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PRE-SERVICE CHINESE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

(EFL) TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION

OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

BY

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ABSTRACT

The government of China requires that the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) should be applied in primary and secondary school English education by issuing the *New Curriculum* early in 2001 to develop learners' competence of using the language; however, implementation of CLT is still a big challenge confronting pre-service Chinese EFL teachers who experienced the traditional teaching approach over an extensive period of time. I conducted a case study research on the perceptions about CLT of twelve pre-service EFL teachers from Liaoning Province, China, to explore: a) what are pre-service Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions about CLT and its implementation in the Chinese context? b) What are the important factors that affect their perceptions about CLT and its implementation?

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory was applied as the framework to examine the process of the participants' perceptions. The study indicates that these pre-service EFL teachers considered CLT as an ineffective teaching approach for transferring linguistic knowledge, but they suggested implementing a small amount of communicative

activities to relieve the repressed feelings of learners who learn English under the

traditional teaching approach. The examination system, the previous English learning

experience, the internalized Chinese culture of learning, and the pre-existing beliefs of

teaching are the important factors influencing how these pre-service teachers were

aware of, understood, interpreted, and emotionally related to English teaching using a

communicative approach. These pre-service EFL teachers developed new beliefs of

teaching in the process of training; however, lack of role models in the local

educational realities prevented them from applying and creating communicative

methods. Therefore, I suggest that teacher educators incorporate reflective discussions

and demonstrate various implementations of CLT in EFL teacher-training programs.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of Problem

China has the largest number of people learning English. English language education is tied into the whole Chinese educational system. Today, English is a compulsory course in the curriculum for primary, middle, and high school students, college or university students, and graduate students up to doctorial degree candidates. In cities, many preschools put English into their curricula. On average, by the time Chinese students graduate from college, they should have studied English for about 2000 hours over more than ten years (柏舟[Bo Zhou], 2000; Zhang & Gao, 2001).

However, the actual picture of Chinese English learners' accomplishments, especially their communicative competence, is far from satisfactory. An article with the title *Crazy English: Good or Bad* clearly describes the situation of learning English in China: "No matter if it [English] is useful or not, you have to learn it; No matter if you learn it or not, you will never be able to use it" (张[Zhang], 2011). Learning English seems to have fallen into a dilemma in China. Although English learners have put a lot of efforts into learning the language, they have not developed the competence for using it.

One important reason for the lack of communicative competence in Chinese learners has been recognized in the teaching approach in schools. English language teaching (ELT) in China is often centered on the teacher, the textbook, and grammar. In other words, English teaching in China mainly focuses on mastery of grammar and vocabulary taught by the teacher using a textbook (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Hu, 2002;

Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; MOE, 2001; Parry & Su, 1998; Yen, 1987). This kind of

teaching approach fails to develop an adequate level of communicative competence in

learners.

In the new century, an effort has been made by the Chinese government to

improve English teaching in schools. In 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Education

(MOE) issued *The New English Curriculum (NEC)* for primary and secondary schools.

The *NEC* advocates a pedagogy reform to change the situation in which teachers

emphasize linguistic knowledge but neglect students' real competence in using

English (MOE, 2001). It states that English teachers should consider students'

interests, experiences, and cognition in teaching. Various teaching methods such as

participation, cooperation, and conversation are suggested in the *NEC* for the purpose

of developing English learners' synthesized competence of using the language. In

short, the *NEC* promotes a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach.

Teachers play a key role in this pedagogy reform, because they determine

whether the curriculum innovation can be successfully implemented in a classroom as

intended by the policymakers (Wang, 2010). Although EFL school teachers have been

required by the Chinese government to adapt and incorporate communicative

elements into their teaching, the traditional teaching approach in secondary schools is

still prevalent today, especially in underdeveloped regions of China (Fan, 2009; Fang,

2011; Yu & Wang, 2009). How to localize the communicative language teaching

approach required by the Chinese government to benefit EFL learners is still a

profound challenge facing EFL teachers in China (Yu & Wang, 2009).

The pedagogical reform poses specific challenges for pre-service EFL teachers who are in the process of exploring different methodological approaches and developing their personalized practice (Mak, 2011). Many pre-service teachers who have learned English under the traditional teaching approach in middle and high schools are affected by that way of teaching. When they are confronted with the Western-based communicative teaching approach, they may have to face the different educational values and beliefs between China and Western countries[1] where CLT originated. They may experience tensions between different beliefs about language teaching, and this will affect their implementation of new teaching methodologies (Mak, 2011). Therefore, it is important to explore how pre-service Chinese EFL teachers perceive CLT and its implementation in China. Pre-service teachers' perceptions about the implementation of CLT can contribute to understanding the possibilities and directions of implementation of CLT in China.

The Pilot Study Research

From March to July, 2011, I had a chance to teach in the teacher-training program at Liaoning Normal University (LLNU) in Dalian. The students, on whom I conducted a pilot study, were third-year undergraduate students majoring in English education. This study aimed at understanding how these students majoring in English education learned English in middle and high school and how they understood the implementation of CLT in an EFL class in China. I asked the students to fill in a short

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[1] I use "western countries" to indicate the developed countries in Europe and North America, such as the USA, England, etc.

answer questionnaire[2] about their English learning backgrounds and assigned them to

do a few quick writes in class. The writing assignments included topics such as how

they had learned English, why they learned English, and what they thought about the

communicative teaching approach.

Fifty nine quick writing assignments were received from the two classes

responding to the question how they learned English. The writings show that many of

the students started to learn English in their early childhood - in primary school or

even preschool. Although some of them mentioned a few enjoyable teaching methods

such as games or dialogues in their early years of learning English, most of them

pointed out that they had learned English under a very mechanical and traditional

teaching approach in middle and high school. Some of their direct quotes that

represent the repeated issues among them are listed below. I tried to keep any

correction to a minimum, but in some places I made some corrections for the sake of

readability.

- I learned English through memorizing vocabulary, reading passages for many

    times, reciting passages, doing exam-oriented exercises;

- I learned what the teacher taught and followed the teacher;

- Learning results depend on whether one has a good teacher or not;

- I learned phonics to acquire a good pronunciation;

- I made sentences with words;

- I learned English for passing through exams as the motivation;

---

[2] See Appendix A.

- I learned English to get a good job;

- Learning English was boring.

- Speaking was not included in our teaching or learning;

- I was afraid of making mistakes in communication;

- I was not confident in my pronunciation and intonation;

- I was able to get high grades in exams, but was not good at communication;

- I improved listening and speaking by watching English movies and TV series at college;

- Learning English was forced by my parents.

These repeated issues signify that these students, who learned English in middle and high school from 2002 to 2008, tended to consider English learning as an exam-oriented, teacher-centered, and mechanical process. They were concerned with their communicative competence in English; their experiences of English communication in secondary schools seem to have been limited to reading texts, making sentences, and having good pronunciation and intonation. Many of the students mentioned watching English movies as a method to improve their hearing and speaking at college, but not in middle or high school. Although they were English major students and had learned English for at least nine years, many of them didn't feel confident in English communication. These repeated issues confirmed the statement that the traditional teaching approach was still prevalent in EFL class in China even after the publication of the *NEC* in 2001 (Fan, 2009; Fang, 2011; Yu & Wang, 2009). This kind of approach did not succeed in helping these English learners

develop their communicative competence (Yu & Wang, 2009).

In order to explore the views of the students on CLT in my pilot study, I also conducted a workshop on CLT in May 2011 and welcomed the students majoring in English education to participate. Fourteen students participated in this workshop. I introduced what CLT was[3] and let them try some communicative activities including "information gap," "questionnaires"[4] etc. I also emphasized that CLT was a teaching approach under which teachers could create various teaching methods based on learners' needs. The fourteen participants evaluated their English oral communicative competence based on a Face-to-Face Scale [2] created by me, and wrote their reflections on these activities and their initial ideas about application of CLT in English class in China on an evaluation sheet[3]. Their reflections on CLT are sorted below in two categories: the issues that may prevent the participants from applying CLT in their future teaching, and the issues that may encourage them to use it. The quotes of the fourteen participants about preventing and encouraging factors are listed in the following table. Some spelling mistakes were corrected by me.

Issues that may prevent them from applying CLT	Issues that may encourage them to use CLT
1. CLT cannot guarantee quality teaching.	a) CLT is interesting.

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[3] See Appendix C to find the handout.

[4] See Appendix D, E, F.

[2] See Appendix B.

[3] See Appendix G.

2. Teaching with CLT is not systematic.	b) CLT is good to develop learners' interests.
3. Teaching with CLT cannot build a solid foundation for students.	c) CLT is good to develop learners' oral English.
4. It takes teachers too much time to prepare for teaching.	d) CLT is good to build learners' confidence.
5. High qualification of teachers is required.	e) Learners don't need to repeat the traditional way of learning as we did.
6. I am short of ideas of teaching	f) It's relaxing.
7. CLT is too complex.	g) CLT can increase learners' curiosity and enthusiasm.
8. Application of CLT needs a good relationship between the teacher and the learner.	h) CLT is good to activate students.
9. Learners lack interest in learning English.	i) CLT is good to develop students' creativity.
10. It is hard to encourage learners to participate.	j) It helps to create a good, interactive, and fair relationship between the teacher and the student.
11. Learners aim at receiving high scores in exams.	k) It is useful to develop one's language ability from all aspects.
12. Learners' quality is not good enough.	
13. Students lack the self-control ability.	
14. Parents like to see the improvement of their children in grades rather than their communicative competence.	l) It is good for the development of students, the society, the education, and the human thoughts.

15. It is not easy to manage a big-sized class using CLT. 16. The class time is limited. 17. The cost of using CLT is high. 18. There are few available teaching materials.	m) It is good to impress students. n) It is useful to enforce students' understanding.

Table 1: Factors Affecting Implementation of CLT Discovered in The Pilot Study

The data listed above illustrate the difficulties and the advantages of applying CLT in a Chinese context based on the fourteen participants' understandings. With regard to the issues that encouraged them to apply CLT in their future teaching, they paid more attention to the needs of learners. They agreed that CLT was a good teaching approach to improve learners' communicative competence, develop their confidence, and create a relaxed and motivating learning environment. All of the fourteen participants expressed that they would try the communicative approach in their future teaching. Addressing learners' needs may reflect that the participants were unsatisfied with English teaching that they had experienced as learners in schools before entering college.

But with regard to difficulties of applying CLT in China, they took more variables into consideration. They doubted the real teaching results of CLT, teacher's qualification and competence to manage CLT, learners' will and ability to cooperate, among other issues.

The data also demonstrate some of the complex relationships between participants' views on CLT and their prior learning experiences. They seemed to have

a love-hate relationship to CLT. On the one hand, they regarded the traditional

teaching approach as problematic and were attracted by CLT; on the other hand, their

doubts on CLT represented a departure of this new approach from their prior

experience. Their previous mechanical English learning experiences seemed to

motivate them to change the traditional pedagogy and try CLT; but at the same time,

how to incorporate CLT in teaching was restricted by their experiences of learning

English as well. There existed a gap between the implementation of the new teaching

approach and the participants' prior learning experiences.

The participants' doubts on CLT reflected their beliefs about teaching and

learning English. Issues 1, 2, & 3 listed above reflect their understandings of efficient

English teaching. They seemed to regard building a systematic and solid foundation

for learners as important in teaching. Issues 4 and 5 may reflect their understandings

of the teacher role in class. Issues 6, 7, & 8 reflect their knowledge of CLT. Issues 9 to

13 reflect their understandings of the role of the learner. The rest of the issues indicate

their concerns for the teaching environment and conditions.

The pilot study provided me some initial understandings about the students who

were studying English education in the university. In the pilot study, some of their

views on CLT were revealed. But the pilot study had its limitations: First, I had

introduced CLT in the workshop and had demonstrated some CLT-activities to the

fourteen participants. My introduction and demonstrations may have influenced their

understandings of CLT, and, therefore, may have affected their views on CLT. Second,

the pilot study focused on exploring the school English learning experiences but

neglected to examine how they had been trained in the teacher-training program in the university, which should have played another important role in constructing their views toward CLT. Third, their views on CLT were explored mainly based on their one-time reflections in the workshop. There was not an opportunity to get detailed clarifications, which would have deepened the data, nor was there an opportunity to analyze and verify the data over a long period of time.

So, based on what I had learned from the pilot study, I decided to conduct a more in depth research on Chinese pre-service EFL teachers'[4] perceptions about CLT and its implementation in the Chinese context.

Research Questions

The research mainly aimed at exploring two questions:

A. What are Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about CLT and its implementation in the Chinese context?

B. What are the important factors that affect their perceptions about CLT and its implementation?

To answer the two questions, I conducted case studies on twelve pre-service EFL teachers, who were studying English Education in Liaoning Normal University in Dalian, Province Liaoning. The training program mainly aimed at training qualified EFL teachers for primary and secondary schools. Nine of the twelve participants were also preparing for the coming examinations for graduate study, when I conducted the

---

[4] I use the term "pre-service teachers" to indicate student teachers who study English education at college.

study with them. I conducted my study during a particular period within their training program, namely the educational practicum that took place from the end of September to November, 2012 in a local secondary school in Dalian. The research was done before, during, and after their educational practicum in three local secondary schools. The concrete sub questions of my research are listed as follows:

1. What are the pre-service Chinese EFL teachers' understandings of CLT and its implementation as well as their beliefs of English teaching before the teaching practicum?

2. What are the understandings and interpretations of the pre-service EFL teachers about English teaching in a practicum school?

3. What beliefs of teaching and perceptions about CLT are represented in pre-service EFL teachers' teaching behavior during the educational practicum?

4. What post-practicum reflections on implementation of CLT do they have based on their practicum experiences?

Purpose and Significance

My case study research aimed at gaining in-depth insights into pre-service Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions about CLT and its implementation in the Chinese context, and uncovering important factors that play a significant role in shaping their perceptions.

This study may be significant in the following aspects:

Although the *NEC* was issued early in 2001, English teaching in Chinese secondary schools has remained virtually unchanged (Fan, 2009; Fang, 2011; Yu &

Wang, 2009). Some reasons for the unsuccessful implementation of *NEC* have been recognized by some scholars (more details can be read in Chapter II); however, there are insufficient empirical studies conducted on the implementation of CLT by scholars in China - a big country with a lot of educational diversity (Zhao & Mo, 2005). Thus, my study, which aims at collecting bottom-up data from local pre-service EFL teachers, analyzes some of the complexity involved in implementing CLT in the local educational context in Liaoning Province and may contribute to the discussion about the localization of CLT in China.

Studies have also shown that teachers' qualification is one important constraint in applying new teaching methodologies in China (Xie, 2010). However, the training and education in English language teaching (ELT) education programs appeared inadequate in training qualified EFL teachers (Zhu, 2010); a thorough reform was regarded as necessary in ELT education programs (Wang, 2010; Zhu, 2010). My research on pre-service teachers' perceptions about CLT and its implementation may inform EFL teacher educators about pre-service teachers' concerns for implementation of CLT and inspire them to make some adaption for training more qualified EFL teachers.

Furthermore, in the field of English teaching, there has been little attempt to define what it means to teach English as a foreign language rather than as a second a language (Muller et al., 2011). English teaching in China is, on the one hand, affected by the English teaching trends in the world, and, on the other hand, may be able to affect the trends as well (Wang, 2010). Therefore, this research on the local

pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT may illustrate what teaching of English means to local pre-service EFL teachers and may also contribute to the discussion about how the international trends of English teaching interact with local Chinese EFL teachers.

Limitation of the Study

The limitation of this study comes from the researcher who was both an insider and an outsider in the field of study. As an insider, I had experienced learning English in middle and high school in my hometown – Benxi, Liaoning. I could understand the participants relatively easily, because they were sharing the same cultural background with me to a large extent. However, this similar cultural background simultaneously formed a barrier for me in interpreting the data. I may attach too much importance to some issues depending on my experience and may not be sensitive enough to realize the differences between the participants and me. Concerning with this limitation, I tried to analyze the participants' words and behaviors in the process of data collection by making the familiar strange and the strange familiar. In other words, I tried to put what was familiar to me into my consciousness again and rethink what it meant to the participants. I also paid specific attention to the unfamiliar data in order not to regard them as irrelevant and neglect them. But at the same time, I was also an outsider in the research, especially when my experience with English education in China was considered. My major was German studies. I didn't get into the field of EFL until I started with my doctoral study in 2008. My knowledge about English education in China had been mainly obtained by means of reading. In addition, I had been out of

China from 2005 to 2011. So my personal experience with English teaching in China was limited, which may prevent me from understanding the newest development of English teaching both in secondary schools and in teacher-training programs. So I talked with two English teacher educators a few times and hoped to compensate part of this shortage. I also talked with some of my local friends and relatives about English teaching to see how they understood current English teaching from their perspectives.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review aspects of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and theories about teachers' beliefs, which are two theoretical frameworks in my study; introduce features and principles of CLT approach in language class; introduce the history and the current situation of English education in China; describe the traditional but still prevalent pedagogy in Chinese EFL class; and analyze the cultural, linguistic, as well as ideological factors affecting the traditional pedagogy in China.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory.

The theoretical framework underpinning my study is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which argues that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Wertsch (1991) summarizes three major themes in Vygotsky's writings: 1) individual development has its origins in social sources; 2) human action is mediated by tools and signs; and 3) the first two themes are best examined through genetic analysis (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). These three themes are tightly intertwined in Vygotsky's work, and "much of their power derives from the ways in which they presuppose one another" (Wertsch, 1991, p.19).

Individual and social.

Mental functioning in the individual derives from participation in social life; the specific structures and processes of intramental functioning that exists within an individual can be traced to their genetic precursors on the intermental plane which

occurs in the relationship between people (Wertsch, 1991). Individuals are controlled first by the objects in their environment and by others, and then gain control over their own social and cognitive activities (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky (1978) writes:

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice. First, on the social level and later on the psychological level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equality to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (p.57)

Environment is the source of the individual's development. Child development is achieved under particular conditions of interaction with the environment (Vygotsky, 1994). That children depend on their caregivers to acquire their first language is an example to explain the relationship between the individual and social settings (Mahn, 1997). An infant acquires communicative intent to the initial sounds from a caregiver and achieves mutual understanding through interaction with others.

When the influence of environment on one's development is taken into consideration, not only the nature of the situation itself should be examined, but the child's understanding and awareness of the situation should also be included, because the same event will have a different meaning for children who possess various awarenesses of it (Vygotsky, 1994). In other words, the influence of the environment depends not only on the nature of the situation itself, but also on the extent of one's

understanding and awareness of the situation. Vygotsky (1994) used the concept of *perezhivanie,* which has been translated as *emotional experience,* to explain the influence of the environment on the individual. To Vygotsky, *perezhivanie* is an indivisible unity that represents both personal characteristics and situational characteristics. He explains:

> An emotional experience [perezhivanie] is a unit where, on the one hand, in an indivisible state, the environment is represented, i.e. that which is being experienced […] and on the other hand, what is represented is how I, myself, am experiencing this, i.e., all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in an emotional experience [perezhivanie]; everything selected from the environment and all the factors which are related to our personality and are selected from the personality, all the features of its character, its constitutional elements, which are related to the event in question. (Vygotsky, 1994, para.17)

In my study, I examined the pre-service teachers' perceptions about English teaching and the communicative teaching approach in the particular training situation in China. I examined the *perezhivanie* (emotional experience) of the participants with the purpose of exploring the influence of the particular environment in China on the pre-service teachers.

Vygotsky (1994) also points out that the ideal and final form of the development not only exists in the environment and from the very start is in contact with the child, but actually influences the very first steps in this development with reference to

language acquisition. He said: "Something which is only supposed to take shape at the very end of development, somehow influences the very first steps in this development" (Vygotsky, 1994, para.42). This approach can also be applied to the experience of being a pre-service teacher, which has a particular position in a teacher's development. On the one hand, a pre-service EFL teacher can be understood as the final form of one's learning and training development. On the other hand, being a pre-service teacher is the first step of the future professional development; a pre-service teacher will interact with certain school settings and develop to the ideal form of a teacher. Thus, how pre-service Chinese EFL teachers understand English teaching in China can, on the one hand, indicate how they have experienced a certain "ideal" form of teaching that exists in their learning and training environments. On the other hand, pre-service teachers' beliefs of teaching can influence how they shape their "ideal" form of teaching in their future development.

   Mediation.

   Mediation is the key to understanding how human development is tied to social settings. Drawing on Marx and Engels' concept that humanity uses tools as the means to change nature and in the process transforms itself, Vygotsky (1978) explained that humans use signs as psychological tools to mediate human-environment interaction. Signs are created by societies over the course of human history and develop socially and culturally. They mediate social and individual functioning and connect the external and the internal (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Humans use signs to mediate and regulate the relationships with others and with themselves rather

than acting directly on the external world (Lantolf, 2000). One of the most important psychological tools, or signs, is human language. Languages play a central role in inhibiting and initiating individual behaviors.

Semiotic mediation is fundamental to Vygotsky's concept of internalization and the individual development from interpersonal processes to intrapersonal ones (Vygotsky, 1978). In regard to foreign language learning, one learns a language not by memorizing arbitrary linguistic shapes and sounds; rather, one engages in social activities such as schooling, making conversations, and so on. These social activities are mediated by all kinds of material signs like gestures, facial expressions, linguistic shapes, and sounds. Through these meditational means, external social interactions become internalized.

