' needs, student assessment and evaluation, and general principles of classroom teaching - adoption of the Joyce and Weil framework for outlining the nature of CLT approaches to intending users could prove beneficial.

- The framework does provide a schema for describing and thinking about new teaching approaches. The scope of this schema is much broader than the constructs used in any one of the texts analysed in this study.
- Teachers could gain a fuller understanding of CLT through the eight constructs used by Joyce and Weil (1994) than they would through using a few available texts that provide, especially from a practical or practising teacher view, only partial or restricted accounts of CLT.
- Use of the framework may enable teachers to more speedily gain a comprehensive insight into the nature of CLT than by assembling a view of CLT from a number of texts each of which deals only with some aspects of the approach.
- Use of the framework may appeal to teachers because it has been designed specifically to assist teachers to learn about new models of teaching and their implementation. It may therefore address more effectively the practical needs of teachers. In pre- and in-service teacher education, its use appears to have had a measure of success.
- Use of the framework may assist teachers to learn how to implement a CLT approach more easily and quickly and so reduce the time required for learning to implement a new approach.

However, the use of the Joyce and Weil framework for detailing the essence of CLT approaches does have to overcome at least one major difficulty. This has to do with the breadth or scope of CLT which is generally acknowledged to be more an approach rather than a method (Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Mitchell, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Rollman, 1994). There appear to be at least two grounds for this 'approach versus method' distinction. Firstly, CLT in essence "refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.172). Secondly, CLT involves the use of a number of methods such as role play, group work and paired activities, and thus is much broader in scope than

a single method. An important question then arises: can the Joyce and Weil framework be used to describe an approach to teaching that covers a number of methods relevant to CLT, rather than just a single method?

An affirmative response to the above question admits of two possible options. One option would be to pool all the various techniques into one all-encompassing account of CLT. A decision to adopt this option would have a number of flow-on effects. First, entries under each of the constructs would have to be broadened since they would need to cover a number of CLT-relevant techniques. For example, a description of teacher roles or of principles of teacher reaction would have to include those related to the various techniques from which they would select, for a particular lesson, such as role play, group work and paired activities. Second, the set of constructs would have to be increased to allow for references to the techniques or strategies that form part of CLT approaches. Third, phasing (the third item in the Joyce and Weil framework) for each of the techniques would have to be included, rendering the description of CLT approaches a very lengthy one. Alternatively, a decision to delete the 'phasing' or 'syntax' construct could be made. This would reduce the length of the description but deprive teachers of helpful information.

The second option would be to deal with the various techniques that constitute a CLT approach, one by one. This would mean preparing separate accounts for each of the techniques that constitute CLT approaches - for example, role play, group work and paired activities. One problem with this option is that dealing with one technique at a time would not capture completely the essence of a CLT approach. A CLT approach may also include a blend of different techniques and different numbers of techniques in ways that are not covered by descriptions of discrete techniques. A resulting complication is that many blended models would be needed to encapsulate the full meaning of a CLT approach.

While space considerations prevent an illustration of the second option, an illustration of the first option has been prepared (see Appendix 1). Here, a CLT approach has been outlined using some of the constructs proposed by Joyce and Weil. This illustration takes the form of a list of criterial attributes of CLT, those seminal to a description of CLT and its classroom use. This list has been generated by the authors from available literature on CLT and by tapping the expertise of other researchers in CLT as well as their own. The account of CLT in Appendix 1 lists, under each of the constructs, those attributes of a CLT approach that are commonly regarded as criterial or essential. A decision was made to add one construct, 'strategies', and to omit two constructs, 'principles and concepts underpinning the approach' and 'syntax or phasing'. The inclusion of the 'strategies' construct is a natural consequence of the plan to illustrate the first option, the goal of which is to provide a composite view of CLT. A decision to delete 'principles and concepts underpinning the approach' was based on the view that underlying principles and concepts would feature to an extent in other constructs, especially theoretical assumptions. On the other hand, reference to 'phasing' was omitted for reasons to do with word length and readability. The authors, however, are not opposed to the inclusion, in later versions of the list, of either or both constructs. Moreover, the opinion is held by the authors that other constructs such as 'student needs' and 'student assessment' may need to be added to cover in explicit fashion practical needs of teachers related to this topic. A caveat needs to be added, however. While the framework provides a certain amount of conciseness, it may not

capture the full complexities of events that occur in CLT classrooms. For example, in TAS 10 (Emphasis should be placed on meaning-focussed self-expression rather than language structure) the relative optimum emphasis between the two modes of behaviour is not made clear.