The concept of internalization plays a central role in Vygotsky's theory of learning and development. Development is understood as the "transformation of socially shared activities into internalized processes" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 5). All higher mental functions are internalized social relationships (Wells, 1999). Based on this understanding, *language acquisition* can be understood as internalization of the language of social interaction from interpsychological to intrapsychological planes (Ohta, 2000). With regard to second or foreign language learning, internalization is a process in which learners construct a mental representation of what was at one point physically present in external form (Lantolf, 2003).

Vygotsky drew an analogy between the processes involved in learning a foreign

language and the processes involved in learning scientific concepts (Vygotsky, 1987). Learning a foreign language through formal school instruction is fundamentally different from learning a native language spontaneously in context. The two learning processes go in opposite directions (Vygotsky, 1987). Learning a native language is based on concrete experiences and sensory details. Children find countless opportunities to practice hearing, speaking, reading, and writing the language. By contrast, learning a foreign language at school includes analytic procedures and a level of conscious awareness that is not present in one's learning of his native language (Ohta, 2000). In the development of a foreign language, *instruction* plays an important role to learners (Vygotsky, 1987).

Learning a native language and learning a foreign language are interrelated as well. Learning of a foreign language depends on one's native speech (Vygotsky, 1987). Since language initiates and inhibits one's behavior, including learning and teaching, characteristics of the first language and experiences of learning it affect one's understandings of how a foreign language should be taught and learned. A study has shown that the behavior of English language learners in China has grown out of their experiences as literate Chinese people (Parry & Su, 1998). When reading an English text, Chinese learners tend to use a bottom up strategy and an analytical approach, which are often used to clarify meanings of a Chinese text.

However, learning a new language doesn't repeat the process that has occurred in acquisition of a native language. As spontaneously acquired knowledge mediates the learning of new knowledge, one's first language works as mediation in the process of

acquiring meaning in a second language. Vygotsky (1987) said:

> Learning a new language does not begin with the acquisition of a new orientation to the object world. It is not a repetition of the developmental process that occurred in the acquisition of the native language. The process begins with a system that has already been learned, a system that stands between the newly learned language and the world of things. (p. 180)

In turn, learning a foreign language exerts influence on the native language (Vygotsky, 1987). Learning a foreign language raises the level of development of the child's native speech, because the child's "consciousness of linguistic forms, and the level of his abstraction of linguistic phenomena, increases" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 179). The child develops "a more conscious, voluntary capacity to use words as tools of thought and as means of expressing ideas" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 179).

Furthermore, internalization of culturally produced sign systems can bring about behavioral transformations and form a bridge between early and later forms of individual development (Vygotsky, 1978), thus, learning of another language provides new social and cultural content to the learner and, therefore, has the potential to change one's original culturally and socially constructed behavior. Learning a foreign language, under certain circumstances, can lead to the reformation of one's mental system, including one's concept of self (Lantolf, 2000). When language learners use signs of a foreign language to convey meanings in a communicative context, their use of these signs is likely to influence the way they view the reality they are talking or writing about (Kramsch, 2000). Learning another tongue provides another way to

create, convey, and exchange signs.

Chinese pre-service EFL teachers have lived in the environments in which Chinese is used as the main mediation tool. Their beliefs of teaching have been deeply influenced by the Chinese social environment. However, pre-service EFL teachers have learned English at least for ten years and have had opportunities to use English to read, to hear, to see cultures of English speaking countries, or even opportunities to communicate with native English speakers. Thus, learning and using the English language may also influence their views on realities in China, including the reality of English education in schools. Learning of a new language may give them opportunities to live in an environment that is no longer limited to their original social and cultural values. Especially in the process of teacher training at college, teacher students learn the English language and educational theories intensively. Their original beliefs that have been developed culturally and socially in their schooling time may be altered during training at college. In a word, possible change of teaching beliefs may occur and potential innovations of teaching may exist in these pre-service EFL teachers.

Genetic approach.

A genetic approach is motivated by the assumption that it is possible to "understand many aspects of mental functioning only if one understands their origin and the transitions they have undergone" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 19). Since human beings inherit cultural artifacts from their ancestors, who in turn inherit these artifacts from their ancestors, Vygotsky reasoned that the only adequate approach to the study of

higher mental abilities was historical (Lantolf, 2000). A genetic approach concentrates

on the process rather than the product of development. It examines the origins and the

history of phenomena, focusing on their interconnectedness (John-Steiner & Mahn,

1996; Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky (1978) explained the importance of a genetic

approach:

> To encompass in research the process of a given thing's development in all its
>
> phases and change- from birth to death – fundamentally means to discover its
>
> nature, its essence, for 'it is only movement that a body shows what it is.'
>
> Thus, the historical study of behavior is not an auxiliary aspect of theoretical
>
> study, but rather forms its very base. (p. 65)

Using a genetic approach, Vygotsky explains the relation between individual and

social. The historically evolved human traits and attributes exist in the environment,

but the only way they can be found in each individual human being is on the strength

of his being a member of a certain social group (Vygotsky, 1994). Individual

represents a certain historical unit living at a certain historical period and in certain

historical circumstances (Vygotsky, 1994).

The genetic approach is not necessarily an argument for the exclusive use of

long-term longitudinal studies that cover extensive time spans, because development

may also occur over relatively short periods of time; for example, learning can take

place during a single interaction between the tutor and the student (Lantolf & Thorn,

2006).

In my study, I examined the process of perceptions of the twelve pre-service

Chinese EFL teachers during the particular period of their practicum in local secondary schools using a genetic approach in order to discover significant factors affecting their perceptions about English teaching.

These pre-service EFL teachers were in the process of developing from English learners to EFL teachers in a teacher-training program in Liaoning. As Vygotsky points out, the way in which the environment is perceived, internalized, appropriated, understood, and acted upon is a determining factor in human development (Vygotsky, 1994). Therefore, influence of the particular training situation on these pre-service EFL teachers depended not only on the nature of the particular training context, but also on the extent of these pre-service teachers' *perezhivanie* – their perceptions, understandings, and awareness of the context and their interactions in it.

In my study, I examined the process of the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about English teaching during a particular training period and carried out an analysis of the pre-service EFL teachers' *perezhivanie (emotional experience)* to see how the pre-service teachers became aware of, interpreted, and emotionally related to English teaching using a communicative approach in a local secondary school.

Teachers' Beliefs

Belief is a common concept studied in the diverse fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy and many other disciplines (Zheng, 2009). Studies on beliefs in these fields have resulted in a variety of meanings. By reviewing prior research on teachers' beliefs, Zheng (2009) summarized some common characteristics in defining teacher beliefs. First of all, belief is understood as a "subset

of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions" (Zheng, 2009, p. 74). Belief seems to be one of the forms for representing one's mental states and initiating one's actions. Moreover, according to Zheng (2009), beliefs are often understood as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions felt to be true" (p. 17); therefore, beliefs act as a filter through which new knowledge and experience are screened for meaning.

Calderhead (1996) suggested examining five main areas in teachers' beliefs: beliefs about learners and learning; about teaching; about subject; about learning to teach; about the self and the teaching role. These different areas of beliefs are interconnected. For instance, beliefs about teaching may be closely related to beliefs about learning (Zheng, 2009). Based on Calderhead's categories, beliefs of teaching, in my study, mainly refer to understandings, premises, or propositions that teachers believe to be true and that help initiate and inhibit teachers' teaching psychological and physical behavior. A broad understanding of beliefs of teaching is applied in my study. Beliefs of teaching include understandings of the role of the teacher and the learner in an EFL classroom, understandings of efficient ways of learning and teaching English, knowledge and evaluations of pedagogies, meanings ascribed to the English language and English teaching in China, and interpretations of the teaching environment in China.

Sixteen assumptions about beliefs of teaching.

Pajares (1992) examined prominent researchers' studies on beliefs and offered a

synthesis of findings about the nature of beliefs. He offered sixteen inferences and

generalizations as fundamental assumptions that may reasonably be made when

initiating a study of teachers' educational beliefs (Pajares, 1992). The sixteen

assumptions are accepted as the fundamental understandings of beliefs of teaching in

my research. In the table below, I list the sixteen assumptions and how the

assumptions are applied in my study.

Pajares' 16 assumptions	Application in my study
1. Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience.	- It is important to study how participants talk about their schooling and training experience to uncover their current beliefs of teaching. - Beliefs of teaching may help predict the future teaching behavior of the participants. - This may also help explain why the traditional approach is still widespread in China. If teachers formed their beliefs in the traditional teaching approach early in their lives, they may not change their teaching easily when CLT is applied as a new pedagogy to them.

2. Individuals develop a belief system that houses all the beliefs acquired through the process of cultural transmission	Beliefs are acquired through cultural transmission and develop in the process of one's participation in social activities. The origin of one's beliefs is the social environment. Thus, Chinese EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs are derived from their participation in social activities under particular conditions, including learning and training.
3. The belief system has an adaptive function in helping individuals define and understand the world and themselves.	- One's beliefs regulate one's perception and behavior. - Beliefs of the participants may be uncovered from their talking about how they understand the world and themselves as teachers.
4. Knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined, but the potent affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted.	- Examining the participants' knowledge of various pedagogies helps understand their beliefs of teaching. - Beliefs of teaching affect how one interprets CLT. In turn, the interpretation uncovers one's beliefs

	of teaching. - By analyzing data, affective and evaluative statements may help uncover beliefs of teaching.
5. Thought processes may well be precursors to and creators of belief, but the filtering effect of belief structures ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing.	A dialectical relationship exists between thoughts and beliefs.
6. Epistemological beliefs play a key role in knowledge interpretation and cognitive monitoring.	Beliefs of learning affect one's perception and cognition. Particularly, one's beliefs of learning influence one's beliefs of teaching.
7. Beliefs are prioritized according to their connections or relationship to other beliefs or other cognitive and affective structures. Apparent inconsistencies may be explained by exploring the functional connections and centrality of the beliefs	- Beliefs of teaching are tied into one's belief system. - Inconsistency may be found in beliefs discovered in participants' talking, writing, and doing.
8. Belief substructures, such as	Beliefs of teaching are a complex

educational beliefs, must be understood in terms of their connections not only to each other but also to other, perhaps more central beliefs in the system. Psychologists usually refer to these substructures as attitudes and values.	subsystem under one's system of beliefs. Beliefs of teaching should be understood in terms of the connections among beliefs.
9. By their very nature and origin, some beliefs are more incontrovertible than others.	When inconsistency of beliefs appears, I may explain it by examining which one is more incontrovertible.
10. The earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter. Newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable to change.	Beliefs of teaching that came into being during the process of schooling may have a strong influence on the participants. In my study, I allow participants to recall their schooling experience. I need to pay attention to what they talk about and how they talk.
11. Belief change during adulthood is a relatively rare phenomenon, the most common cause being a conversion from one authority to another or a gestalt shift. Individuals tend to hold on to beliefs based on incorrect or incomplete	This point may be helpful in data analysis. - When one strongly believes in the effectiveness of the traditional approach, he may not use CLT in their future teaching.

knowledge, even after scientifically correct explanations are presented to them.	- When one has incorrect knowledge of CLT, he may not change his teaching.
12. Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; hence, they play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information.	- Beliefs can indicate the teaching behavior of pre-service teachers. From the beliefs of teaching of the participants, I may be able to predict their future teaching. - One's beliefs of teaching can be recognized by examining one's teaching behavior.
13. Beliefs strongly influence perception, but they can be an unreliable guide to the nature of reality.	- Beliefs and the reality are different. - What the participants talk about their experience of schooling and training should not be regarded as the reality, but as personal construction of the reality. Participants' words will be analyzed as data to uncover the participants' perceptions of teaching.
14. Individuals' beliefs strongly affect their behavior.	Pre-service teachers' beliefs of teaching indicate their teaching behavior.
15. Beliefs must be inferred, and this	I try to combine participants' writings,

inference must take into account the congruence among individuals' belief statements, the intentionality to behave in a predisposed manner, and the behavior related to the belief in question.	talking, and their teaching behavior in my study to infer their beliefs of teaching. Their demonstration lessons in the school are used as the moment in which their teaching behavior is observed.
16. Beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student gets to college.	- Experience prior to the college study has an intense influence on one's belief of teaching. It is important to know participants' previous experience with English learning and teaching - In the sociocultural framework, pre-service teachers develop themselves through interaction with the training environment. Since the teaching environment in China is experiencing a reform, pre-service teachers may develop themselves in the training as well.

Table 2: Pajares' Assumptions About Beliefs Of Teaching

Studies on beliefs of teaching.

Since the late 1970s, the research on teachers' cognition has progressed through

three distinct stages: research on teachers' planning, teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions, as well as teachers' beliefs and implicit theories (Zheng, 2009). Since the 1990s, the third phase of research has focused on the exploration of the knowledge and beliefs that lay behind the practice of teaching.

Many factors have been attributed to the development of pre-service EFL teacher beliefs. In the following, some studies on pre-service teachers' beliefs are reviewed to demonstrate the complex relationships between pre-service teachers' beliefs and many factors.

Relationship between pre-service teachers' beliefs and past learning experience. It is acknowledged that some pre-service teachers' beliefs are largely derived from their prior experiences. Pre-service teachers' prior experience of learning may adversely affect their learning approach to teaching (Mak, 2011; Pajares, 1992; Zheng, 2009). Also, language teachers' assumptions about how the foreign language should be learned are likely to affect their way of teaching (Mak, 2011).

Culturally-influenced beliefs. Exploring how one pre-service EFL teacher's beliefs interacted with her teaching decisions, Mak (2011) found that some pre-existing beliefs of the participant such as emphasis on knowledge transmission influenced her beliefs of teaching. The influence of these beliefs seemed to be deep-rooted and less explicit to the participant. The culturally-influenced beliefs seemed to hinder the participant's desire to explore other pedagogical options (Mak, 2011).

Pre-service EFL teacher beliefs and teacher education programs. Miller &

Aldred (2000) investigated pre-service teachers' beliefs and perceptions about CLT

methods in the Hong Kong teaching/learning context by conducting naturalistic

research in their methodology course. They found that the participants' perceptions

regarding the negative statements about CLT shifted at the end of the methodology

course. They argued that the process of discussion, evaluation, and reflection should

be built into the teacher education program, which is valuable for both the student

teachers and the teacher educators.

Pre-service EFL teacher beliefs and classroom practices. The relationship

between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices is complex. Pre-service EFL teachers'

beliefs influence what they say and do in a classroom, which, in turn, shapes their

beliefs (Zheng, 2009). Mak (2011) found that one participant was forced to reflect on

and modify her belief in teacher talk, when she had to apply her beliefs in a different

teaching situation. However, the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom

practices is an inconclusive issue. More studies are required to explore the dynamics

of different areas of teachers' beliefs and to discover which kinds of beliefs are more

prone to change and which not (Zheng, 2009).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Over the past decades, CLT has been well-acknowledged in the field of language

teaching in Western countries (Cai, 2008; Savignon, 2001; Liao, 1997). Currently, it

has spread outwards from countries where English is the native language to the

Expanding Circle and Outer Circle countries based on Kachru's (2001) category. A

methodological reform is moving from ESL countries to EFL contexts (Muller et al.,

2011). Even Chinese EFL teachers are required by the Chinese government to use CLT in primary and secondary English education (MOE, 2001). This section focuses on explaining what CLT is, examining the origins of CLT, and explaining CLT in the sociocultural framework.

What is CLT?

The *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT), also called *Communicative Approach* or *Functional Approach*, is a set of principles about language teaching including recommendations about method and syllabus. It focuses on meaningful communication rather than structure (Hui & Jin, 2010). It emphasizes that goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence (Liao, 1997). CLT is not only concerned with face-to-face oral communication, but also applies to reading and writing activities that involve readers and writers engaged in the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning. The goals of CLT depend on learner needs in a given context (Savignon, 2001).

CLT is a set of principles about language teaching under which various methods can be applied based on learners' needs. There are three basic principles that the teacher should be aware of when applying CLT: the *communicative principle* according to which activities that involve real communication should be applied to promote learning, the *task principle,* which emphasizes that activities should carry out meaningful tasks to promote learning, and the *meaningfulness principle*, which refers to the use of meaningful language to support the learning process (Hui & Jin, 2010). As CLT is a teaching approach, it has no restriction of what activities to choose in the

classroom as long as it serves the end of communication (Tong, 2008).

In comparison with the traditional grammar translation approach, the goal of CLT is to develop the communicative competence of the learner based on the understanding that language is a *tool* for communication and should be learned *through using* it, whereas the goal of the traditional approach sets linguistic competence as its desired goal. It stresses only language structures, sounds or words, thus separating language from use, situation, and role (Hui & Jin, 2010; Liao, 1997).

A language class using a CLT approach is *learner-centered*. Students are active actors and are expected to interact with other people during communication; the teacher is a guide, counselor, organizer, and facilitator. In a language class using CLT, *fluency* is often addressed more than *accuracy* (Liao, 1997).

Origins of CLT.

CLT is well recognized in the past decades; however, CLT is not a completely new idea in the field of language teaching. Throughout the long history of language teaching, there always have been advocates of a focus on meaning, instead of form (Savignon, 2001). Since the 1970s, the CLT has been put forth around the world as the "new" or "innovative" way to teach a second or foreign language, as opposed to traditional language teaching approaches. The origins of the contemporary CLT can be traced back to simultaneous developments in Europe and North America in the 1960s and 1970s.

In Europe, the CLT is seen as the British linguistic movement in the 1960s in reaction to the structuralism and behaviorism embodied in the language teaching

approach (Hui & Jin, 2010). In the late 1960s, British applied linguistics started to regard the functional and communicative aspects of a language as the fundamental dimension in language teaching. Inspired by the British applied linguistics, scholars, and language specialists argued for focusing on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures in language teaching (Hui & Jin, 2010; Savignon, 2001).

Meanwhile, in the US, Hymes (1971) reacted to Chomsky's (1965) linguistic theory of speakers' competence in which a mere linguistic system or abstract grammatical knowledge was described (Cai, 2008; Cazden, 1996; Liao, 1997; Savignon, 2001). Chomsky's theory focuses on characterizing the abstract competence speakers possess that enable them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language (Cazden, 1996). Hymes (1971) regarded this competence mentioned by Chomsky as linguistic competence, which was regarded by him as a limited aspect of a broader concept of communicative competence.

Based on Hymes' theory, communicative competence involves four dimensions: *grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence* (Liao, 1997). Grammatical competence refers to grammatical and lexical capacity. Sociolinguistic competence means an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place. Discourse competence refers to the interpretation of individual messages in terms of their connectedness and of how meaning is represented. Strategic competence indicates the coping strategies to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. Therefore, language

learning should serve the development of these four components of communicative competence.

The sociocultural theory and CLT.

Within the sociocultural framework, individual development depends on social sources (Vygotsky, 1978, 1994). Learning is internalization of the social interaction (Stock, 2002; Wertsch, 1991). It is a semiotic process attributable to participation in socially-mediated activities (Donato, 2000). In the sociocultural framework, language acquisition is realized through a collaborative process in which "learners appropriate the language of the interaction as their own, for their own purposes, building grammatical, expressive, and cultural competence through this process" (Ohta, 2000, p. 51).

Zone of proximal development (zpd) is one important aspect of Vygotsky's genetic theory of human development. Zpd is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by
> independent problem solving and the level of potential development as
> determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration
> with more capable peers. (p. 86)

By using zpd, both the maturation processes and the processes in a state of formation can be recognized (Vygotsky, 1978). Zpd determines the lower and upper bounds of the zone within which instruction should be pitched (Wells, 1999). Learning and teaching in zpd depend on social interaction and typically involve face-to-face interaction mediated by speech (Wells, 1999). A child needs to interact

with a more able member in his or her development. The more able member needs to provide assistance and scaffolding according to the child's needs. Based on this understanding, in a language classroom, teachers should not regard learners as passive recipients of knowledge, but as active co-constructors of shared understandings through interaction (Ohta, 1995). Foreign or second language acquisition should be embedded in rich social contexts of human interaction as first language acquisition does. The difference is that foreign language learners have little opportunity to interact with target native speakers in a natural context (Ohta, 1995).

Studies also show that scaffolding can occur not only in interaction between the teacher and the learner, but also in peer interaction, which is called *collective scaffolding* by Ohta (2000). Students can learn from the act of teaching others and from the act of attempting to articulate their own understanding (Allwright, 1984). Storch (2002) discovered that scaffolding is more likely to take place when pairs interact in collaborative and expert/novice patterns. In these two patterns, *collaborative dialogue*, in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building, can occur. Collaborative dialogue reflects cognitive processes such as noticing the gap, forming a hypothesis, testing and restructuring, as well as up-taking (Storch, 2002).

In a language classroom, collaborative interaction in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building provides learners opportunities to negotiate the message of the input in a target language. Negotiation of the message means making meaning. Meaningful interaction in language classrooms is

pedagogically beneficial by bridging the gap between classroom learning and the outside world through activities designed to simulate "real life" communication problems (Allwright, 1984), which contributes to improving comprehensibility of input, enhancing attention, and providing the need to produce output (Van Lier, 2000).

Collaborative interaction in a language classroom not only provides learners opportunities to negotiate the message of the input, but also helps them focus on the form of the language. During instruction, awareness of the structure and function of a language is developed by using it socially (Savignon, 2005). Utterances of teachers and other students can be seen as simultaneously process and product, namely as "saying" and "what is said." "Saying" is making meaning; and "what is said" is an objective product that can be explored further by the speaker and others (Swain, 2000). As a tool, dialogue serves language learning by mediating its own meaning and the construction of knowledge about itself. In a word, when students use a second or foreign language to solve problems, the target language, as the means of communication, can be developed as well (Allwright, 1984; Donato, 2000; Ohta, 1995; Savignon, 2005).

From the sociocultural perspective, meaningful and collaborative interaction in a language classroom is beneficial to help learners communicate with the teacher and peers, negotiate their relations with others and the outside world, practice coping strategies in a certain context, and increase awareness of linguistic knowledge. Thus, teaching with the CLT approach, which emphasizes communication through meaningful interaction among students by doing a significant amount of activities, is

useful in developing all of the four aspects of the communicative competence.

English Education in China

    History of English education in China.

    Human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Learning and teaching of English in China, which can be understood as socially and culturally situated activities, have come into being in a particular cultural, social, and political environment through Chinese history. The review of the ELT history in China in this section describes the historical facts, demonstrates the socially, culturally, and politically constructed meanings ascribed to the English language and its education.

    The history of education in China can be generally divided into two periods. The first period indicates the isolated period of China, from the ancient China to the Opium War in 1840 (Bastid, 1987). During this period, the Chinese people didn't consider it necessary to learn a foreign language, which was often regarded by them as barbarous in comparison with their civilized Chinese language (Wang, 2004). The education in China during this period depended on the discussions and practices of the Chinese educators, philosophers, and governors. Their thoughts and practices are still exerting deep influence on the education in China today.

    The second period refers to the time from 1840 to the present. In 1840, the Opium War broke out between China and the British Empire. With the defeat of China, China was forced to open its door to the Western powers. Since then, education in

China has been confronted with the outside world and affected by the negotiation of Chinese people with the outside world. The current reform of applying a communicative approach in EFL class can be understood as the negotiation with the outside world as well. The *NEC* can be understood as the Chinese government's aspiration to move Chinese education toward catching up with the rest of the world (Fang, 2011).

English education in China is a phenomenon starting in the 19th century (Lam, 2005). In 1839, a group of Anglo-American missionaries set up a school in Guangzhou that, for the first time, offered English lessons to Chinese people (Wang, 2004). Prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Western missionary education remained a consistent supplier of English language education to many Chinese people.

Official English education began in 1862 in Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) (Wang, 2004; 付 [Fu], 1986). After the Opium War, in which China was defeated by the British Empire, more and more Qing government officials realized their helplessness in the face of foreign aggression and decided to drop their imperial pride and encourage English language education (Wang, 2004). Learning the English language was first regarded by the Qing government as the means to help deal with the numerous Western powers in diplomatic exchanges at the negotiation table. Later, learning English was more and more motivated by the desire to learn Western knowledge and techniques in order to defend against the West and to establish a modern nation with economic, scientific, and military might (Lam, 2005; Wang,

2004).

After the end of Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China came into being in 1912. The Republic of China experienced many tribulations after its founding. Wars by numerous warlords, the War of resistance against Japan (1937-1945), and the Civil War (1945-1949) made it difficult for English language education to carry on (Wang, 2004).

In 1949, the People's Republic of China was established. Missionary English education came to the end; English education in China has become a task under the control of the Chinese government. In the first few years of the People's Republic of China, learning English was a task of the elite intellectuals aiming to fulfill different goals, such as self-defense in the aftermath of the Opium War or translation in the diplomatic area (Wang, 2004). In the early 1950s, China and the Soviet Union allied by communism and Chinese people were called to learn from the Soviet model; therefore, the Russian language was regarded as the preferred foreign language in China and the English education was pushed to the edge of extinction (Lam, 2005; 付 [Fu], 1986).

In the early 1960's, China broke with the Soviet Union and established more diplomatic and economic relationships with many third world countries, which made it necessary to adopt a new policy towards English education (Chang, 2006). This is the so-called "back-to-English movement" (Lam, 2005). During this period, curricula for teaching English in junior secondary school and in college were distributed. But this start of English education was annihilated in the following Cultural Revolution –

a political movement of ideological extremism in China from 1966 to 1976. During this period, English was regarded as the language of the enemy and disappeared from school education.

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese education experienced a sharp turn from the revolutionary model to the academic model. English education started to experience a rapid progress (Chen, 1981; Lam, 2005). In 1978, Deng Xiaoping announced *The Policy of Four Modernizations*, namely the modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. This modernization movement soon evolved into *the Reform and Opening Policy* in China. Advanced international science and technology were regarded as the key to modernization. The English language, therefore, was considered as the instrument to acquire the advanced international know-how and to ensure the success of the modernization and the open-door policy (Hu, 2004; Lam, 2005; Tam, 2004).

In the 1980's, English education was enormously expanded. In 1982, English was announced as the main foreign language for learners in secondary schools. In college, English started to become a learning subject not only for English major students, but also for non-English major students. In 1987, the Chinese English Test (CET) Band 4 and Band 6 were implanted as standardized exams for college non-English majors (Lam, 2005).

With China's integration into the global economy, the English language has been considered not only as the key ensuring the modernization program and the open-door policy, but also the language which can help China and Chinese people enter the

world stage (Hu, 2005b; Tam, 2004). The Chinese Ministry of Education released a series of educational reforms to adapt education to this new situation. Eight national curricula were issued between 1988 and 2001 and each of them signifies a reform in English education respectively (Hu, 2005a). The *NEC* is the eighth curriculum and the latest one issued by the MOE in 2001, according to which English has become a compulsory subject, which should be learned by students starting in third grade.

In the new century, English teaching in China is the "object of a national campaign backed by state policy, with the participation of tens of millions of people" (Zhang & Gao, 2001, p.115). Proficiency in English is widely regarded as important both to the nation as a whole and to every individual; huge national and individual efforts and resources have been invested (Hu, 2005b; Wang, 2004). On the national level, English education has been viewed as a necessary instrument to access international know-how and to acquire a high international stature. On the individual level, English is a compulsory subject from third grade to graduate school. Proficiency in English leads to a host of economic, social, and educational opportunities and provide individuals with access to both material and symbolic capital (Hu, 2005b; Lam, 2005; Zhang & Gao, 2001).

The New Development of English Teaching in China.

The New English Curriculum. In 2001, the Ministry of Education in China issued the *New English Curriculum (NEC)* for English teaching in primary and secondary schools.

The Chinese government adopted the communicative teaching approach mainly

because of three considerations. First of all, the *NEC* admits that English is important

not only due to the globalization of the economy, but also due to the

informationization of the social life in the world. English is viewed by the Chinese

government as the most important carrier of information and the language widely

applied in every field of human life (MOE, 2001). In fact, the Chinese government

adopted CLT as a response to the changing role of English in China. In the era of the

Open Door policy, the English language was viewed by the government as a language

to learn high technologies and knowhow from the developed countries with the

purpose of strengthening itself. However, since the new century, the Chinese

government has viewed the English language not only as a tool to learn from the

developed countries, but also as a lingua franca used in the whole world (MOE, 2001).

How to use the language to communicate with the whole world has become more

important. For the *NEC,* quality-orientated education is understood as instruction to

facilitate learners' personal development (Wang, 2010).

Second, the traditional teaching approach, which is centered on the teacher, the

textbook, and grammar, is deeply influenced by Confucianism. Although

Confucianism has played a positive role in terms of education in China (as described

below), many scholars consider Confucianism as a restriction on school education

(Hu, 2005; Salili, 1996; Yen, 1987). The dominance of the teacher and the textbook in

education may prevent students from creating new knowledge or developing critical

thinking. With respect to ELT, the teacher-, textbook-, and grammar-centered teaching

methods affected by Confucianism fail to provide students opportunities to use

English. This kind of teaching is considered by the MOE as not appropriate any more to the economic and social development in the country (MOE, 2001).

Third, since the 1980's, many Asian countries started with the application of the communicative approach in an English class (吴[Wu] &唐[Tang], 2013), which signaled a pedagogical reform moving from ESL countries to EFL contexts. By carrying out this pedagogical reform, the Chinese government intended to catch up with international trends.

Some scholars criticized the way that CLT was implemented by the Chinese government as a top-down policy (Hu, 2007; Yang & Bernat, 2011). Although the reform policy outlines the expected changes to teaching, it does not include a needs analysis or a clear plan for implementation (Hu, 2007) and represents a departure from teachers' prior experience and beliefs (Yang & Bernat, 2011).

However, some other scholars argue that the top-down policy is appropriate in the Chinese centralized system of education (Liao, 2004; Yu, 2001). The Chinese educational system is centrally controlled, with the government specifying both the content and methodology of teaching (Liao, 2004). Due to the highly centralized Chinese system of education, this top-down intervention should be very effective in urging teachers to teach communicatively in a classroom (Yu, 2001). Through professional trainings and efforts made by educational authorities, the government believes that many constraints of implementing the *NEC* can be overcome gradually. The hope is that the adoption of CLT will bring about a positive effect on English learning and teaching (Liao, 2004).

According to the *NEC,* teachers should play roles different from the past (Wang, 2010). Teachers should pay attention to learners' interests, experiences, and cognition. Learning methods such as experiencing, practicing, participating, and cooperating, as well as *Task-Based Language Teaching* (*TBLT*) are promoted in this *NEC* (MOE, 2001). A communicative approach is regarded by MOE as appropriate to realize the general goal of developing learners' comprehensive competence of using the language.

The *NEC* also provides a nine-level target for English teaching in primary and secondary school. Each level describes what the learner should be able to do in the appropriate age. Level 2 is for completion of primary school, Level 5 for completion of junior high school, Level 8 for senior high school graduates, and Level 9 for graduates from key high schools and foreign languages schools featuring the subject of English (MOE, 2001).

The *NEC* has adopted the dominant behavioristic orientation in dividing the target of English learning into five broad domains (Yu, 2001). In line with each domain, interrelated objectives are described, against which learners' exiting behavior can be observed and assessed. The five domains are

- *language skills* including skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing;

- *language knowledge* of phonics, vocabulary, grammar, function, and topics;

- *learning strategies* related to cognition, regulation, communication, and

resources;

- *feelings and attitudes* connected to motivations, confidence, the spirit of cooperation, patriotism, and a international view;

- *cultural awareness* involving cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, intercultural communicative awareness and competence (MOE, 2001).

In short, there are four growing trends in the *NEC*: First, the *NEC* asks EFL teachers to incorporate the communicative language teaching in the EFL class. Second, the new curriculum moved away from detailed prescriptions to guiding principles for English teaching. Third, teaching objectives have been specified in increasing detail, which sets clear targets for classroom teaching. Fourth, increasing language input is emphasized (Hu, 2005b).

Studies on the Implementation of NEC in China. Since the publication of the *NEC* in 2001, the question of how to apply CLT in the Chinese context has been intensively discussed among EFL teachers and scholars; however, not many empirical studies have been conducted in this field. When we consider the articles about TBLT, which is often understood as a pedagogy supporting CLT, published from 2002 to 2005 in China as an example, only 5% of the articles were written based on empirical studies (Zhao & Mo, 2005). In recent years, more empirical studies on the communicative approach in EFL teaching have been conducted, but more studies still need to be done.

Many studies show that the implementation of the *NEC* in China is far from satisfactory; the traditional pedagogy is still very common in China (Fan, 2009; Fang,

2011; Yu & Wang, 2009). In teaching practice, teachers questioned the effectiveness of CLT in supporting English learning (Fang, 2011). Some teachers complained that students used the language too arbitrarily and could not build a solid foundation (Su, 2007).

Fang (2011) studied how the *NEC* was personally and locally experienced by EFL teachers and identified form-oriented examinations, low teacher enthusiasm for change, teacher lack of knowledge about the *NEC*, low learner proficiency, and low learner motivation as the social factors that may constraint teachers' implementation of the *NEC*. The lack of support from schools, parents and students have also proved to be factors hindering pedagogic change in schools (Xie, 2010). But the most important constraint is recognized as the lack of qualified English teachers (Yu, 2001; Xie, 2010). A qualified English teacher is understood as a teacher who is capable in all four language skills and is familiar with theories of linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy (Yu, 2001). However, training and education in both pre-service and in-service education programs are often inadequate in training qualified EFL teachers (Zhu, 2010). Zhu (2010) conducted his research in a teacher-training program and found that the curricula in this training program had not changed dramatically since the publication of the *NEC*. He explored that barriers and gaps existed between basic education and teacher training and education (Zhu, 2010). The Chinese teacher education is believed to need a thorough reform, which, on the one hand, addresses teachers' immediate needs such as the ability to teach English, and, on the one hand, helps teachers make sense of the current curricular innovation (Wang, 2010; Zhu,

2010).

In the pedagogy reform, teachers are believed to be positive innovators in English teaching (Wang, 2010). Reviewing his own six-year-long experience of implementing the new curriculum, Wang (2010) found noticeable changes in EFL teachers' teaching and learning acts in his school. Wang (2010) argues that teachers have to give up some techniques with which they are at ease. They should "no longer drive a light carriage on a familiar road" (Wang, 2010, p. 444). Since the new curriculum has placed teachers at the center of the innovation in the shift from knowledge transmission to whole-person education, teachers should take the role of the innovator and create new paths.

These studies mentioned above show the complexity of implementing CLT in the Chinese context. There exist difficulties as well as possible solutions. Since successfully adopting and adapting innovations to local contexts takes time and effort (Muller et al., 2010), more studies on the implementation of CLT should be conducted, especially in China - a country with a lot of diversity. This study that examined how the pre-service EFL teachers became aware of, understood, interpreted, emotionally related to, and even performed CLT in the local context in Liaoning can contribute to the discussion about the localization of CLT in China.

The Traditional Pedagogy of English Teaching in China.

Although many years have passed since the publication of *NEC*, the traditional way of teaching English is still widely applied in many schools in China (Fan, 2009; Fang, 2011; Yu & Wang, 2009). The traditional way of English teaching focuses on

transmitting knowledge of grammar and vocabulary based on a textbook. English

teaching is often centered on teachers, textbooks, and linguistic knowledge (Burnaby

& Sun, 1989; Hu, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Parry & Su, 1998; Yen, 1987).

The teacher-centered teaching method is widely accepted in China as an effective

teaching method in a big-sized and fixed classroom in which there is little space for

students to move (Parry & Su, 1998). A teacher-centered and disciplined classroom is

believed to be appropriate to transmitting knowledge (Parry & Su, 1998). EFL

teachers consider the role of modeling crucial, because the teacher is often understood

as an all-knowing and ever-correct person (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Sampson, 1984). In

an EFL classroom, the teacher does the most talking; the student is not verbally active

and prefers to participate by listening and thinking (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998; Parry &

Su, 1998; Yen, 1987). Teachers are seldom questioned, interrupted, or challenged by

students in the classroom.

In China, learning is often perceived as a process of knowledge accumulation

rather than one of knowledge construction and application (Yu & Wang, 2009). The

teacher pays more attention to transmitting knowledge than to applying different

teaching methods (Jin & Cortazzi, 2008; Parry & Su, 1998; Yu & Wang, 2009).

Knowledge of the English language is associated with studying and reading books,

which are understood as an embodiment of knowledge, wisdom, and truth.

Knowledge is believed to be in the textbooks, through which knowledge is

transmitted by teachers. (Jin & Cortazzi, 2008; Yen, 1987; Yu & Wang, 2009). Texts

in books are understood by English teachers as models that should be internalized by

students (Sampson, 1984). One obvious way of internalizing a textual model is to memorize it. Memorization is considered by the teacher and the student as the initial step in assimilating a lesson in China. Exams, which justify teacher's authority and ensure students' discipline in a classroom, are frequently designed to test the students' memorization of what is contained in books (Parry & Su, 1998).

Grammar is considered as the law of a language in China. To the teacher and students, every phenomenon in a language needs to come down to grammar. An English text is not read for meaning but deciphered for extending vocabulary lists and for refining the mastery of grammar (Yen, 1987; Zhang & Gao, 2001). While teaching English, the Chinese EFL teacher often uses a traditional approach combining the grammar-translation method and audio-lingual method (Hu, 2002). Teachers and students tend to study details of grammar systematically; use cross-linguistic comparison and translation extensively, memorize structural patterns and vocabulary, take painstaking effort to form good verbal habits, emphasize written language, and prefer literary classics. In Halliday's (1980) concept, learning English under this approach in China is learning *about* a language, rather than *learning* a language or *using* a language to learn.

The traditional teaching approach seems to be a practical choice for many EFL teachers in China. First, English teachers may feel insecure in their own English, and, therefore, try to avoid students' questions and free discussions, which they may not be able to handle with confidence (Parry & Su, 1998; Yen, 1987). Second, the traditional teaching approach is impacted by the Chinese examination system (Biggs, 1996; Du,

1998; Yang, 2006). A big percentage of questions in the College Entrance English exams test words, phrases, and grammar. The questions which are disconnected from a meaningful context primarily measure the student's ability to memorize and recognize grammatical structures and patterns (Du, 1998). Therefore, the traditional approach is believed to be of practical use to pass highly competitive exams.

The choice of the traditional teaching approach in EFL class in China is not limited to the reasons mentioned above; more important, the traditional way of teaching is deeply influenced by the Chinese culture, the Chinese language, and the favored ideologies of the Chinese government.

Confucianism – a cultural factor. Jin and Cortazzi (2006) create the concept of *culture of learning* to study the relationship between the Chinese cultural context and English education. A culture of learning indicates the socially and culturally constructed forms over history with respect to learning and teaching behavior (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006; Shi, 2006). It illustrates the framework for understanding "what teachers and students expect to happen in classrooms and how participants interpret the format of classroom instruction, the language of teaching and learning, and how interaction should be accomplished as social construction of an educational discourse system" (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p.9). The concept of *culture of learning* has a sociocultural perspective.

Confucianism is considered as the most important content of culture of learning which affects ELT in China (Biggs, 1996; Hu, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Parry & Su, 1998; Reagan, 2005; Zhang, 2008). Confucius (551 BC- 479 BC) was an important

Chinese thinker and philosopher. His thoughts have been developed into a system of philosophy known as Confucianism, a term indicating "the main stream interpretation of Confucius by mandarin scholars over 2,000 years" (Yen, 1987, p. 50). Confucianism emphasizes the importance of education, promotes obedience and respect, and pursues establishment of a united, peaceful, hierarchical, and harmonious community (Parry & Su, 1998). Confucianism had served the Chinese feudal and imperial kingdom as a powerful influence on the minds of the Chinese people. Although institutionalization of Confucianism came to an end in the early 20th century, Confucianism, as a way of thinking, is still influential in many aspects of the Chinese people's daily life, especially in the area of education (Yen, 1987; Zhang, 2008).

The significance of education stands out in Confucianism. Education is perceived as important both for self-realization and national development. Education is regarded as a means of turning an ordinary person into a superior one and a weak nation into a strong one (Hu, 2005b; Lee, 1996). Confucius argues for educability of everyone. Success or failure of a student in education does not depend on personal intelligence. Effort, determination, steadfastness of purpose, perseverance, and patience are the factors leading to one's success in education (Hu, 2002). Based on this understanding, Chinese students are often motivated to learn by themselves; and making use of different teaching methods to motivate students is often regarded as unnecessary. Teachers and students prefer to concentrate on learning the content. Although the teacher-, textbook-, and grammar-centered EFL class is monotonous, the teacher and the student tend to accept it as a successful and effective way to acquire

the content of the English language.

The teacher-student relationship in China is greatly influenced by Confucianism. Confucianism argues for a hierarchical society. One famous sentence in *Analects of Confucius* says, "let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject; let the father be a father, the son a son" [jun jun chen chen fu fu zi zi] (as cited in Yen, 1987, p. 50). In an ideal society, according to Confucianism, a rigid and highly-ordered hierarchy with the emperor at the apex was created in the feudal and imperial China (Yen, 1987).

The Confucian model of a stratified society has been transplanted into the classroom. The relationship between the teacher and the student in China is vertical rather than horizontal (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; Yen, 1987). According to a famous Confucian scholar Han Yu (802), the teacher's task is to "transmit wisdom, impart knowledge, and resolve doubts" (para. 1). The teacher is positioned as an all-knowing person and therefore has authority.

The vertical teacher-student relationship, however, should not be stereotyped as a cold authoritarian relationship. It is also a harmonious relationship with warmth and a sense of responsibility (Biggs, 1996; Hu, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2008). A famous Confucian saying is: "Once a teacher teaches you for one day, you should respect him as your father for the whole life" [yi ri wei shi, zhong shen wei fu]. The learner-teacher relationship is a close and enduring relationship of reciprocal responsibility in which teachers are expected to exercise the role of a strong parent and, therefore, deserve long-term respect and obedience from students. Biggs (1996) regards the relationship between the teacher and the student in China as "the

apparently curious mixture of authoritarianism and student-centeredness" (Biggs, 1996, p. 56).

According to Confucianism, education is aimed at nurturing benevolence of individuals and achieving social stability (Hu, 2005b; Lee, 1996). In order to fulfill this purpose of education, high values were given to the classic Confucian books, which are known as the "Four Books and Five Works"[5]. The books are said to be either written about Confucius or revised or compiled by Confucius himself (Yen, 1987). The classics were considered as the embodiment of the highest value of the universe. They were made the core of the official curriculum for the civil service examinations in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). Intellectuals had to memorize these classics and explain them in a way that conformed to the mainstream interpretation.

Today, textbooks in public schools seem to play the same role as the classic Confucian books did in the history. Textbooks, written by the so-called experts, are considered as the core of school learning. Textbooks are often regarded as containing standard knowledge, which builds the foundation for writing exams. In the current pedagogy reform, teachers still tend to regard textbooks as a carrier of language rather than agents of methodological change (Fang, 2011).