The list would be used to inform users, and potential users of CLT approaches, of the essential features of the practical implications of using this approach to teaching foreign languages. It could also be used to coach teachers in the use of CLT approaches by providing a framework for planning and reviewing their foreign language teaching.

Some exchanges have already been held about this way of describing CLT with other experts in this field in Australia and elsewhere with encouraging results. It has also been used in a research project to document the content of teachers' practical theories of CLT (Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, & Son, 2004) and to compare teachers' and researchers' conceptions of CLT (Mangubhai et al, 2005). However, because this work is still in its early stages, the authors are keen to obtain further feedback on the ideas outlined in this paper and to engage in debate either through the pages of this journal or private communication.

Concluding remarks

Our analysis of some texts on the meaning and classroom use of CLT has revealed that individual texts offer accounts that cover one or more aspects of CLT approaches to teaching, but do not fully address the practical needs of teachers wishing to understand and/or use this approach in classrooms. There is no guarantee, either, that reading a number of these texts would yield a comprehensive treatment of these issues. This feature of CLT literature may well be a reason why teachers have allegedly not internalised the communicative approaches to teaching well enough, a claim that has appeared frequently in the literature. It has been our argument that if this is so, then a partial solution to this problem may be through the use of a framework proposed by Joyce and Weil (1994) within which more comprehensive accounts of communicative approaches, or any other approaches for that matter, can be provided. Widespread adoption of this framework or schema by those setting out to define or describe CLT would not result in identical definitions of CLT. The framework would allow individual authors to still provide idiosyncratic accounts of CLT. Moreover, use of the schema, that is, the set of constructs, would facilitate the provision of comprehensive accounts of CLT that would address most of the practical needs of teachers. Teachers would then be able to use these accounts to develop their own customized versions of CLT to suit the contexts in which they teach, thus taking into account their own and their students' needs, personality variables and styles, as well as features specific to their class contexts such as resources, size of class, age of students and so on. It is our contention that the Joyce and Weil framework presented here could facilitate the development of a more comprehensive understanding of communicative language teaching approaches, and hence a better likelihood of their manifestation in foreign language classrooms. Moreover, the use of the framework could be extended to cover other approaches to the teaching of second languages, a use that is entirely consistent with the aims of the developers of the framework.

Notes

1. The sixth teacher who appeared to have a limited conception of CLT approaches turns out, when videotaped lessons are analysed, to be quite communicative in her teaching.
2. One must add to these reasons a more critical (for the teacher) reason: if teachers' control over the second language is weak, they are less likely to use communicative approaches, a point most forcefully made by a teacher of Japanese to the first author during an in-service course he was conducting. In effect, he said that he was unwilling to use CLT methods in his classroom because of his limited Japanese language proficiency, and therefore he was going to "stick to the textbook".
3. The lack of clarity and disagreements about CLT has led to regarding CLT, not as a method, but as an approach that encompasses certain principles of second language learning. This focus has led to a focus on task-based learning and teaching, and even to, what has been labelled, postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

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Appendix 1: List of criterial* and non-criterial attributes of CLT (with codes)

(Non-criterial attributes are in italics)
Goal focus (principal goals)
GF 1   To develop students' communicative competence in L2, defined as including grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic competencies.
GF 2   To have students use L2 productively and receptively in authentic exchanges.
GF 3   Other

Theoretical assumptions (beliefs, principles etc underlying approach)
TAS 1   Students should be actively involved in the construction of meaning.
TAS 2   Learning L2 involves students solving their own problems in interactive sessions with peers and teachers.
TAS 3   Communicative competence is best developed in the context of social interaction.
TAS 4   Communication among classroom participants should be authentic i.e. not

staged or manipulated by a power figure.