Many scholars consider Confucianism as a restriction to school education (Hu,

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[5] The Four Books are *The Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean, Analects of Confucius, Mencius.* The Five Works are *Classic of Poetry, Classic of History, Classic of Rites, Classic of Changes, Spring and Autumn Annals.*

2005b; Salili, 1996; Yen, 1987). The dominance of the teacher and the textbook in education may prevent students from creating new knowledge or developing critical thinking. With respect to English teaching, the teacher-, textbook-, and grammar-centered teaching methods affected by Confucianism fail to provide students opportunities to use English or to develop an appropriate communicative competence.

A possible solution of this problem may be found in Confucius' original thoughts, which may be different from Confucianism - a series of interpretations of Confucius' ideas over the span of 2000 years (Yen, 1987). In Confucius' own teaching practice, curriculum was essentially created by conversations between teachers and students (Zhang, 2008). The teacher was the model of morality in a society. The students' role is as a converser with the teacher and a sharer of the teacher's way. The teacher and the student share common learning, common causes, common feelings, and common lives. In short, the curriculum is sharing. Students should play a positive role in teaching through thinking critically, sharing their ideas in discussions, and participating into knowledge creation.

Prior experiences of learning the Chinese language - a linguistic factor. Mind and language are related (Vygotsky, 1990). Learning of a foreign language depends on one's native speech (Vygotsky, 1987). Since language initiates and inhibits one's behavior, including learning and teaching, characteristics of the first language and experiences of learning it affect one's understandings of how a foreign language should be taught and learned. Thus, the behavior of English language learners in China has grown out of their experiences as literate Chinese people (Biggs, 1996; Jin

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& Cortazzi, 2006; Parry & Su, 1998; Wang & Yang, 2008).

The Chinese language is a logographic writing system. The basic grapheme is a character, which is composed of basic stokes-the smallest building materials for characters. The combination of strokes must follow certain stroke-positional constraints (Wang & Yang, 2008). Learning to write the Chinese language is associated with well-defined practices, which include "demonstration, modeling, tracing, repeated copying, and, ultimately, active memorization of the precise movement, direction, and order of stokes of the Chinese script with deeply associated kinesthetic and aesthetic awareness and socio-cultural knowledge" (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p. 9). Learning to become literate in Chinese, the Chinese teacher and the student have acquired the general understanding that learning should include repeated practice under teachers' guidance and mimetic production of teacher's models or textbook examples (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Traditional ELT in China is congruent with the methods of teaching Chinese.

The acquisition of the Chinese language seems to encourage a particular kind of mental discipline, such as an analytical approach and a bottom-up reading strategy (Parry & Su, 1998). Chinese characters, as the basic graphemes, construct words; words build sentences and then paragraphs. Different combinations of characters may construct words with different meanings. The limited number of Chinese characters means that new meanings are created according to which characters are juxtaposed with each other (Biggs, 1996). Texts consisting of words are often multi-layered, "with shifts and shades of meaning being revealed in repeated readings" (Biggs, 1996,

p. 57). Thus, a bottom up strategy and an analytical approach play an important clarifying role at both the word level and the text level. This may be a factor in answering the question why individual lexical items and grammar are the teaching focus in an EFL class in China.

Learning the ancient Chinese language is involved in the Chinese curriculum; it may affect one's understanding of how to teach and learn a language, as well. Although the ancient Chinese language shares characters with the modern Chinese language, they have different meanings and structures. Students have to translate them into modern Chinese following both teacher's instructions and explanations in textbooks. Students need to analyze sentence structures and examine exact usages of characters in order to figure out right meanings. Learning ancient Chinese may be a factor affecting the teaching methods in EFL class as well: emphasis on grammar and vocabulary as well as using translation as an important means.

Positivism - an ideological factor. Positivism, as a newly emerged ideology in the reform era in China, is believed to be a factor in shaping the teaching and learning of English language in China (Zhang & Gao, 2001). Since the end of the 1970s, science has been viewed as having magical powers. Science is believed to be "truth, self-evident, objective, neutral and interest-free" (Zhang & Gao, 2001, p. 126). Analogies have even been drawn between teachers and technicians, machinists, as well as engineers of the soul (Jin & Cortzaai, 2008), which may indicate that education has been regarded as important in transmitting and developing scientific knowledge. As ELT is closely linked to the science of linguistics, the discourse about

ELT has become scientific (Zhang & Gao, 2001). The student is supposed to learn

from the teacher with the help of a set of "scientifically" proven methods.

The science of linguistics itself, at least in some of its most influential schools, is

noted for its detachment from the social, ideological, and historical aspects of

language (Zhang & Gao, 2001). Language is often regarded as an objectively

describable and isolated structural entity; language is often understood as a system of

signs according to Saussure and deep structure and transformational rules according

to Chomsky (Zhang & Gao, 2001). Teaching of a language, therefore, is often

understood as focusing on the deep structure and transformational rules. Texts should

be learned not for meaning, but as cases for learning the structure of the language

(Yen, 1987; Zhang & Gao, 2001). To English learners in China, the topic of an

English text does not play an important role, because English texts are "all means to

an end of the mastery of the foreign language" (Zhang & Gao, 2001, p. 127).

To summarize, the pedagogy of English instruction in China has grown out of

the culturally, linguistically, and ideologically constructed understandings of how

education should be carried out, how the first language should be learned, and what

academic discourse dominates in education. The three above-mentioned factors and

other factors are closely linked together and contribute collectively to forming the

pedagogy of teaching English in China, and surely impact in profound ways the

perezhivanie that influences the acquisition of EFL pedagogy and the young student

teachers' experiences/perceptions/beliefs about English language teaching in their

schools. Thus, it is important to study how the Chinese student teachers who have

been affected by the particular sociocultural factors in China perceive the

communicative teaching approach that came into being based on different

sociocultural factors in western countries.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Methods

My research aimed at exploring what perceptions about implementation of CLT pre-service Chinese EFL teachers have and what the important factors affecting their perceptions are. I conducted a case-study research on 12 pre-service Chinese EFL teachers, who were teacher students in the Liaoning Normal University and conducted a six-week educational practicum in local secondary schools in Dalian from September to November, 2012. A case study research enabled me to explore this particular cultural group in an in-depth and holistic way.

Philosophy of Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology has a long, distinguished history across many disciplines. As a valid methodology in the field of social sciences, it was initially adopted by anthropologists and sociologists to examine the complex behaviors and organization of human groups and then adopted by various disciplines such as education, business, law, medicine, and applied linguistics (Stoynoff, 2004).

There is little agreement on the definition of case studies in the field of social sciences. One reason for the confusion surrounding its definition is that the process of conducting a case study is "conflated" with the study unit as well as the study product (Merriam, 1998).

Definitions emphasizing the process. Robert Yin, who figures prominently in the development of case study research, emphasizes the research process in his definition of case studies. According to Yin (1984), a case study refers to an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context,

when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). This definition emphasizes a research process in which the researcher conducts a study in a real-life situation through collecting various sources of information. In this process, the researcher may apply research methods such as observations, interviews, and personal documents.

Nunan (1992), a famous researcher in second language acquisition, also emphasizes the process of a case study in the definition by indicating that a case study is a 'hybrid' utilizing a range of methods for collecting and analyzing data.

Definitions emphasizing the object. In comparison to Yin (1984) and Nunan (1992), many more scholars focus on describing the object of study, namely the case, in their definitions. Case study is viewed by many scholars as a study of an "instance of a broader phenomenon", a "part of a larger set of parallel instances" (Feagin et al., 1991), a "bounded system" (Smith, 1978), or a "particular issue, feature or unit of analysis" (Anderson, 1998). A case study can be a study of an individual, several individuals, a group, a community, a specific policy, a responsibility, a program, an activity, an innovation, an event, an intervention, an organization, and other similar kinds of units (Creswell, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 1998; Smith, 1978; Stake, 1975).

Stake (1995), who has carried out many case studies in the U.S., describes a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within circumstances" (p. xi). The case has a boundary and contains an integrated system. In the field of education, the cases of interest are

people and programs. Each individual or program is similar to other persons and programs in many ways and unique in many ways. The researcher seeks to understand them and learn how they function in their ordinary situations.

Based on Smith's (1978) "bounded system" and Stake's (1995) "integrated system," Merriam (1998) views the case as "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (p.27). The researcher can "fence in" what is going to be studied. Merriam (1998) suggests assessing the boundary of a case by examining whether there is a limit to the number of people to be interviewed or a limited amount of observation time.

Researchers in the field of education also favor definitions of a case study in terms of the study object. In December 1975, at the Cambridge conference on "methods of case study in educational research and evaluation", examinations of a "bounded system" (Smith, 1975) and an "instance in action" (MacDonald and Walker, 1975) were widely accepted definitions of case studies (Bassey, 1999). MacDonald and Walker (1975) also emphasize the significance of the word 'instance' in their definition, because it implies a goal of generalization. According to them, a case study can generate, as well as test a theory. They believe that "instance and abstraction go hand in hand in an iterative process of cumulative growth" (MacDonald &Walker, 1975, p.4).

Definitions emphasizing the end-product. Merriam (1998) defined a case study as an end-product in the first edition of the book *Qualitative Research and Case Study Application in Education*. She regarded a qualitative case study as "an intensive,

holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit"
(Merriam, 1988, p. 27). Wolcott (1992) also sees a case study as "an end product of
field-oriented research" (p. 36). He believes that a case study is more appropriately
regarded as an outcome or format for reporting qualitative or descriptive work.

   The definition in my research. In my study, I prefer the holistic definition of a
case study given by Creswell (2007): in case study research, the investigator explores
a bounded system or multiple bounded systems (a case or cases) over time, collects
detailed and in-depth data from various sources of information such as observations,
interviews, audiovisual material, and documents etc., and then reports a case
description and case-based themes.

Strengths of Case Studies.

   The reasons for conducting a case study research in my doctoral study lie in its
advantages in systematically looking at a specific case, collecting data through
multiple sources, analyzing and interpreting findings within their context and then
reporting results.

   A case study is *particularistic*. A case study focuses on a particular situation,
group, event, program, or phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Case studies concentrate on
how "particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of
the situation" (Shaw, 1978, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p.2). Case studies are
problem-centered and on a small scale. They pay attention to the details and
complexity of the case in its own right.

   Case study research provides an *in-depth and holistic* way of studying human

events and behaviors in their *natural* environments (Feagin et al., 1991; Hammel, 1993; Willis, 2007; Yin, 1993). A case study is useful when an investigator has less control over contemporary events. The embedded variables, which are impossible to identify ahead of time, are best studied in their natural settings.

In order to study the complexity of a case in its natural environment, *different methods* are used in a case study to collect various kinds of data, often over a period of time, so it permits a more holistic study of complexity of a certain case or cases. Sources of case study data may consist of "participant and nonparticipant observation, interviews, historical and narrative sources, writing such as journals and diaries, a variety of quantitative data sources including tests, and almost anything you can imagine" (Willis, 2007, p. 239). On one hand, multiple sources of evidence can represent a multiplicity of viewpoints and offer alternative interpretations, and on the other, corroboration of multiple qualitative techniques can enhance the validity and reliability of findings.

Case studies are *descriptive*. A case study results in *a rich and thick description and analysis* of a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Feagin et al., 1991). A thick description means a "complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (Merriam, p. 30). Case studies use "prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyze situations…They present documentation of events, quotes, samples, and artifacts" (Wilson, 1979, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 30). A case study is likely to be reported in an informal, perhaps narrative style (Stake, 1975). A rich and thick description and analysis incorporates a "chain-of-evidence", a "tight

and interconnected path of recording evidence" so that the reader can follow the analysis and come to the stated conclusion (Anderson, 1998, p.159). As well, descriptive reports are usually more accessible than conventional research reports, and therefore capable of serving multiple audiences (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1975).

Case studies are *heuristic*. A case study is useful in illuminating the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). A case study offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1975). Knowledge learned from a case study is more concrete, more contextual, and more developed by reader interpretation. Properly presented, a case study can also provide a database of materials, which can be reinterpreted by future researchers (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1975).

A case study is *practice-oriented* (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1975; Anderson, 1999). Case studies are a step to action (Anderson, 1999). They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Insights gained by case studies can be put to immediate use. Since case studies focus on practical problems, a case study is an appealing design for studying problems arising in the field of education (Merriam, 1998). Case studies have proven particularly useful for understanding educational innovations, for evaluating problems, and for informing policy (Anderson, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Understandings gained in case studies can, in turn, affect and perhaps even improve practice. Regarding research itself, case studies can offer insights, which can be used as tentative hypotheses for future research (Merriam, 1998).

In summary, a case study is an in-depth and holistic way of studying a particular

human entity in its natural setting by collecting various kinds of data. It provides a rich and thick description and analysis of a phenomenon in a publicly accessible form. A description and analysis of a case study can illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon and allow other researchers to reinterpret the findings. Insights gained in case studies have the potential to affect or even change practice.

Samplings

The study reported in this dissertation is a continuous study based on the pilot study that I conducted in 2011 in Liaoning Normal University. In the pilot study, I explored how the student teachers in the English teacher-training program of Liaoning Normal University had learned English in their secondary schools and how they viewed CLT as a teaching approach. The pilot study provided me with opportunities to gain a better understanding of the field of English teaching as well as EFL teachers' training in Liaoning and compensated in many ways for the practical experience that I had lacked in this field.

Based on what I had learned from the pilot study, I designed a qualitative case study to explore more in-depth insights into pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about the implementation of CLT in a certain Chinese context. This time, I intended not only to include pre-service teachers' views but also their teaching behaviors into consideration. My doctoral proposal was approved in April 2012 and the qualitative case study research on twelve pre-service EFL teachers was conducted from September to November 2012 during which they did a six-week educational practicum in three local schools in Dalian.

The twelve participants were student teachers studying in the English Teacher Training Program of the English Department in the Liaoning Normal University. The program mainly trained teachers for teaching English in primary and secondary schools. These twelve participants were recruited with the assistance of an associate professor in the English Department who announced my research to the fourth-year teacher students in her course and managed a meeting for me to meet the volunteers from these teacher students. Thirteen volunteers attended the meeting; I introduced my research to them and explained what I planed to do with them. Twelve teacher students agreed to participate. The twelve participants were 21 to 22 years old and they were all females, which approximately reflected the prevalent gender in the training program. Among approximately sixty teacher students in the forth year in this program, only three were males.

The Liaoning Normal University is located in Dalian which is a coast city in the south of Liaoning province and is a place famous for its natural beauty, good working environment, and good economic situation for people in Liaoning province (See the map of China below. The star indicates where Liaoning Province is located.). Since the Liaoning Normal University is a key university in Liaoning and aims at serving the local education in this province, the university admits many local students from Liaoning every year. All of the twelve participants in my research were local people from Liaoning, thus, this research presents very local data.

Figure 1. Map of China

（The map was downloaded from 中国地图网[Net for Chinese maps]）

The Liaoning Normal University is a key university in Liaoning province, but not a key state university nationwide. The Liaoning Normal University belongs to the universities who are permitted to admit their students in the second round in the process of university entrance admission. The (more than one hundred) state key universities have priorities to admit their students in the first round. The admission depends on both applicants' wishes demonstrated in their application forms and their scores on the entrance exams. The twelve participants might not belong to the "top" students in their high schools who could be able to be admitted by key state universities. They were probably students in the medium range in terms of scores.

The twelve participants went to primary and secondary schools in their

hometowns in Liaoning and were admitted by the English teacher-training program of

Liaoning Normal University based on their scores on the University Entrance

Examination which took place in 2009. They graduated in July 2013.

The training program is a four-year (eight-semester) undergraduate study

program. In the first two years, the program provides courses which emphasize the

development of language skills. In the last two years, the students have an opportunity

to take courses on educational theories, linguistics, literature, and translation. In the

seventh semester, they need to take part in a six-week educational practicum at a local

school. In the eighth semester, they needed to take a few courses, write their theses,

search for jobs, and prepare for graduation. My research was conducted in the process

of their educational practicum in the seventh semester. The details about the training

program and the practicum are introduced later in Chapter IV. The twelve participants

were arranged by the training program to conduct their practicum in three different

local schools in Dalian (one middle school, one high school, and one vocational high

school). The pseudonyms of the twelve participants and the local schools in which

they did practicum are listed in the following table:

Practicum Schools	Pseudonyms of the Participants
The middle school	Tian, Hui, Xi, Xuan, Wu, Fei
The high school	Fan, Hong, Zhao
The vocational high school	Di, Han, Qing

Table 3: List Of The Participants

Data Collection

I incorporated a range of methods to collect data with a focus on the participants'

points of views as they emerge from their writings (questionnaires/ reflections), talking (interviews/ focus groups), and behavior (class observation; field notes). The procedure of the data collection was divided into three stages: data collection before, during, and after the educational practicum.

1. Data collection before the educational practicum

A short-answer questionnaire (See attachment I) was sent to the 12 pre-service teachers through email. The participants sent back their responses to me via email as well. I told the participants to answer the questionnaire in English if they could; and they could also answer in Chinese if they wanted. Twelve responses, ten answered in English and two in Chinese, were received.

This first questionnaire (Q1) aimed at exploring the participants' basic understandings of CLT, their prior English learning experiences, their training experiences, their views on implementation of CLT, and their initial plans of teaching English in the educational practicum. Since they answered Q1 before meeting real students, their answers were more likely based on their schooling and training experiences. I read their responses as soon as I collected all of the questionnaires, compared their views, discovered initial themes, and summed up questions for further research.

2. During the teaching practicum

1) I asked the twelve participants to write *journals* about their practicum experience, reflections, understandings, and opinions about English teaching. They could send me emails or write in a notebook and give it to me after the practicum. But

I found out in the first two weeks that journal writing did not work well with them. One participant said she really intended to write something special and important in her reflection, but there seemed not to be a lot worth reflecting on and not every practicum day turned out to be special. According to their later data, many of the participants did not feel English teaching at the local schools very different from their own learning experience, which may be a reason why they did not consider English teaching in the local schools as unusual. Furthermore, journal writing seemed to become an extra burden to their already busy practicum. They had jobs to do in the practical schools and often spent the free time they had in the local schools doing preparations for the coming graduate entrance exams. So I changed my mind and wrote them two emails in the last four weeks of the practicum asking about their latest experience in the schools and their views of English teaching. I told them to email me their responses when they had anything to share. In this way, I collected sixteen responses (all in Chinese) from eight participants.

2) During the practicum, I also conducted *focus-group interviews* with the participants. It was difficult to arrange a meeting time good for everyone, so I divided the participants into two groups. Five participants (Xuan, Hui, Fei, Tian, and Xi）attended the first focus group (FG 1) and four (Han, Di, Hong, and Fan) attended the second one (FG 2). Both focus group studies lasted about one and a half hours. The Chinese language was mainly used in the focus group studies; some English words were mixed sometimes in the Chinese discussions. The focus group aimed at exploring the practicum experience of the participants, their understandings of

English teaching in the real school settings, and more topics interesting to them. The focus group sessions were tape-recorded and transcribed. The other three participants, who did not make it to attend the focus group, were interviewed separately by me.

3) I visited the practicum schools and *observed* participants teaching. The twelve participants did their practicum in three schools located in Dalian: six participants in a middle school, three in a high school, and three in a vocational high school (Please see the pseudonyms in the table on page 73). The six pre-service EFL teachers in the middle school and the three in the high school were only allowed to teach one class formally. But the three pre-service teachers who did the practicum in the vocational school were allowed to teach a few more times. I intended to cover all the three practicum schools and observe as many participants as possible. I made it to observe the demonstration lessons taught by 9 participants: four in the middle school; two in the high school, and three in the vocational school. One limitation of my study lies in the lack of opportunities that these pre-service teachers were given to actually teach for themselves in the local public schools. They had limited opportunity to teach and may not have even been encouraged by their master teachers to use the CLT approach.

3. After the educational practicum

Another short-answer questionnaire (See attachment J) was sent through email to all of the participants after the practicum. The second questionnaire (Q 2) focused on their views on English teaching in real schools and their perceptions about implementation of CLT based on their practical experience. Ten responses were received. Since the post-practicum research took place in November, many of the

participants focused on preparing for the coming graduate entrance exams and, therefore, had little common free time. So I interviewed six participants, two at a time, having them reflect on English teaching in the local schools and their teaching. I made phone interviews with another three participants.

My research aimed at exploring the participants' perceptions of implementation of CLT in the local school context by collecting their expressions given through writing and talking as well as by examining their teaching behaviors. Relevant *documents* such as the *Courses Introduction* of the training program, their teaching plans, the textbooks, as well as the practicum requirements of the university were also collected.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a complex process of "making sense out of data," namely "making meaning" (Merriam, 1998, p. 192). It involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what has been said and seen in a study. It involves moving back and forth between concrete data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation (Merriam, 1998).

My data analysis actually started during the process of data collection, which provided me as the researcher an opportunity to verify tentative interpretations and follow up on new understandings and unanticipated themes emerging from the incoming data.

The whole data collecting process produced a large amount of information. After all of the data had been collected, I thoroughly went through all the data collected

before, during, and after the educational practicum. Generally speaking, *thematic analysis* and *comparative analysis* (Creswell, 2007) were applied to analyze the collected data. To analyze pre-service teachers' perceptions about implementation of CLT, the content of the data were interpreted through the classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. The data collected from different participants and the data collected from one individual throughout the research process were compared and contrasted.

Concretely, the data were analyzed vertically and horizontally. By horizontal data analysis I mean the analysis of the data collected from all the participants in the same period in order to identify repeated compatibility among all the participants. By vertical data analysis I mean the analysis of the data collected from one individual throughout the whole process of the research, so that the perceptions about CLT from one individual before, during, and after the practicum could be considered.

In my research, the participants also used narratives when writing and talking about their experiences in the prior schools and in the practicum schools. Narrative, in fact, is a way people learn about, explain, organize, and communicate experience (Riesman, 2005). *Narrative analysis* is a valuable tool for interpreting the 'in place' experiences of different individuals and groups, how they understand and attach meanings to situated experiences, and produce the places in which their experiences take place (Wills et al., 2005). Special attention was paid to the narratives told by the participants in the process of data analysis for understanding pre-service teachers' English learning and practicum experiences.

Going forward and backward through all of the data again and again, I found that the data collected before the practicum were based more likely on the participants' schooling experience and their teacher training experience. Since they had a lot in common in terms of their English learning and training experience, many repeated themes could be recognized.

However, the data collected during and after the practicum were closely related to their practicum school experience. They were arranged to conduct the practicum in three different schools. Although commonality could still be identified among their data, their data showed more often how they dealt with English teaching individually in a certain practicum school.

So in reporting the data, I tried to balance between the commonality and individuality represented by the data. I report the repeated themes in terms of their prior English learning experiences, their training at college, their beliefs of English teaching, their understandings of CLT, and their initial perceptions about CLT. In order to show the individuality of their perceptions and teaching behaviors in different schools, I portray six individual participants as six cases by reporting the data collected from each of them in the whole period of the research.

Validity and Reliability

Internal validity refers to how one's findings match reality (Merriam, 1998). In a qualitative study, what is being observed are people's constructions of reality. Case study workers attempt to capture and portray the world as it appears to the people in it. Thus, validity must be assessed in term of interpreting the researcher' experience,

rather than in terms of reality itself (Merriam, 1998).

I used the following strategies to ensure the internal validity of my study:

Triangulation: I created a database, which incorporated multiple data sources, including writings, talking, observation, field notes, and documents. Conclusions suggested by different data sources are stronger than those suggested by one (Anderson, 1998).

Member checks: I did member checks throughout the study. I sent my transcriptions back to the ones from whom the data were collected. I also asked some of the participants whether my interpretations were plausible.

Peer examination: I asked two of my colleagues, who had experience with EFL teacher education, to comment on my data and findings and provided alternative perspectives and interpretation.

External validity is concerned with the generalizability of the findings of one study (Merriam, 1988). A case study is considered a powerful means of establishing the *naturalistic generalization* which is more intuitive, empirical, and based on direct and vivid personal experience (Stake, 1975).

In order to enhance the external validity of my study, I tried to provide a rich and thick description of the data, so that users could make comparisons with their own situations and may be able to look for patterns that explain their own experience. I also tried to identify and mitigate the effects of my biases and prejudices in order to ensure the impartiality of the conclusions.

Reliability refers to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated; it is

often inextricably linked with validity in the conduct of research (Merriam, 1988).

With regard to qualitative research, reliability refers to dependability or consistency of

findings. In my research, *triangulation* is not only a technique to ensure the internal

validity, but also a technique to strengthen the reliability.

Case study has been criticized, because it depends on the researcher's own

sensitivity, integrity, and ethics (Anderson, 1998; Cohen & Manion, 1980; Merriam,

1998). The final report of a case study is considered to be "subjective, biased,

impressionistic, idiosyncratic and lacking in the precise quantifiable measures"

(Cohen & Manion, 1980, pp. 110-111). However, the researcher's subjectivity does

"intervene, but to the extend this intervention is clearly stated, it then becomes

objectified into an object that is clearly the sociologist's point of view, or more

precisely, the sociological point of view" (Hamel et al., 1993, p. 42). I used the

technique of *Investigator's position* to ensure the dependency of my findings. I tried

to explain my assumptions, world view, and theoretical orientation behind the study,

as well as my position vis-à-vis the group being studied, and the social context from

which data were collected.

Chapter Four: Pre-service EFL Teachers' School English Learning Experiences

and Teacher Training Experiences at College

The General Information about School Education in China

The Chinese school education includes pre-school education, primary school education, middle school, high school, and higher education. Six- or seven- year old children start with a nine-year long compulsory education which consists of six years of primary education and three years of middle-school education. Based on the *New Curriculum*, children should learn English starting from the third grade. But in many cities that have better educational resources, children start with English learning even earlier in the first grade. For instance, the local Educational Institute in Dalian requires that primary schools located in the city areas start with the English instruction for first graders; but the schools in rural areas can provide English instruction starting from the third grade.

For students in a middle school, English is one obligatory learning subject. In the new curriculum, middle school students are required to have four hours of English class every week, but, in fact, many middle schools provide their students more hours of English class to ensure a higher enrollment rate for entering high schools. High School Entrance Examinations are usually run by local educational authorities. Although subjects to be tested may vary in different regions, subjects such as Chinese, Mathematics, and English are always tested. Depending on the scores of High School Entrance Examinations, middle school graduates may go to high schools, vocational schools, or start to work.

A high school education lasts for three years. High schools are categorized into key high schools and normal high schools. A key high school admits students who have achieved higher scores in High School Examinations. Key high school students have better opportunities to be enrolled later by universities, because these schools possess better educational resources such as more qualified teachers and developed equipments. A normal high school does not compare with a key high school regarding teaching resources and university enrollment rates. Whether a high school graduate will be admitted by universities, vocational or technical colleges, or go back home is determined by his/her scores in the nationwide College Entrance Examination which takes place every June. Again, English is one of the most important subjects that are tested in the examination. The table that follows demonstrates the main school structure in China:

Higher education	**Universities, Colleges, Institutes, Technical and Vocational colleges** (English is a compulsory subject and college students are often required to pass CET Band 4 or 6)	
Open for all ages	National Entrance Examination	
Age 15-17	**High school** (English as an obligatory subject)	**Vocational high schools** (English as an obligatory subject)
For middle school graduates	High School Entrance Examination	
Age 12-14	**Middle school** (compulsory education) (English as an	

	obligatory subject)
Age 6-11	**Primary school** (compulsory education) (English is provided starting from the 1st or 3rd grade)
Age 3-5	**Pre-school** (Children may learn English depending on the decisions of preschools and parents)

Table 4: Education In China

(Created by the researcher based on the article *China's education system* provided by China Internet Information Center, 2006)

The Chinese education is a state-run educational system. The Ministry of Education (MOE) takes charge of "the overall planning, coordination and management of all forms of education at various levels", formulates, in collaboration with relevant departments, "the standards for the setting-up of schools of all types at various levels", and guides "the reform of education and teaching methods" (MOE, 2009, para. 1). The policy, standards, and regulations set up by the MOE serve as the guidance for the provincial educational departments and local educational institutions that construct more local related regulations for local schools, manage local education, and supervise and evaluate teaching in local schools.

The twelve participants in my research went to school in Liaoning, thus, their school education was under the guidance of both the central and provincial educational authorities. Although varieties existed in their hometown schools, they actually shared a lot in common regarding their schooling experiences before entering college. Reading their questionnaires and transcribed interviews, I discovered a lot of

similarity in their schooling experiences, such as their daily routines at school, the school English teaching methods, and their attitudes toward school English teaching.

In order to create a foundation for understanding the prior schooling experiences of the twelve participants from Liaoning, I describe the school life of one participant called Hui as an example.

Hui's School Life.

I take Hui's school life in middle and high school as an example to demonstrate how a lot of the current Chinese college students experienced their schooling before entering college. Hui's school life should not represent all Chinese students; but it should be very true for the most college students who grew up and went to school in Liaoning before entering college. The information about Hui's life was sorted out based on the data given by Hui in the focus group, the questionnaires, and the interview I did with her after the practicum.

Hui was born in 1992 in Dalian, Liaoning. She went to elementary school when she was six and started with her English learning in the third grade. She mentioned that English learning in primary school was relatively interesting. The teacher sometimes let them make dialogues in groups and demonstrate in the front of the other students. Her group was able to do very good jobs and often received teacher's praise.

After the six-year education in the primary school, she went to middle school in 2001 and high school in 2004. During the period of learning in middle and high school, she usually got up at 6 a.m., went to school at 7 am, and arrived at school

before 7:30 a.m. From 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., it was the time for the early morning class. Hui and her classmates usually spent the early morning class on self learning such as reciting English words, memorizing English texts, and preparing for the coming courses. Sometimes, her teachers would guide their learning by giving certain learning tasks.

Class began at 8 a.m. in middle and high school. There were normally four morning classes, four afternoon classes, and two evening classes. Her middle and high school normally used the four morning classes and the first two afternoon classes on teaching different subjects such as Chinese, English, math, physics, chemistry, politics, biology, P.E., and so on. The other two afternoon classes were normally used as self-learning time for doing homework and exercises. Two activity classes for playing outside on the playground were also arranged in two afternoons. The evening classes normally served as extra time for the main subject teachers to teach or for students to learn by themselves. Hui went back home about 7:30 p.m. during the period of middle school and 8:30 p.m. during the period of high school. She ate lunch at school and had dinner at home. After dinner, Hui also studied at home for a while and went to bed at 10 or 11 p.m. or even later.

In middle and high school, Hui's school teachers tended to cover the most teaching content in the first two years in order to leave more time in the third year for repetition and preparation for the coming examinations. It is notable that schooling was the most important content in the life of Hui and the other participants before entering college.

Today, students in secondary schools do not need to take evening classes any more. In March 2012, the Liaoning provincial government made a policy to decrease the burden of school students (徐[Xu], 2012). Schools are not allowed to give their students extra evening classes; and students are able to leave school around 4 p.m. But according to what I heard from the participants, my friends and relatives, many current middle and high school students spend the "released" hours taking courses in private schools to compensate for the time they "lose" in schools.

How Did The Participants Learn English in Secondary Schools?

According to the participants' responses to the first questionnaire (Q 1) collected before the practicum, English teaching during the time the 12 participants went to middle and high school remained very traditional. English teaching in their prior schools was full of grammar, vocabulary, quizzes, exercises etc. Here are some of their descriptions about English teaching in middle and high schools. All the participants except for Wu and Hui answered Q 1 in English. I quote the words of the participants without correction if they responded in English, which represents their competence of using the English language to some degree. Wu's and Hui's responses in Chinese were translated by me into English.

> Before I enter college, my teachers always focus on grammars and
>
> vocabularies just because it is the most efficient way to improve my score.
>
> (Han)
>
> In my memory, my before English teacher just teaches class by class
>
> according to the text book. (Xuan)

I think my peers have the same experience as mine. Our English teachers in

middle and high school didn't really care about our language ability but our

testing skills. Grammatical translation is absolutely their best choice. (Fei)

Based on the data in Q 1, English teaching in secondary school seemed to favor a

certain mechanical teaching pattern as described as follows:

Usually, in most English classes, we will learn vocabularies first, then study

the text. In the text we should learn some useful grammar and sentences. At

last, we should recite the vocabularies and texts and do some grammar

practice. (Fei)

Following the "vocabulary-text-practice" pattern, EFL teachers in secondary

schools tended to deliver pure linguistic knowledge from textbooks to learners

through detailed explanation. Learners needed to memorize what the teacher and the

textbook said and do exercises, quizzes as well as exams to ensure their learning

results. The prior English learning experiences of the participants imply that English

teaching in Liaoning, at least from 2003 to 2009 when the participants went to middle

and high school was centered on the teacher, the textbook, and grammar. Although the

New Curriculum was enacted in 2001, little difference of English teaching seemed to

take place in secondary schools in Liaoning.

The participants also noted that English teaching in their secondary schools had

merely served preparation for examinations. English teaching had been so

exam-oriented that things that seemed to have had nothing to do with writing exams

had been ruled out of English teaching. In this kind of exam-oriented English teaching,

reading and writing competence had been mostly addressed; speaking and hearing had been neglected.

Before entering college, especially during the period of high school, my English teachers taught us English only for the sake of our high scores in exams. For example, because listening and speaking competence would not be tested in the entrance exam, we never had English listening or speaking classes. […] The teacher would not blame you if you were not able to say a word. But she would not let it go easily if you were not able to write it. (Wu, translated by the researcher)

Consequently, this study demonstrates that not only was English listening and speaking competence ignored in their EFL classes, but the content carried by the English language also seemed to be overlooked; and instead, the "value-free" linguistic knowledge seemed to be the main focus in the school English instruction, although the Chinese government already required EFL teachers to teach in a communicative manner at that time. Here are some examples given by the participants:

When we learned a text, the teacher would analyze the grammatical knowledge in it right away and then let the students recite the knowledge by themselves. (Wu, translated by the researcher)

As we know, there are many topics in the texts, however, we just discuss in form. We are not interested in those topics at all. Sometimes, we may interest

in some topic, the teacher will say "ok, time is limit" all we want to talk is

away. (Xuan)

We did so many exam-oriented exercises in English class that we could

select the right answer by taking a look at the question without

understanding its meaning. (Fan)

To summarize, the English language, was treated in secondary schools in Liaoning more likely as a "value-free" construction of words and structure instead of a language carrying information and culture. English texts were treated more often as examples for learning words and grammar, rather than texts with meanings. Since the environment is a key source of individual development (Vygotsky, 1994), this kind of English teaching environment in their previous experiences in secondary schools shaped these pre-service teachers' understandings of how English should be taught in an EFL class.

The Participants' Attitudes toward English Teaching in Secondary Schools.

The participants' attitudes toward the traditional mode of English teaching in secondary schools are complicated. Their recognition and appreciation of this kind of teaching were mixed up with resistance to it. On the one hand, they felt bored, over-loaded, and unmotivated under this exam-oriented and mechanical teaching approach which focused intensively on linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, they recognized this traditional mode of English teaching as an effective teaching approach in the Chinese exam-oriented educational system, and, therefore, as a reasonable choice for teachers in secondary schools.

Many of the participants expressed their dislike of the monotonous teacher-centered, textbook-centered, and grammar-centered teaching mode in secondary schools and pointed out that this mode had damaged their learning interests and increased their learning pressure. Han described how the exam-oriented English teaching in her middle and high school had destroyed her interest in learning English as follows:

> Before I enter college, my teachers always focus on grammars and vocabularies just because it is the most efficient way to improve my score. There is a time that I do not like English at all, for what I met everyday is a great amount of multiple-choice questions and papers. They made me nervous. (Han)

Although the participants were conscious of the negative influence of the traditional mode of English teaching on their learning motivations and interests, most of the participants regarded this teaching mode as effective in dealing with examinations. The dilemma of their attitudes toward English teaching in their previous secondary schools can be noted in the following comments:

> Honestly I love fresh and lively teaching mode. But I have to say before the test system in China keep this way which focus largely on rigid knowledge, I prefer the teaching way now. And I know, this is such a pity. I hope one day students won't like us now, hating reciting rigid books but have no choice. (Di)

> If I don't have examinations, I will like those classes that I can learn a lot

of different cultures, customs and something that can improve my practical

ability. But if I have examinations, I need the teachers who can have a

better explanation of the words, grammars, etc. (Fei)

The exam-oriented educational system in China was regarded by most of the

participants as the main reason for applying the traditional way of English teaching in

secondary schools. When their personal feelings toward this kind of teaching were

taken into account, they expressed much dissatisfaction and even resistance to it.

However, as far as the macro exam-oriented context was concerned, most participants

seemed to admit that it was reasonable to have sacrificed their interests and pleasure

for the sake of entering higher education. This was a necessary price that one needed

to pay for a better future.

The EFL Teacher-Training Program at LNNU

Liaoning Normal University (LNNU) is located in Dalian, Liaoning, a coastal

city in the northeast of China. LNNU which grew out of the former Liaoning

Teachers College is one of the key institutions of higher education in Liaoning

Province. LNNU is currently the biggest leading teacher training institution in

Liaoning Province and is recognized as the training base for teachers in elementary

and secondary schools, higher education, and continuous education. LNNU is also

considered as a university that has contributed significantly to the reform and the

development of school education in Liaoning Province (LNNU, 2010).

The twelve participants were admitted by the Department of English of LNNU in

2009. In this year, the Department of English admitted about three hundred students

who were distributed in ten classes. The English department consists of two main programs – the Program of English Education and the Program of International Trade. Two classes of the students who were admitted in 2009 focused on studying English Education, with about 30 students in each class. And the other eight classes focused on studying International Trade.

The courses provided by the Department of English for the students who study English Education can be generally divided into two stages. In the first two years, the courses such as *Synthetic English, English Hearing, Oral English, English Writing, English Reading, Pronunciation and Intonation* etc. mainly aim at developing students' English competence in listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

In the last two years of study, courses addressing English competence are still relevant and students need to take courses like *Advanced English* and *Advanced Writing* to strengthen their English skills. However, more courses are provided with the focus on academic knowledge in this stage, such as *How to Teach English, Research in Education*, and *Psychology in Education*. Many courses about education together with courses about linguistics, literature, and translation are offered as optional courses as well.

Most of the participants, according to Q 1, mentioned that they had learned a lot from the teacher-training program. The training program seemed to have contributed to developing the confidence of many teacher students in performing English. One participant responded as follows:

The most significant thing I've learned from my training is courage. I don't

scared when I stand before teachers and students. I participated in a speech

contest when I stepped into college. I failed, or I was defeated by my nervous

performing. That was a nightmare for me. Now I can speak, although not that

fluently, in front of others. I feel good. (Qing)

Also, many participants mentioned that they had learned different pedagogical

approaches and educational theories in the teacher-training program. Tian's

description of what she learned in the training program offers a close look at what

teacher students may be able to learn in the training program at LNNU.

In the teacher-training program, I learned a lot mainly from two aspects:

learning and teaching. I have acquired that the necessary element for the

successful language learning in classrooms is the ESA[6]. Some teaching

sequences such as straight arrow sequence, boomerang sequence, and the

patchwork sequence, some teaching models like task-based learning,

grammar- translation, communicative language teaching. English mainly

consists of speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Different aspect has

different teaching method. These four parts have close relation to each other.

(Tian)

The training program was also considered by the participants as a transition

period in which they could develop themselves from learners to teachers:

The teacher-training program is a kind of rehearsal. Suppose that if we go to

teach without any training and practice, can we do well? I think the

---

[6] ESA is an abbreviation of Engage-Study- Activate.

teacher-training program gives us an opportunity to find problems and make

more preparations for our future teaching. During this time, we can find out

what abilities we lack, how to communicate with the students and where the

students' interests lie or whatever. (Han)

From the participants' responses to Q 1, it can also be seen that some teacher

educators in the training program at LNNU encouraged the teacher students to change

English teaching in secondary schools in future.

They [the teachers of the training program] told us that we should not copy the

teaching way of our high school English teachers; instead, we need to find

better teaching methods through continuous learning and reflections. […] I

have realized that an English teacher should not be a teacher with a numb

mimic explaining texts or exam papers, but one encouraging students and

helping them learn with their own motivations. (Hui, translated by the

researcher)

Some participants also acknowledged limitations of the teacher-training program

and made decisions to overcome the limitations through self-exploration in their

future teaching practices:

In terms of teaching skills, I don't remember too much actually. Those

terminologies are just symbols. The important thing is application. Now I

begin to have my own teaching style. That's enough. (Qing)

To tell the truth, I don't like the teacher-training program at college, because

they all come from professional and scholar books which are difficult to

practice in such a mixed learning situation in China. So I figured out I have to

taste, to feel, and to modify when teaching by myself. (Di)

In brief, the Program of English Education at LNNU seemed to have served the

participants to develop their English competence, build confidence of using the

language, acquire necessary educational theories, and become conscious of the

mismatch between theories and teaching realities in schools.

Two courses in the training program.

In my research, the participants frequently mentioned two courses provided by

the Department of English at LNNU, namely *How to Teach English* and *Oral English*.

In this section, the two courses are described based on the course descriptions of the

English department and the responses of the participants with the purpose that a

further look at the training program is taken.

How to teach English. *How to Teach English* is one of the most important

courses for transmitting educational theories in the EFL teacher-training program at

LNNU. It is offered in the sixth semester and has five credit hours every week. The

course aims at providing teacher students necessary teaching theories that have been

developed both in China as well as abroad and giving students opportunities to

acquire practical experience in micro-cell teaching units in which students practice to

teach (辽师英语系[Department of English of LNNU], 2012). In the first five weeks,

instructors consentrate on introducing significant teaching theories to teacher students.

And then students are given opportuntites to teach in a ten-person group, which is

called micro-cell teaching. Students take turns to teach English to their classmates in

the group who act as learners.

Many participants appreciated that the mirco-cell teaching had given them the opportunities to teach and practice different teachingt methods. By teaching in the front of their classmates, they built confidence in facing students in a real classroom in the coming educatonal practicum. Here are some statements of the participants:

> Microteaching helped me a lot. I acquired that how to use different teaching approaches to reach different teaching goals. I know how to control the atmosphere of the whole class during my teaching process. It made me know what my shortages and my advantages are, helping me improve next time. (Zhao)

> The microcell teaching gave me the opportunity to perform as a teacher. It helps me to have a better understanding of being a teacher. (Fei)

> I stand in front of my classmates [in micro-cell teaching], so I would not be afraid to teach in a real class. (Hong)

However, the participants also indicated that the teaching situation of the micro-cell teaching was too ideal and far from the reality in a school. The class with ten persons was too small in comparison with a real class that might consist of forty or more students. Moreover, the classmates already knew each other well and were very cooperative in the process of teaching. They had already known the knwoledge taught to them and only pretended to learn something new, which was far from the real situation in a classroom.