TAS 5 Communication should be stimulated by genuine issues and tasks.

TAS 6 Communication should follow a natural pattern of discourse rather than be pre-determined or routine.

TAS 7 Classroom culture should be characterised by teacher/student tolerance of learner error.

TAS 8 Risk taking by students should be encouraged.

TAS 9 Classroom culture should be characterised by student centeredness ie, an emphasis on student needs and socio-cultural differences in students' styles of learning.

TAS 10 Emphasis should be placed on meaning-focused self-expression rather than language structure.

TAS 11 Grammar should be situated within activities directed at the development of communicative competence rather than being the singular focus of lessons.

TAS 12 Resources should be linguistically and culturally authentic.

TAS 13 More attention should be given, initially, to fluency and appropriate usage than structured correctness.

TAS 14 Use of L2 as a medium of classroom communication should be optimized.

TAS 15 Other

Strategies (methods used with a CLT approach)

S 1 Role plays

S 2 Games

S 3 Small group and paired activities

S 4 Experiences with resources involving speaking, listening, writing and reading in L2

S 5 Tasks requiring the negotiation of meaning

S 6 Asking questions of students that require the expression of opinions and the formulation of reasoned positions.

S 7 Other

Social system

Teacher Roles

TR 1 Facilitator of communication processes

TR 2 Guide rather than transmitter of knowledge

TR 3 Organizer of resources

TR 4 Analyst of student needs

TR 5 Counselor/corrector

TR 6 Group process manager

TR 7 Other

Student Roles

SR 1 Active participant, asking for information, seeking clarification, expressing opinions, debating

SR 2   Negotiator of meaning

SR 3   Proactive team member

SR 4   Monitor of own thought processes

SR 5   Other

Teacher-Student Relationships

TSR 1   Friendly

TSR 2   Cooperative

TSR 3   Informal where possible

TSR 4   Other

Normal student behaviours (behaviours that teacher wants students to display during lessons)

NSB 1   Engaging in autonomous action, defining and solving own problems

NSB 2   Risk taking

NSB 3   Activity-oriented behaviors

NSB 4   Cooperation with peers, teacher

NSB 5   Using L2 as much as possible

NSB 6   Other

Support System

Teaching Skills

TS 1   General teaching and management skills

TS 2   Skills in the use of technology

TS 3   Ability and commitment to work with community

TS 4   Other

Teacher attributes

TAT 1   Outgoingness

TAT 2   Proficiency in L2 (for non-native speakers)

TAT 3   Proficiency in English (for native speakers of L2)

TAT 4   Fascination with L2 and its culture (non-native speakers)

TAT 5   Teaching experience

TAT 6   Experience as a resident in the L2 culture

TAT 7   Other

Special resources (resources needed over and above usual resources in classrooms)

SPR 1   Authentic L2 materials

SPR 2   Human resources with facility in L2 in community

SPR 3   Internet; CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) resources

SPR 4   Other

Principles of teacher reaction (Guidelines used by the teacher in reacting to student questions, responses, initiations, etc)

PTR 1   Encourages learners to initiate and participate in meaningful interaction in L2

PTR 2   Supports learner risk taking (e.g. going beyond memorized patterns and routine expressions

PTR 3   Places minimal emphasis in error correction and explicit instruction on language rules

PTR 4   Emphasizes learner autonomy and choice of language, topic

PTR 5   Focuses on learners and their needs

PTR 6   Encourages student self-assessment of progress

PTR 7   Focuses on form as need arises

PTR 8   Other

Instructional and nurturant effects

Instructional

IE 1   Proficiency in L2

IE 2   Greater understanding of one's own culture and mother tongue

IE 3   Other

Nurturant

NE 1   Respect, fascination for L2 and its culture

NE 2   Other

Teacher affect

Grand other

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