Oral English taught by Sam. Another course mentioned by almost all of the

participants in the study is the *Oral English* which was taught in the third semester by an American teacher named Sam (pseudonym). According to the participants, Sam was in his sixties. The participants often mentioned Sam's teaching when I asked them about the classes that had left deep impressions on them or when the participants discussed about the communicative teaching approach in the focus groups and the interviews. Many of the statements I quote in this part were collected in the interviews and the focus groups that I did during the process of the educational practicum. But it is more appropriate to report these data in this chapter in order to construct a better understanding of the teacher-training program at LNNU. The interviews and the focus groups were conducted in Chinese and their words were translated into Chinese.

Sam's teaching left deep impressions on almost all of the participants. Many participants described how he taught. Some of their descriptions are listed as follows:

> He liked to let us get up and move around. Once he gave each of us a small piece of paper with one word on it. We needed to find the student whose word was related to mine. He let us do this activity in the hall way, which influenced other classes and got complained. (Hong, FG 2)

> He demonstrated PowerPoint Presentation in each lesson and introduced American culture to us and asked questions. (Fan, FG 2)

> His course consisted of the most components I have ever seen. He did not let us do exam papers, but interviewed us at the end of the semester. He also asked us to write journals and present different topics. (Xi, FG 1)

> He let us choose a topic among the topics given by him, do a research after

class, and give a presentation about the topic. (Fei, FG 1)

He set a rule of "no Chinese in class". Who says English in class, should pay

one Mao [about 1.5 cent] as penalty. (Xuan, FG 1)

According to what the participants said, Sam's teaching was very communicative. He did not follow a textbook; instead, he used authentic materials such as music and websites. He let the students move around and do something for realizing certain purposes instead of sitting still behind their desks and listening. In this way, the students could be able to focus on completing certain tasks through meaningful interactions. To summarize, Sam seemed to have applied different methods to encourage students to communicate in class and after class through oral and written activities.

Two participants, Xi and Fei, liked his teaching extremely. They mentioned many times in the first focus group that Sam was a really good teacher and they liked his teaching. Xi also said: "My interest in oral English developed significantly during the period of his teaching" (FG 1). The two participants also realized that some other students may not have participated actively as they did. Some may have stepped back and let the others express themselves. But almost all of the participants regarded Sam's class as interesting and a good way to learn American culture.

Also, a few participants did mention their ambivalent feelings toward Sam's teaching. Two participants (Han and Hong) mentioned that they did not like writing the journals which Sam asked them to write, because they did not consider it as meaningful and they did not know what to write except for writing daily schedules in

a plain way. Hong also described in FG 2 how she felt lost in the first few lessons

taught by Sam.

> I felt so lost in the first few times of Sam's teaching. We could not understand
>
> him when he said something for the first time. So he had to repeat many times.
>
> Actually, we may have understood him correctly at the first time, but we could
>
> not believe what we heard. What he let us do was very unusual. I had not
>
> expected to hear that. (Hong, FG 2)

The ambivalent feelings toward Sam's communicative mode of English teaching

may indicate that Sam's communicative way of teaching was far from the learning

experience of the student teachers. In other words, Sam's teaching may not match the

learning culture of the participants that had been developed in schools before entering

college. The prior learning experience under the traditional approach may be a barrier

for learners in appreciating the communicative language teaching. However, this

barrier seems to be able to be overcome by learners, especially the learners who could

motivate themselves to participate actively.

Although Sam's class left a deep impression on the participants, Sam's

communicative way of teaching did not seem to have inspired the participants to

conduct their own teaching in a communicative way. They appreciated Sam's teaching

more likely from the perspective of a learner and seldom related it to their own way of

teaching. When I asked the participants if they could apply some of Sam's teaching

methods in a middle school or a high school EFL class, they confessed that they had

not thought of it and then they tried to explain why they as college students may be

able to enjoy Sam's class but middle school students may not. Hui mentioned that they, as college students, already had known how to express something in English in Sam's class, so they could be able to focus on the knowledge he taught. But learners in middle schools still didn't know how to say something in English. Furthermore, some participants (Fei, Xi, Xuan) believed that they were grown-ups and could control themselves not to get too excited. But the children in schools were too young to control their own emotions and the teacher may lose control over them in a communicative class. The participants seemed to agree that a certain level of English proficiency and maturity in the learners were necessary preconditions for implementing CLT in an EFL class in China.

The educational practicum

The teacher students of the English Teacher-Training Program are required to conduct a six-week educational practicum in a real school in the seventh semester. The educational practicum, according to the requirements of the university, is a central aspect of the teacher training. During the practicum, teacher-students come to understand the educational reality in secondary schools, have opportunities to apply what they have learned, and develop their competence in teaching and research (辽宁师范大学[Liaoning Normal University], 2012).

The Department of English is in charge of arranging certain schools for its EFL teacher students to conduct the practicum. According to one professor in the training program, many secondary schools did not like accepting pre-service teachers, because they were concerned that the pre-service teachers may interrupt the normal teaching

process in the school. In 2012, the Department of English succeeded in arranging some primary schools, middle, and high schools, as well as vocational schools for their teacher students to do the practicum. The twelve participants of my study conducted their educational practicum mainly in three school sites: a middle school (6 participants), a high school (3 participants), and a vocational high school (3 participants).

Based on the practicum requirements given by the university, an educational practicum consists of three parts: teaching practice (3 credits), classroom teacher practice (2 credits), and educational research practice (1 credit). Pre-service teachers should be supervised by a school teacher and also a teacher educator from the training program (辽宁师范大学[Liaoning Normal University], 2012). In fact, what the pre-service teachers did in a real school may not follow the requirements exactly. The content of a practicum in a school depended more on how a school and its teachers arranged it. The details about the educational practicum conducted by the twelve participants in the three schools are provided in Chapter Six.

Summary

This chapter, based on students' responses to the first questionnaire, introduced the participants' previous English learning experiences and their college training experiences.

The twelve participants experienced the traditional teaching mode in middle and high schools in their hometown cities in Liaoning. Although the communicative teaching approach was already required by the Ministry of Education during that time,

English teaching in their schools did not change. The school English education they experienced was centered on linguistic knowledge, textbooks, and preparation for examinations. English was treated more often as a "neutral" learning subject without carrying culture or value. This kind of teaching destroyed the participants' learning interests and motivation during their middle and high school education, exerted pressure on them, and failed to develop their communicative competence. However, as far as the macro exam-oriented context was concerned, most participants accepted this teaching approach as the necessary and reasonable choice. English examinations that focused on testing linguistic knowledge seemed to justify their school EFL teachers to apply the traditional mechanical teaching approach; these pre-service teachers also regulated themselves to fit into this teaching approach by sacrificing their personal interests.

The Chinese educational system is a top-down system connected by examinations between different levels of schooling. The *New Curriculum* drafted by MOE has been carried out in a top-down manner from the central government to local governments and local schools. However, EFL teachers in Liaoning seemed to ignore this policy and conducted English teaching in a traditional manner by focusing on meeting the requirements of examinations. This indicates that a gap exists between the communicative teaching approach suggested by the MOE and the examinations which are also given by the Chinese educational authorities to evaluate English teaching and learning results. The lack of an evaluation system that tests the competence of using the language prevents EFL teachers from applying CLT.

As far as the teacher-training program at the college is concerned, the participants focused on developing their English proficiency in the first two years and studying educational theories in the last two years. They learned about the English language by taking many language courses and also used English to learn other subjects. They learned theories of the communicative teaching approach as well as experienced this teaching approach in the training program at the college.

Chapter Five: Initial Perceptions About CLT And Its Implementation

Using the first questionnaire (Q 1) I gave before the educational practicum, I intended to explore the 12 pre-service EFL teachers' understandings of CLT and their general ideas of English teaching (question 1, 2 and 3); their initial views on implementation of CLT in Chinese EFL classrooms (question 4 and 5); their English learning experience in primary and secondary school (question 6) as well as their training experience at college (question 7); and their intent toward implementing CLT in the coming practicum (question 8 and 9). Their English learning experience and training experience have been explained earlier in Chapter IV. This chapter is mainly devoted to presenting pre-service EFL teachers' initial perceptions about CLT and its implementation in the Chinese context that were reflected in Q 1. No change is made to the quotes of the participants unless it is indicated.

Understandings of CLT

According to Q 1the participants did before the educational practicum, the participants had acquired some basic understandings of CLT from the teacher-training program. The most common understanding of the participants was that CLT was an effective teaching method in improving the communicative ability of English learners. However, it is important to notice that the communicative competence these pre-service teachers referred to was not the synthetic competence which included grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence as pointed out by Hymes (1971). The participants used the term of the communicative competence to indicate a single language skill – the skill of

speaking. This can be revealed from the words they used to explain the communicative competence, such as "speaking", "talking", "dialogues", "interactions", "discussions", and "story-telling". A participant explained CLT in Q 1 as follows, which illustrates how many participants understood the communicative competence:

> I think it [CLT] focuses more on the communicating skills. What the teacher wants to do is to let students speak out and communicate with each other. The methods teacher can use are discussion, telling stories to the class and so on. (Xuan)

Explaining what CLT was, some participants also addressed the communicative function of a language in Q 1:

> For the communicative language teaching, the first is that language is not bits of grammar, it also involves language functions such as inviting or suggesting etc, which students should learn how to use. The second strand, briefly speaking, the focus of much communicative language teaching became what we have called language activation. (Tian)

Some other participants explained CLT through comparing it with the traditional way of teaching in China. CLT seemed to be what the traditional way of English teaching did not do.

> In my opinion, communicative language teaching is to mainly focus on communication. In today's China, teachers in primary schools and secondary schools pay great attention to grammars and vocabularies.

They neglect the significance of speaking. It is really a serious mistake

because I believe that most times we communicate through talking and

English is only a communicating tool. (Han)

Without knowing too much about CLT, it is a way of English teaching based

on practicing students' communication skill which is very different from the

traditional teaching way. Teachers will focus on practical and useful tasks than

simply reading books. (Di)

While explaining the role of the teacher and the learner in an EFL classroom,

these pre-service teachers gave very similar answers. They mentioned that the teacher

should be "a mediator", a "transmitter", an "excavator", or a "guide" instead of an

"authority" in a "leading position" within a classroom. The learners should be the

"center" of teaching. English class should be "learner-centered" instead of

"teacher-centered"; and the teacher should "minimize teacher's talking" and

"maximize students' talking" in a class. Their similar textbook-like answers suggest

that their knowledge about CLT very likely was acquired from certain courses they

took in the teacher-training program.

Although their answers about the teacher's role and the learner's role were nearly

identical, these pre-service teachers expressed several different views on how an

English teacher was able to center on learners in his/her teaching. Their views can

generally be summarized as what should be done and what should not be done by the

teacher. According to their answers, the teacher should not "teach students or just tell

them what is right or wrong" (Zhao) or "always input the knowledge to the learners"

(Han). In order to focus on learners in the process of English teaching, the teacher should:

> give students some appropriate guide or correctness if necessary. Teachers should give students enough time and chances to practice their own abilities, such as a presentation or a group-cooperation activity; (Tian)

> "encourage students to show their opinions"; (Xuan)

> "motivate learners to learn willingly"; (Di)

> "lead learners to the best ways to learn by themselves"; (Wu)

> "supervise learners' learning, and encourage them to learn"; (Hui, translated by the researcher)

> "raise the problems and guide the students to consider in an appropriate way"; (Fei)

> "help students to have a further understanding of language, not just let them learn". (Xi)

These participants, according to the statements listed above, seemed to agree that the teacher should not always transfer knowledge to students; instead, they should motivate learners to learn by themselves. Tian expressed a more insightful understanding that the teacher should provide learners opportunities to practice the language. To some other participants (Han, Di, Wu, Hui), "learner-centered" teaching was likely identical with learners' self-learning which emphasized learners' learning processes and their willingness to learn. But the process of learning seemed to be understood as a tough and unpleasant one that learners did not like, because the

participants suggested that the teacher should give a lot of motivation and encouragement to ensure learners' willingness to learn. If the willingness of learners was encouraged and motivated successfully, the learners' learning process could then be ensured. In this way, the student-centered teaching could be achieved. Also, some other participants (Xia, Fei, and Xi) only explained CLT in a very general manner. Their explanations seemed to be able to fit into both CLT and other teaching approaches.

While answering the question of how to apply CLT in English teaching in Q 1, the most frequently mentioned activity by these pre-service teachers was to show videos or movies to students. This may relate to the participants' own learning experience at college, where they watched many videos to develop their oral and hearing ability. One participant (Fan) even said that she had watched about 300 English movies at college, which increased her oral competence dramatically.

The participants also mentioned "hearing activity", "making dialogues", "telling-stories", "playing games", "competition", and "role-play" as concrete CLT activities that they might use in an EFL classroom. These pre-service teachers seemed to possess a limited number of ideas of how the CLT approach could be realized.

Moreover, the participants did not seem to have confidence in creating their own teaching activities by themselves. Two participants (Hui and Han) even mentioned that they did not know many concrete CLT teaching methods and regarded creation of new activities as very difficult; therefore, they hoped that the so-called experts in the field of EFL could be able to create certain packages of methods that were "systematic,

efficient, easy to understand and easy to be carried out to help other teachers put CLT into reality" (Han).

To summarize, these pre-service EFL teachers used the identical theoretical concepts such as "guide" and "student-centered" to describe the role of the teacher and the learner in an EFL classroom. However, while explaining how to carry the theories into reality, they concentrated more on explaining how the learners should be motivated to learn willingly rather than what the teacher should do in an EFL classroom. Also, they had limited ideas of possible CLT-methods in their minds. The disparity between their theoretical understandings and their concrete practical ideas may imply that these pre-service teachers developed different (or even incorrect) understandings or associations about the same theoretical concepts when these concepts were taught to them in the training program. The training program seemed to have succeeded in transferring certain concepts and theoretical knowledge about CLT to the pre-service teachers, but failed in digging deeply into the theory of CLT and combining the theory and teaching realities.

Views on Implementation of CLT in China

According to the data collected in Q 1 conducted before the teaching practicum, the participants saw benefits as well as problems regarding the implementation of CLT in China. They regarded CLT as a new teaching method that could increase the oral ability of English learners and motivate learners to learn. However, the participants questioned the possibility of implementing it in China.

Good oral skill vs. high scores in examinations.

The participants believed that CLT could help set up an English-speaking environment in an EFL classroom and give students more opportunities to practice English. In this way, the communicative skill of learners, more exactly their oral skill, could be improved.

> English learners in China are not native speakers, and they don't have the real English-using environment. But the CLT can offer English learners enough linguistic environments and enough chances to practice their English. (Tian)
> The purpose of learning a language is to communicate with the language. Implementing CLT in China will definitely increase the communicative ability of Chinese English learners and achieve the real target of language learning. (Fan)

However, many participants believed that both the teacher and English learners in China were affected deeply by the exam-oriented education at schools and they may regard this teaching as useless for doing examinations.

> Teachers do not aim at increasing the communicative competence; instead, they are directed by examination, in which the oral work will not be checked. They may think this approach cannot increase the scores in a short time. CLT is far from enough. (Tian)
> There may be two possibilities for implementing CLT in China: first, the examination system would be abandoned; or second, the teacher can be "unhooked" from the students' scores. (Wu)

To the participants, CLT was good but not good enough in the Chinese

educational context. Although CLT was understood as a way to develop learners' oral

skills, it was not regarded by them as efficient in improving the skills of reading and

writing that were needed in examinations. Additionally, CLT was not viewed by them

as an efficient way of teaching linguistic knowledge such as grammar and vocabulary

that were the main content in examinations. It is notable that the participants'

perceptions about the implementation of CLT depended on their narrow

understandings of CLT as a method only for improving speaking competence.

The participants recognized the conflict existing between the implementation of

CLT and teaching linguistic knowledge, which seemed to demonstrate that the *New*

Curriculum issued by the government might stay in conflict with the nation-wide

Chinese examination system. A mismatch seems to exist among the national teaching

curriculum and the evaluation procedures.

Fun of CLT vs. usefulness of the traditional way of teaching.

The participants also expressed their views in Q 1 on how English learners

would probably respond to an English class in which CLT was implemented in Q 1. In

fact, through examining the participants' views on possible learners' responses, part of

the participants' own responses to CLT can be revealed as well. Because at the time

when they answered the question about learners' responses before the practicum, they

seldom had had experience with real learners and probably considered this question

by putting themselves into a learner's position.

According to their answers to the question about learners' responses in Q 1,

many participants believed that Chinese English learners would like CLT, because teachers who applied CLT would be able to arouse learners' interests. In Q 1, they used the words such as "new", "fresh", "lively" to describe a class in which CLT was implemented. They believed that CLT would be able to "surprise" learners and make English teaching "more fun", "less-boring", and "less-sleepy". Here are some statements in Q 1 about the motivating function of CLT in an EFL classroom:

> In my opinion, most English learners may love CLT, because through a long time of learning English tediously, they have already felt sick of this way of learning. They desire to approach a new and active way. (Han)
>
> CLT is more practical and more interesting. I don't think who wants to learn something would like the traditional ways of teaching. That makes us sleepy. (Qing)
>
> I think most Chinese students will like this teaching mode. Because English learning is very boring sometimes, such as memorizing words. But if we use this mode, class will be more interesting and more will be learned through communication. (Wu, translated by the researcher)
>
> In my opinion, the traditional way for English learners is grammar translation. And most learners may adapt the tradition way. If we use CLT, I think they may be curious and feel new. That may arouse their interest. (Hong)

By using the words like "tediously", "sick", "sleepy", and "boring" in the expressions listed above, these pre-service teachers showed their dissatisfaction with the monotonous and tiresome teaching process in their previous schools. They

believed that this kind of teaching had affected their motivation to learn negatively. They hoped that CLT as something "new" "practical' and "interesting" could help create a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in an EFL classroom in which learners could be motivated. With their unpleasant experience of learning English in secondary schools, they seemed to pay more attention to the significance of enjoyment that CLT might produce in an EFL classroom. CLT may be understood by the participants as a new way of teaching that could make up what English teaching in their previous schools had lacked.

The participants seemed to use CLT as a weapon against their unpleasant English learning experience due to the traditional way of teaching in secondary schools. However, it is important to note that they were not against the results brought by the traditional teaching, since they did not mention their uncertainty about it. From the data demonstrated in the prior section, we know that they regarded the traditional way of English teaching as very efficient in achieving high scores in examinations. What the participants disliked seemed to be the unpleasant feelings and pressure combined with the traditional way of English teaching. They did not like the monotonous, mechanical, exam-oriented way of teaching in secondary schools; however, they did not question its ability in improving test scores.

Although the participants mentioned that English learners would like CLT, they also expressed many concerns for learners if CLT was applied. Some participants expressed their worry in Q 1 that learners of secondary schools might not cooperate well, because they could not understand teachers' talking in English, because they

intended to improve their scores rather than their communicative skills, or because they felt too embarrassed to cooperate. The participants were also concerned that learners might speak Chinese while doing activities; or they might get too excited while doing activities and the teacher might lose the control of the students in the process of teaching.

All of these pre-service teachers mentioned in Q 1 their willingness of trying CLT in the coming teaching practicum. Some participants had a firmer decision than others and talked more about concrete ideas of implementing CLT such as activities they wanted to apply. Some others would like to combine CLT with other teaching methods. A few mentioned that they would like to try CLT, but they confessed that they did not really know how to do it.

Summary and Reflections

Based on the data collected from Q 1, the participants had some basic understandings of CLT before the educational practicum. Their information about CLT seemed to be acquired from the teacher-training program at the college rather than through their personal schooling experience before entering college. Their understandings about CLT turned out to be limited to some theoretical concepts and statements; and their knowledge about concrete methods of implementing CLT appeared restricted. The participants acknowledged CLT as a new and effective teaching approach to improve students' communicative competence; however, their understandings of communication were more likely identical with speaking and listening. They often applied the four-language-skill categories to interpret CLT.

The participants' perceptions about the implementation of CLT were contradictory. On the one hand, they acknowledged CLT as a new, interesting, and effective teaching approach that could improve one's ability to communicate by adding pleasure to the monotonous traditional way of English teaching. They related to CLT emotionally when their previous repressed feelings of the traditional approach were considered. However, they hardly regarded CLT as an adequate teaching approach that could help achieve high EFL test scores based on their "reasonable" understandings of CLT within the macro educational context in China.

Vygotskian theory indicates that individual development has its origins in social sources (Vygotsky, 1987). In my research, it is notable that the perceptions of the pre-service EFL teachers who had grown up and gone to school in Liaoning were affected heavily by their previous long-time schooling experience. CLT as a new teaching approach learned at college was often understood and interpreted by the participants through comparing it with the traditional way of teaching they had experienced previously. Moreover, the participants emphasized pleasure and development of oral competence as two main benefits of CLT, which indicates that they interpreted CLT more likely as a method to make amends for the traditional way of teaching. They seemed to regard CLT as a teaching mode to compensate for what the traditional way of English teaching lacked.

Chapter Six: The Participants' Perceptions During The Practicum

In the process of the educational practicum, my attention was paid to understand the pre-service teachers' perceptions about English teaching in a practicum school, their views on current school teachers and learners, and their further understandings of CLT as well as its implementation.

The data demonstrated in this chapter are mainly obtained from the two focus groups (FG 1, FG 2) and some interviews that I did with the participants during the process of the practicum. Xuan, Hui, Fei, Tian, and Xi attended FG 1. Han, Di, Hong, and Fan attended FG 2. Wu, Qing, and Zhao were interviewed separately. The two focus groups and the interviews were conducted in Chinese; they were transcribed and translated by the researcher into English.

English Teaching in The Three Practicum Schools

The twelve pre-service teachers did a six-week practicum in three local schools in Dalian: a middle school, a high school, and a vocational high school. The school English teaching described by the participants served to understand how they perceived English teaching in the local schools. Their perceptions may not be able to provide a whole picture of English teaching in these schools, because they stayed in each school only for six weeks and mainly followed only one school teacher.

In the middle school.

Six participants, Tian, Xi, Xuan, Hui, Wu, and Fei, conducted their educational practicum in a middle school. This school is one of the key middle schools in Dalian and is famous for its high rate in the High School Entrance Examination in Dalian.

The six participants with other twelve pre-service teachers were arranged in a large room as their temporary office. Three or four pre-service EFL teachers were arranged to one English teacher who taught the seventh grade in this school.

The six participants who did the practicum in this school arrived at school at 7:30 a.m. and left at 4:30 p.m. Their work in the practicum often depended on what the school teachers told them to do. All the 6 participants mentioned that they helped their school teachers correct students' homework and guide learners' learning in the early morning classes, in which they explained some common mistakes in the homework, gave quizzes, or checked if the students could recite a text as demanded by their teachers. Hui and Xuan, who followed the same school teacher, were also given the opportunity to teach English phonetics in one afternoon class. Each pre-service teacher was required to teach one normal class in the last week of the practicum. The pre-service teachers discussed their teaching plans with their school teacher before teaching.

According to the six pre-service teachers (Hui, Tian, Fei, Xi, Xuan, and Wu) who did the practicum in this school, English teaching in this school remained traditional; grammar translation was the main teaching approach used by the school EFL teachers. Hui and Xuan who were assigned to the same school teacher described in FG 1 how this EFL school teacher taught English.

> At the beginning of one class, the teacher asked right away in Chinese: "jin tian xing qi ji [What day is today]? Liang, qi lai fan yi [Liang, stand up and translate]". Then on the second day, she called a few students who could not

be able to focus well to come to the front and write on the blackboard, and

then she let the others open their notebooks. Then she said in Chinese "Jin tian

xing qi ji [What day is today]?" The students needed to write down the

appropriate English sentence. The students were required to know how to say

it and how to write it in English. (Hui, FG 1)

Although translation method was mainly applied by the teacher in her

teaching, she paid attention to alteration of sentences, such as the alteration

between "what about" and "how about". Different sentences may have the

same meaning; she would try to explain all the possible sentences. She may

list the words that her students may not understand before translation. What's

more, the teacher made a good connection among different lessons. For

example, when the students met the word "order" one day in an exercise, she

explained, based on this one, all of the six usages of the word "order" that

appeared in the textbook. (Xuan, FG 1)

In the FG 1, Xi and Fei who followed another EFL school teacher in the middle

school also described how their school teacher taught English:

She just followed the textbook: passages, dialogues, and then translation of

sentences and explanation of grammar. She is able to explain grammar very

clearly, but in a very formal way. While teaching possessive pronouns, she

drew a table on the board for explaining how possessive pronouns looked like

in situations of nominative and objective. We, as pre-service teachers,

understood her explanation very clearly, but the students may not understand

her well. (Fei, FG 1)

While explaining a sentence, she would point out what was the subject and what was the object. Her class had a very strong sense of grammar. Her teaching arrangement was very clear and logical. There was nothing more or nothing less in her teaching. (Xi, FG 1)

Although this teacher taught in a very mechanical manner in her teaching, she seemed to realize the disadvantages of this kind of teaching, which could be revealed from Xi's words: "She told us that there was no other way out. While teaching grammar, many other aspects have to be ignored in English teaching" (FG1). Teaching linguistic knowledge to meet the requirements of the coming examinations was this school teacher's practical choice. The reason why she said this to the pre-service teachers may be that she tried to justify her traditional teaching manner to these pre-service teachers who were trained to teach in the communicative approach. She sent the message to the pre-service teachers that the communicative approach did not fit into the educational reality.

According to the focus groups and the interviews, the six pre-service teachers who did the practicum in the middle school admitted that little of English teaching in this school had been changed in comparison with their own English learning experiences. The teacher just stood high in the front and students answered questions. The teacher followed the textbook and addressed grammar.

In FG 1, the participants also mentioned that the English textbook written based on the *New Curriculum* was very communicative, and much better than the textbooks

they had used before during their schooling time. But how the school teachers used the textbook remained the same. They just picked out the knowledge from the book. Teaching English based on the *New Curriculum* looked like "putting the old wine into a new bottle" (Tian, FG 1).

Although the participants admitted that little had been changed in this school regarding English teaching methods, they recognized some developments in terms of teacher qualification and teacher-student relationships. The EFL teachers in this school were believed to be more qualified teachers than their own previous EFL teachers, because the EFL teachers in this school had better oral competence, more ability to arrange teaching, and better ability to explain grammar and vocabulary. Also, the teacher-student relationship was improved as well. These pre-service teachers mentioned that they had been afraid of their own previous teachers. But the students in this school seemed to have less fear of their teachers while answering or asking questions.

The participants also mentioned that learners who were about 13 years old appeared very active in class. Their learning motivation was high and there seemed no need to use other methods to motivate them. Many of the students were taking English courses outside school. They seemed to have "already learned what the teacher was going to teach in class" (Xuan, FG 1).

In the high school.

The high school in which three of the participants, Fan, Hong, and Zhao, conducted the practicum is a key high school in Dalian. The high school is located

relatively far from the university where the pre-service teachers lived, so the three

participants had to depart earlier in order to arrive at school at 7:30 a.m. and they

came back to the university about 6 p.m. Four or five pre-service EFL teachers were

assigned to one English teacher teaching the first grade in the high school. The

participants told me in the interviews that they had few opportunities to contact the

students. They went to a classroom and observed English teaching only when the

school English teachers taught. They stayed in a big classroom as their temporary

office for the most time when they did not have class to observe. The pre-service

teachers built groups to discuss about English teaching in this school and their class

designs. They also talked with their master teachers about their teaching plans and

received guidance from them. Each pre-service teacher taught only one time in the

last week. The high school seemed to have more worries about the influence of the

pre-service teachers on the learning process of its students, as Fan indicated in the

interview after the practicum: "They were afraid that we would affect the students'

learning results if we taught too many times. They didn't trust us."

According to the three participants (Fan, Hong, and Zhao) who did the practicum

in this school, English teaching in this school was very traditional as well. The school

EFL teachers they observed focused mainly on teaching grammar. "Some teachers'

pronunciation may not be good enough, but they were all good at explaining

grammar" (Fan, FG 2). English teaching in the high school seemed to follow a certain

teaching pattern:

English teachers often followed the textbook; they let learners read words,

dialogues, and then explained texts and exercises. I also observed that one

English teacher addressed the importance of one linguistic knowledge point by

pointing out that it had been tested in one Entrance Examination. In this way,

she achieved learners' special attention to the knowledge. (Hong, FG 2)

English teachers in this school were required to speak English all the time in an

EFL class. But the three participants said that the teachers in this school did not

always speak English in class. English was mainly used when reading English texts or

answering questions. The teachers often spoke Chinese while explaining grammar and

vocabulary.

According to the three participants who did the practicum in this school, most

students in this school had learned English in private schools since they were very

young; and their oral English was pretty good. Girls could speak better than boys.

Based on what I observed in this school, many students, especially the students in the

key class, could speak English very fluently. The students were admitted by this high

school based on their high scores in the High School Entrance Examination in Dalian.

In other words, they had been selected as better students by this key high school

among all the middle school graduates in Dalian in that year. The parents of these

students, according to the participants, attached importance to learning and supported

their children to learn.

The participants also admitted that this high school tended to hire highly

qualified EFL teachers. They, as undergraduate students from the Liaoning Normal

University, may not have opportunities to find a teaching position in this school.

The middle school and the high school are both key schools in Dalian. They share much commonality in many aspects: better qualified teachers, well-motivated learners, and very supportive families. But in comparison with these two key schools, English teaching and learners in the vocational school appeared very different.

In the vocational high school.

Three (Di, Han, and Qing) of the twelve participants did their practicum in a vocational high school. In comparison to the other participants who conducted the practicum in the key middle school and the key high school, these three participants had more opportunities to teach. The school English teacher, who was in charge of teaching English to the second grade in this vocational school, gave all the English pre-service teachers one demonstration lesson and let them take over her teaching work in the first week. As the vocational school did not have the pressure of achieving a high enrollment rate, the EFL pre-service teachers were given relatively more time of teaching, as Di explained in the focus group: "Vocational schools and primary schools are relatively flexible and not as serious as middle and high schools" (FG 2).

During the practicum, the three pre-service teachers helped with the early morning classes in which they supervised students' reading of English texts. In the first few weeks, the participants stayed more often in a classroom to teach English, helped the classroom teachers with class management, and corrected homework. In the last few weeks, the classroom teachers also allowed them to stay more often in the office and do their own work after finishing necessary teaching jobs.

According to the three participants, they did not have many opportunities to

observe how the school English teachers taught in this school. The English teacher who was in charge of teaching the second grade students demonstrated only one English class to all of the pre-service EFL teachers and then let them take over her teaching right away in the first week. She seemed to regard the qualification of these pre-service teachers as good enough for teaching her own students.

In the only teaching demonstration, the school EFL teacher did some activities to motivate students, such as building groups and doing pair works. But when the three participants talked with the students later, they found out that this teacher did not always use this kind of methods in her daily teaching. The school English teacher also told the pre-service teachers that no matter what responses the students would give to them, they as teachers should fulfill their responsibilities by planning their teaching steps and motivating all to participate. With this suggestion, the teacher seemed to imply that the learners in this school may not cooperate well in class.

In comparison with the students of the other two key schools, the students in this school had less interest and motivation in learning. When I observed in this school, I saw once that half of the students slept in one English class. According to the three participants, these students seldom took English class outside school. Di mentioned that the students of this school only intended to receive a certificate. Whereas the students in the other two key schools had greater opportunities to go to the top universities in China, students in this vocational school seemed not to have very clear ideas about their future. "They don't know what they want to do. They may find a job or go back home after graduation" (Di, FG 2).

Perceptions about Implementation of CLT

Implementation of CLT needs more time and efforts.

From the data collected in FG 1, FG 2, and the interviews done during the

process of the practicum, more themes about the implementation of CLT emerged.

Many of the participants were concerned that there was not enough time for EFL

teachers to implement CLT in their teaching. If CLT was applied, the planned teaching

target could not be completed on time. Here is one comment:

> For instance, in the middle school, the teachers were required to spend one
>
> week or less on teaching one lesson. If we do games and expand a lot in class,
>
> it is impossible to finish one lesson on time. (Xuan, FG 1)

To the participants, teaching English meant teaching the contents of a textbook.

Every part in the book needed to be handled. And CLT was understood by them as

something extra that did not stay in a textbook rather than a certain teaching approach

that could transfer vocabulary, linguistic knowledge, and practicing language

effectively. The implementation of CLT as doing something additional to teaching the

textbook was considered by these pre-service teachers as a teaching approach that

would take extra time and influence the speed of teaching.

The participants did not only believe that CLT would slow down the teaching

speed, but they also mentioned that the teacher would have to spend more time and

more efforts on preparing for a class using CLT, which would build a big burden to an

EFL teacher. Here are two examples mentioned by Xi and Han:

> After all, CLT needs a lot of preparation. Also, you need to expand and you

need to know all of those stuffs about CLT. A big number of students already

trouble you a lot. When you have to teach more than one classes, you will be

totally tired. (Xi, FG 1)

I wanted to expand a little bit in my teaching so that the students [in the

vocational school] had interest to listen to me. The preparation was really

exhausting: it took you perhaps a half day to think about how to expand one

sentence and how to make teaching interesting. It was really exhausting. (Han,

FG 2)

According to the participants, an EFL teacher who implemented CLT needed to

pay much more efforts in comparison with a teacher who taught English in a

traditional way. Xuan described in FG 1 how she would gradually give up putting an

extra effort into applying CLT in her teaching as follows:

At the beginning [of being a real EFL teacher], I want to be a good teacher

who does not put much pressure of doing exams on her students. But gradually,

I may think that I still have my own stuffs to do. So, why not just follow what

has been already accepted. It is enough to raise their scores; and then I have

time to do my own things. (Xuan, FG 1)

According to Xuan's description, an EFL teacher may be conscious of the

disadvantages of the current exam-oriented teaching approach in schools and would

plan to teach differently. But their desire of exploring new teaching methods may be

used up in the process of teaching; and their teaching may be assimilated into the

traditional way of teaching that seemed to have been accepted by the society.

What Xuan talked about also indicates how a teacher would be evaluated as a good teacher in China. Schools, learners, and parents, maybe the whole society, would assess a teacher by checking the scores of his/her students. In this kind of evaluation environment, pre-service teachers may have less desire to spend more efforts on exploring new teaching methods. Without many successful examples of implementing CLT, the pre-service teachers seemed to have to explore a new teaching way and they may feel uncertain about where the new way would lead them to. Thus, teaching traditionally seemed to be a safe choice for pre-service teachers in comparison with choosing CLT.

CLT is the trend of English teaching.

In the focus groups and the interviews, almost all of the participants admitted that CLT was the trend of English teaching in China. However, they believed that there was a long way to go, before CLT could be broadly applied in China. These participants expressed their willingness to add some CLT in their teaching, but they also admitted that what they could do would be limited and would be strongly affected by the way of English teaching of their own previous school teachers. Here are some of their expressions from FG 1 about how the teaching of their previous English teachers would affect their future teaching:

> No teacher in my junior and senior middle school used CLT to teach me, so I
>
> don't know how to use CLT in my teaching. (Hui)
>
> Mostly, we will just imitate the way of teaching of our prior teachers. This
>
> may be the so called 'taking over'. There is no way to create by myself. (Xi)

In fact, we are trying to make some changes, but the traditional teaching is too stable in our minds. (Fei)

The participants were aware of the influence of their previous EFL teachers on their own way of English teaching. Their early English learning experience was believed to have helped construct their understandings of English teaching and was deeply rooted in their minds. Although they were conscious of the limitations of the traditional teaching mode, they admitted that they could hardly find a way going out of its influence. In other words, the culturally-influenced beliefs seemed to hinder the participants' desire to explore other pedagogical options.

However, the participants who had focused on learning the English language and English education at college believed that CLT would be applied in the future; only its implementation would take a very long time. Here are some of their predictions given by the participants in the focus groups and the interviews:

English teaching can be slightly changed by us. It is impossible to implement CLT over one night. The change should be slow, very slow. Application of CLT is a task over generations. We will add a little, and our next generation will add a little more. Generations of teachers are needed to contribute to that. (Xi, FG 1)

It [CLT] may be applied in ten years. Now the kids of the people who were born in the 80s started to go to school. Some people I know have sent their kids into bilingual preschools. When these kids go to schools, they may resist the traditional way of teaching. Besides, their parents can accept the new ways

of teaching as well. There are so many differences between the parents who

were born in the 70s and 80s. (Qing, interview)

According to Vygotsky (1994), the ideal and final form of development exists in

the environment and influences the very first steps in the development of a child. If

this ideal form is not present in the child's environment, the child will develop very

slowly and will never attain the level which they reach when the suitable ideal form is

present (Vygotsky, 1994). Based on the views of the participants, the ideal form of

applying CLT did not exist in the environment in their development of becoming EFL

teachers. Because of the lack of the ideal forms of implementing CLT in the

educational reality, their way of implementing CLT would be a long and slow process.

CLT may be in conflict with the Chinese culture of learning.

Xuan, Hui, Tian, Fei, and Xi who did the practicum in the middle school

attended FG 1 in which they mentioned a class taught by a young native English

teacher in this school. The native English teacher taught oral English to the

seventh-grade students once a week. It is interesting to see how these participants

talked about his teaching and the students' responses in his class. From their talking,

some of the participants' understandings of meaningful teaching and learning can be

revealed. Fei described the class taught by the foreign teacher as follows:

> The students like his class. What he gives to them is new. It is something that
>
> will not be taught by their Chinese English teachers. The atmosphere of his
>
> teaching is also different from the formal Chinese school teachers; it is not that
>
> serious and full of fun. (Fei, FG 1)

When I asked her what was "fun" in his teaching, Fei answered: "Nothing, but something Luan Qi Ba Zao, such as something that has not been heard from their Chinese English teachers" (Fei, FG 1). The Chinese expression of "Luan Qi Ba Zao" can be understood as "messy", "chaotic", "mixed up", or "something about this and that". By using the word "Luan Qi Ba Zao", Fei seemed to say what the foreign teacher taught in class was rich in content but not very important. His teaching had no norm to follow, not like the teaching of a formal Chinese teacher. By saying "Luan Qi Ba Zao", Fei may consider that the teaching of the foreign teacher did not belong to meaningful teaching in China.

In FG 1, the participants also mentioned a situation in this foreign teacher's class and discussed about one girl student's reaction. Their discussion is reported as follows:

> **Xi**: Relating to the topic about family in the textbook, the foreign teacher taught the students about the family tree. He told the students that if your mom and your dad were divorced and got married with somebody else, the new kid they gave birth to was called step brother or step sister. The students were very interested in this topic. One girl even asked a series of weird questions, like how to call the aunt if the cousin was divorced and so on. She asked four or five this kind of questions until the teacher was speechless.
>
> **Fei**: The students are very interested in weird and odd things.
>
> **Xuan**: That's right. They have a lot of outside-oriented spirits. They often have interest in something that has nothing to do with learning.

Through words like "weird" and "odd", these pre-service teachers seemed to say that the questions the girl asked were not significant in a classroom. The questions asked by the girl were not understood by them as a meaningful communication through which something could be learned, but as a distraction from the main road of teaching and learning. How to use knowledge to ask practical English questions seemed no to be regarded by them as important as knowing abstract and solid knowledge in a book.

Using expressions such as "outside-oriented spirit" and "no relation," they seemed to understand that meaningful teaching and learning had a clear boundary. Only certain things that could satisfy certain requirements could be included into the circle of teaching and learning. The inside-oriented teaching and learning may refer to transmitting knowledge that existed inside textbooks into one's mind within a classroom. The "Luan Qi Ba Zao" knowledge that did not stay in a textbook and came from the outside world may be understood by the participants as unstable and useless.

The discussion of the participants may imply that learning and teaching understood by the participants focused on the "inside" knowledge rather than the "outside" knowledge. While implementation of CLT is understood by many western scholars as setting up meaningful interaction that bridges the gap between classroom learning and the outside world through activities designed to simulate "real life" communication problems (Allwright, 1984), the idea of connecting the outside world and a classroom through CLT may be in conflict with the Chinese cultural understanding of teaching and learning.

Imagined possibilities of using English in China.

As stated in the prior chapter, some participants noticed that English would not be used in the daily Chinese speaking environment and pointed out that a teacher who applied CLT could provide English learners opportunities to practice the English language within a classroom. But while talking about the ideas of how to set up an English-speaking environment in the focus groups, the participants often gave some ideas by imagining certain situations in which English learners interacted with English-speaking foreigners. Tian talked in FG 1 about how she would try to create some real situations for her students to make dialogues:

> I will teach the students how to say something in the way that is said by foreigners abroad. For example, I may create a situation in which one person does not know something or he has a trouble abroad. First, I will let the students try to solve this trouble based on the knowledge they already have. Then, I will tell them how foreigners will ask questions in this kind of situation. The students may find this kind of teaching useful, because they learn something that can be used later. In fact, very few of what we have learned in a current classroom could be applied abroad. (Tian, FG 1)

Tian intended to create a "real" situation in which English learners could practice English. However, the situation she created did not relate to the daily lives of many Chinese learners in China, but took place in foreign countries. In Chinese, the expression of "foreign countries", without specific explanations, often indicates the USA, England, or other developed Western countries. The possibility of using English

that Tian imagined was far from Chinese learners' daily lives. In fact, many English learners in China, especially in small towns and rural areas, seldom have the possibility to communicate with native English speakers.

Di also mentioned this kind of imaginative possibility for speaking English in FG 2.

> While teaching the unit of direction, I tried to achieve the learners' attention and interest by mentioning the possibilities of using the English sentences we had learned. I told them that they could speak these sentences if they wanted to ask directions. But the students said that they would ask directions in Chinese of course. Then I said that they could answer a foreigner who asked you about directions. The students said that they would avoid the situation of meeting a foreigner like that. (Di, FG 2)

Di mentioned this in order to show that her students in the vocational school had little interest and motivation in learning English. However, her expression above also implies that possibilities of using the English language were in fact far from the English learners in the vocational school. English meant to these English learners more like a learning subject that had nothing to do with their own lives. If they did not speak to foreigners, there seemed to be no possibilities of using English to them.

According to the above mentioned two examples, the English language seemed to play two different roles in China. English as a learning subject played a solid role in schools. However, regarding with the usage of this language, English

was understood by Chinese learners more possibly as a language to communicate with foreigners, which turned out to impossible for many learners in China and could only remain imaginative.

Even the participants who had studied English education at college for more than three years did not use English to communicate among themselves. Fan mentioned in the interview that I did with her after the practicum that she liked speaking English at college, but she felt that many of her classmates would feel weird if she spoke English to them. "The others may think that I am showing off" (Fan, the interview after the practicum). English was seldom regarded by these pre-service teachers as a language to express themselves. They seemed to feel uncertain to own the language as their own communicative tool. Instead, English was regarded by them more likely as a language that was possessed by English native speakers.

Not only was English often regarded as the language belonging to foreigners, but CLT as an imported teaching approach was also often understood by the participants as being possessed by foreigners. There was an interesting discussion about the implementation of CLT in FG 1:

> **Hui**: I am a little skeptic. If we are required to teach English to Chinese learners with CLT, why not let the children stay abroad for one year?
>
> **Xuan**: Because the costs are too high.
>
> **Hui**: But we also spent a lot of national resources, time, and energy until we are able to teach after twenty years of English learning.
>
> **Fei**: But the kids are too young [to stay abroad alone].

Xuan: Maybe the key is how to use the resources to train teachers like us.

Xi: In this situation, it may be better to replace all school English teachers with foreign teachers.

Xuan: Oh. I think every school should have foreign teachers. At least, they can establish an English speaking environment.

These participants as potential EFL teachers felt uncertain about applying CLT in China, since CLT was believed to be a teaching approach owned by foreign people and applied abroad. They believed that foreign teachers would be more qualified to apply CLT than Chinese EFL teachers did, without considering if foreign teachers had received particular training or not. Native-speakerism which means that native-speaker teachers are believed to be the ideals both of the English language and English teaching methodology (Holliday, 2005) occurred in fact among these participants.

Summary and Reflections

During the process of the practicum, more interesting themes about implementing CLT emerged from the data collected through the focus groups and the interviews. The implementation of CLT was often considered by the participants as adding something extra to teaching textbooks, which would slow down the planned teaching speed. These pre-service teachers also believed that EFL teachers had to expend more efforts on preparing for CLT in comparison with the traditional way of teaching. Since the evaluation system in China was considered by the participants as very score-oriented, they might lose desire to apply CLT and their teaching would be

assimilated gradually by the existing traditional teaching approach. However, they believed that CLT was the trend of teaching English in future. Generations of teachers were believed to be needed to contribute to implementing CLT broadly in China.

Another interesting theme emerging from the data relates to the Chinese learning and teaching culture. A culture of learning indicates the socially and culturally constructed forms over history with respect to learning and teaching behavior (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006; Shi, 2006). In the long process of schooling, the participants seemed to be used to teaching and learning stable and abstract knowledge within textbooks inside schools. Learning and teaching at schools were perceived by the participants more like a process of transmitting knowledge rather than constructing and applying knowledge, which is identical with the findings of some scholars (Jin & Cortazzi, 2008; Yu & Wang, 2009). Therefore, CLT which intends to bring the outside world into a classroom may be in contradiction with the Chinese cultural understanding of teaching and learning English.

Finally, according to what the participants said, there was a sign of native-speakerism existing among these participants. Both the English language and CLT were understood as possessions of English native speakers. The possibilities of speaking English mentioned by the participants were limited to the interactions with native English speakers. In fact, these possibilities of using English were often unreal and remained imaginative for many English learners in China.

While the English language plays an uncertain role in daily interactions in the Chinese speaking context, English as a learning subject plays a steady and important

role in schools, according to the participants. Linguistic knowledge is understood as the main learning content for English learners, but learning how to use the language in a real life situation is often omitted in schools. Thus, teaching and learning English in China means more likely learning about a language rather than learning a language in Halliday's (1980) concept. Although the Chinese government views English as the most important carrier of information and the language that is widely applied in every field of human life (MOE, 2001), these pre-service teachers did not treat English as a language for enjoying information from around the whole world. More often, English meant to them more likely a language that could bring English learners better educational opportunities.

Chapter Seven: Six Pre-service Teachers As Six Cases

In the previous chapters, the themes were reported based on the horizontal analysis of the data, which means that the themes derived from the data collected from all the participants within the same period (the period before the practicum and the period during the practicum). The words of all of the participants were taken into consideration to recognize the common significant themes.

However, the teaching behaviors of the pre-service teachers took place in three different schools and their reflections after the practicum appeared very school-based. Their teaching behaviors and their post reflections showed very personal beliefs and perceptions, which increased the difficulty of recognizing the common themes among all the pre-service teachers. In order to capture the individuality of these pre-service teachers who did the practicum in different schools, I report, in this chapter, the data collected from six individual pre-service teachers vertically. It means that I report the data that were collected from each of the six participants before, during, and after the practicum respectively, so that a whole picture of the perceptions of one individual can be demonstrated through their words and behaviors.

I illustrate six pre-service teachers as six cases, two from the pre-service teachers who did the practicum in the same school. By analyzing the words and behaviors of all the participants, I realized that these pre-service teachers could generally be categorized into two types – the pre-service EFL teachers who had a more communicative sense of English teaching and the pre-services teachers who understood English teaching in a more traditional manner. The two types of

pre-service teachers existed in all of the three practicum schools. While choosing the six pre-service teachers to report, I intended to cover both of the two types of pre-service teachers in each practicum school. I compared the data of the pre-service teachers who did the practicum in the same school (six in the middle school; three in the high schools; three in the vocational school) and chose the two whose words and behaviors demonstrated the most communicative sense of English teaching and the most traditional one. The six pre-service teachers I finally selected were Di and Han in the vocational school, Fan and Hong in the high school, as well as Hui and Tian in the middle school.

In this chapter, I follow the same pattern to illustrate each case: a) Their views presented in questionnaires collected before the practicum; 2) their views emerging from the focus groups or the interviews in the process of the practicum; 3) their teaching behaviors; 4) their views presented in questionnaires collected after the practicum as well as the interviews done after the practicum. At the end of each case, I reflect on each pre-service teacher.

In The Vocational School

Di: "The students have no interest in learning."

Before the practicum. Presenting the views on English teaching and CLT given by the six pre-service teachers before the practicum, I demonstrate their responses given in Q 1. Q 1 contains nine questions[7]. The nine questions mainly deal with four issues: a) pre-service teachers' understandings of CLT and English teaching (question

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[7] See attachment I.

1, 2, 3); b) their perceptions about implementation of CLT in China (question 4, 5, 8, 9); c) English learning experience in previous schools (question 6); d) training experience at college (question 7). These four issues are covered while reporting the six participants' views before the practicum. No change is made to their words unless it is indicated. The numbers of the questions to which the participants responded are given in the brackets.

Before the practicum, Di understood CLT by comparing it with the traditional way of teaching she had experienced previously. To her, CLT was something that was very anti-traditional:

> Without knowing much about CLT, I think it is a way of English teaching based on practicing students' communication skill which is very different from the traditional teaching way. Teachers will focus more on practical and useful tasks than simply reading books. (Q1, q 1)

Di realized that an English teacher needed to play a different role in a classroom when CLT was applied; however, she could not explain clearly how to teach differently, but only mentioned that the teacher should motivate and know her learners:

> Teachers should be guides just when we meet with difficulties more than people who strictly urge us to read, recite, listen, write or speak. They should motivate us to learn willingly. (Q1, q 2)

> I always thought the interests to learn are the key. Teachers need to pay more time on getting to know the students, then they can find a way to teach. (Q1,

q3)

Before the practicum, Di described her positive opinion about CLT as the

application of a few activities such as "dramas" or "dialogues". But from her point of

view, CLT could not be applied broadly in China because English learners would be

embarrassed. When she talked about English learners, she expressed her opinions

based on her feelings toward CLT, because she had not met real learners in a

secondary school yet. She put herself into a learner's position, saying:

> We love dramas or simply dialogues. So usually when this kind of way be
>
> used at classes, students learn more efficient. (Q1, q4)
>
> They [English learners] like them [CLT methods] but most of them still think
>
> it is impossible to set this kind of mode in China broadly. So even when some
>
> teachers carry it out, at the first, I'm afraid many of them will feel embarrassed
>
> to cooperate. (Q1, q5)

Di also tried to analyze the difficulties of implementing CLT in China by

addressing the teacher's role and the educational system in China:

> Why most teachers now still use the traditional and rigid teaching way? I think
>
> the answer is that they don't care much about the students. They barely don't
>
> know everyone's name, let alone teach according on students' interests and
>
> characteristics. I will try CLT/TBLT in the future and I will try harder to know
>
> everyone of my students. (Q1, q8)

Di recognized the limitation of the exam-oriented educational system, but she did

not criticize it. To her, there was no other choice but to accept the traditional teaching

mode to fit into the system.

> Honestly, I love fresh and lively teaching mode. But I have to say before the
> test system in China keep this way which focus largely on rigid knowledge, I
> prefer the teaching way now. And I know, this is such a pity. I hope one day
> students won't like us now, hating reciting rigid books but have no choice (Q1,
> q6)[8].

Before the practicum, Di seemed to hold a skeptical attitude toward what she had
learned in the training program. She seemed to question the possibility of
implementing what they had taught her in the university in an actual educational
situation.

> To tell the truth, I don't like the teacher-training program at college. Because
> they are all come from professional and scholar books which are difficult to
> practice in such a mixed learning situation in china. So I figured out I have to
> taste, to feel and to modify when teaching by myself. (Q1, q7)

As a pre-service EFL teacher who was developing her particular teaching style,
Di struggled between what she was told to do and what was appropriate to do in the
current educational reality. The theories learned from the training program were
considered by her as unrealistic to fit into the educational system. She decided to
ignore what she was taught in the training program and to teach in the way that would
be accepted. This indicates that the new teaching approach could not attract her

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[8] Di used this paragraph to answer the question about her English learning experience at school.
But this answer relates more to implementation of CLT, so it is placed here.

attention, if the examination system in China was not reformed,

During the practicum. The data during the practicum were mainly collected in the focus groups, the interviews, and the class observations. The focus groups and the interviews were conducted in Chinese and then transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. The quotes cited from the focus groups and the interviews were in fact the researcher's translations.

In FG 2, I mentioned a study about CLT I had read. This study showed that one group of students who had been taught a foreign language through CLT methods was as good at the linguistic competence as the other group who had been taught through traditional methods. I intended to tell the participants that CLT might be an approach to teach grammar as well, since many of the participants were concerned that CLT neglected the linguistic knowledge. Di felt confused to hear what I said and asked:

> Then why should we use CLT which can only result in the same teaching
>
> outcome [as the traditional way did]? I think it is harder for a teacher to
>
> prepare for CLT. If CLT can not confirm higher learning scores, why should
>
> we use it?

With this expression, Di's views about CLT can be revealed. Di might have learned in the training program that CLT could achieve a better teaching result. But in her mind, a better teaching result referred to achieving higher scores. She assessed teaching results in a very score-oriented way. Therefore, Di seemed to agree that it was unnecessary for a teacher to pay extra efforts for implementing CLT that had nothing to do with raising one's scores.

Di's teaching behavior. In the vocational school, the pre-service teachers were required to teach in the first week. I visited two classes of Di in the second week of her teaching. She had completed teaching the reading texts in a unit and focused on the exercises in the unit.

At the beginning of the class I observed, Di wrote "Be a better you" on the blackboard. Then she said to the students in English: "You must be confident. You don't need to compete with others". Then she kept talking in Chinese: "You compete with yourself. Today should be better than yesterday." With these words, she seemed to be encouraging the students to make a progress everyday. But this encouragement may also imply that the students in this school were not good enough and would lose in competitions with others.

Generally speaking, Di's teaching was very grammar-, textbook-, and teacher-centered. At the beginning, she checked how well the students recited the words they had learned last time. She said one word in Chinese (for example "gong si" [company]) then let one student stand up and answered. Then she also let the student come to the front and write the word on the board and then made necessary corrections. Following this patter, Di checked seven English words.

After that, Di guided the students to do the exercises in the book. She always followed the same pattern while doing these exercises: She read or let one student read the English instruction of each exercise and explained it again in Chinese; then she gave the students time to do the exercise and checked them by calling some students to say their answers; she made corrections and explained some significant

words and grammar when necessary. The teaching content was strictly based on the textbook. She did not skip any of the exercises. During the whole process of the class, she stood in the front on the platform and only came down once.

The interactions between Di and her students were limited to giving commands or asking and answering questions. She gave some basic instructions in English such as "Let's start!"; "Let's review the words!"; "I speak Chinese words, you give English words."; "Who wants to give a try?"; "Let's come to the speaking part!", "Are you ready?" When she explained words or grammar, she usually spoke Chinese. For instance, when she explained the phrase "group the numbers", she explained "group" in Chinese: "when it is a noun, it means 'zu'. As a verb, it means 'fen zu'".

She seldom taught anything that did not exist in the textbook. In the later interview I did with her, she mentioned that the textbook she used in the practicum school was good, because it was practical and had much more fun than the textbooks she had used before.

Several times Di tried to expand a little bit based on the textbook exercises. There was the symbol "$" for dollar in the textbook, then she explained the symbol "¥" for Renminbi. She also added a little bit of cultural information. When she called on one boy to read one sentence in the book, the boy said the Chinese words "nei ge " many times in his reading. "Nei ge" (那个) is a Chinese word often said by Chinese people while searching for words to express their thoughts, and many Chinese English learners maintain this habit while speaking English. Di pointed out that it was not appropriate and persuaded her students to give up this habit. Di wrote "nigger" on the

board and explained that the meaning of "nigger", which sounded like "nei ge", was negative in the US. She suggested that one could say "well…" instead of "nei ge" if one needed time to think in the process of speaking. I, as an observer, realized that many students looked at her intently and got a little bit excited at hearing this. The students' reaction indicates that they may not have listened to the usual instuction in class because Di's mechanical teaching of English did not interest them.

Di spent the most time on doing and explaining exercises in the two classes I observed. In the second class, Di also spent the last ten minutes on starting with a new lesson about direction. She started with dealing with the new words in the vocabulary list. She let the students read after her. Then she explained some words in Chinese. For instance, for the word "direction", she mentioned "direct" and "director". For the phrase "Temple of Heaven", she mentioned the Echo Wall in the Temple of Heaven in Beijing and suggested the students to see the Echo Wall later. For the word "subway", she mentioned that the subway in Dalian would be available at the end of this year.

In fact, the students did not react well in her class. Only the students in the first two lines seemed to focus on listening to her. The half of the students who sat in the back of the classroom did not listen and lied down on their desks. Di frequently called the students sitting in the first two lines to answer questions. Two students were called for more than three times, but no students sitting in the back lines were called by her. She seemed to worry about that these students would not cooperate with her.

Di seemed not to have many methods to motivate her students in her teaching. Instead, she gave warnings to the students who did not listen for a few times. She

warned in Chinese: "Listen carefully, or I will call you to come to the backboard and write something". When too many students did not listen but lied on their desks, she said in Chinese: "Wake up, or I will call somebody's name"; "Let me see who does not wake up and who does not open the book"; "It's the last exercise. Let's do it well. The students sleeping wake up! It's almost time for lunch". With these warnings, she intended to set up the teacher's authority and gain the students' attention to her teaching. But these warnings seemed not have any effect on these students. From the warning that "I will call somebody's name" to the warning that "It's almost time for lunch", Di seemed to be more and more discouraged by the students' reactions.

After the practicum. The views of the six pre-service teachers given after the practicum derive mainly from the second questionnaire (Q 2)[9] and the interviews I did with them after the practicum. Q 2 and the post interviews deal with the participants' reflections on English teaching in the practicum schools, the reflections on implementation of CLT in China based on their practicum experience, and the reflections on the influence of the English learning and training experience. No change is made to the quotes from Q2 unless it is indicated.

Di expressed her dissatisfaction with her teaching practicum in the vocational school by pointing out that neither the school teacher nor the learners cared about English education in this school:

The school English teacher usually teaches in Chinese, and seldom explains clearly. But when other teachers come, things are different. I don't think their

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[9] See attachment J.

teaching is efficient, not at all, but strangely neither teachers nor students care.

Yes, they (the school EFL teachers) applied a little bit [of CLT]. But it seems

that students are not interested as expected. The plans weren't made according

to students' interests. [I learned from the teacher that] students may not

cooperate, but as a teacher, you need to fulfill your responsibilities, which

means to plan all the teaching steps and to design various activities. (Q 2, q1)

In the interview that I did with Di after the practicum, Di described her first

teaching in this school to explain why she did not use the so called CLT methods in

her teaching. The interview was conducted in Chinese and translated by the

researcher.

I did do a good preparation for the first class by considering as many teaching

aspects as possible. But when I stood in the front and asked questions, I found

nobody down there responded to me. So I said the answers by myself. Even

after that, nobody coordinated with me. So I had to stand there in the front and

talked by myself. That was really embarrassing. You had prepared a lot, but

nobody coordinated with you. CLT ended up with no results. (Di)

To Di's understanding, the teacher had no way to apply CLT, if learners had no

interests in learning and did not participate willingly. Teaching traditionally seemed to

protect Di from feeling embarrassed and giving efforts for applying CLT.

In the post interview, Di also mentioned that the students in the vocational school

had no interest in learning. Here are some of her descriptions about these students in

the post interview. Her words below are translated from Chinese into English:

They are good kids. They won't steal, fight, or do anything like that. They

only don't like learning.

I know that many students studying in other middle and high schools learn

English in an after-school class. But the students here even won't study at

school, not to mention at home. And worse, they don't have any tutors after

school.

Once I said 'u5342' in class and let them write down what they heard, they

asked me 'what is u?' They even don't know the letters. They cannot

memorize the 26 letters. They, the eighth grade students, don't know the letters,

and they don't want to study, so the teacher has to give up. (Interview after the

practicum)

The students of this vocational school, based on Di's understanding, neither had

interests in learning, nor did they have a good foundation of English knowledge.

However, the students may not have that low proficiency in English as Di described.

The students could not recognize the letter "u", which may not necessarily mean that

they had no idea of the 26 letters. They may have not prepared to hear the letter "u"

with the numbers together.

When Di analyzed the possibility of implementing CLT before the practicum, she

provided three reasons why it was impossible to implement: learners, teachers, and

the exam system in China. After the practicum, she only emphasized learners as the

main factor preventing implementation. To her, the Chinese learners who had been

immersed for such a long time under the traditional mode could hardly get used to the

new teaching approach. She said:

> As for the Vocational School […], I don't think it [CLT] is suitable for the students in this school (Q2, q3), [because] the students felt STRANGE even WEIRD [about CLT] (Q2, q4).

> The problem is that students aren't familiar with this, so they cannot get used to it even after a long time. Teachers should modify your methods in time, according to students' feedbacks and try to implement CLT in a way that students really like (Q2, q3).

Di also explained why she focused on teaching grammar and vocabulary in the textbook in the vocational school; she believed she cared about the learners and taught in ways to meet their needs.

> At first I tried CLT, however, the students in my class did not respond to me. Because all they want to do is just to get a diploma and a decent job. So instead of making classes interesting, I thought trying my best to repeat all the knowledge at class to help students get familiar with those useful English expressions could be a better way. The students are not familiar with the CLT teaching methods since they have been immersed in the traditional class model. Besides they have no interests in study and books at all. (Q2, q2)

Although Di believed implementation of CLT in China to be impossible, she expressed her wish to try CLT in her future carrier, because she recognized CLT as the trend of English teaching in the future.

> I want to be a teacher who loves her students and whom also is loved by them.

I will try my best to implement CLT in the future by attaching more

importance to what my students think (Q2, q7). [Because] this is the major

trend of teaching and students' minds become more open day after day. (Q2,

q5).

It is also interesting to notice that Di seemed to hold a more positive attitude

toward the training program after the practicum, in comparison with her attitude

before the practicum.

I learned all the teaching methods from the college, besides I really learned a

lot by attending some teachers' classes. It would be more helpful if we are

trained how to handle a class of students with totally different personalities

(Q2, q6).

Investigator's Reflections on Di. Before the practicum, Di understood CLT by

comparing it with the traditional way of teaching she had experienced previously. To

her, CLT was something anti-traditional. The traditional teaching was understood by

her as teaching "rigid knowledge" in textbooks in a "strict" and serious way; the

knowledge taught in school was often "unpractical" and "useless". Thus, CLT as an

anti-traditional teaching approach may be understood by her as applying series of

"practical and useful" tasks to improve one's communicative skills in a "fresh and

lovely" way.

Di's first teaching in the vocational school seemed to discourage her to apply

CLT in her teaching. But what was believed by Di as the methods of CLT she had

used in the first teaching was explained by her as "doing good preparation",

"considering as many teaching aspects as possible", and asking questions to the students who should answer. Because these methods of CLT mentioned by her were not communicative, Di may not have understood the theory of CLT or mastered practical teaching methods of CLT deeply or even correctly.

Before, during, and after the educational practicum, Di expressed her belief for a few times that CLT could not be applied in China broadly. Before the practicum, Di explained this belief by pointing out that teachers did not care about the students. She also addressed that CLT could not fit into the current educational system in China, because the educational system only focused on one's scores by examining rigid knowledge in textbooks. However, after the practicum, Di's reason for impossibility of implementing CLT in China focused more on the role of learners. She seemed to believe that CLT would not work to the students who had no interests in learning. Therefore, she believed it to be better to transfer knowledge directly to the learners in the vocational school rather than using various teaching methods. Di also indicated that Chinese learners who had immerged in the traditional way of teaching for a very long time could not get used to the completely new way of teaching.

In fact, Di herself may feel uncomfortable toward CLT as well. Before the practicum, she mentioned that Chinese learners would feel embarrassed if they participated in tasks and expressed themselves. She described probably her own feelings toward CLT as well, since she had not contacted any real learners before the practicum and may have considered the question by putting herself into a learner position. Her own uncomfortable feeling toward CLT may be a factor that affected

how she perceived her students. She might have presupposed that the students in the vocational school would feel uncomfortable to take part in activities, and, therefore, have avoided providing communicative tasks to these students.

Di seemed to be struggling between the learner's role and the teacher's role. She may not be certain or confident enough to play a teacher role. This can be revealed from her answers in Q 1 in which she gave many answers from a learner's perspective rather than from a teacher's perspective. For instance, she said: "they should motivate *us* to learn willingly" while describing the role of the learner and the teacher in an English class. Furthermore, her uncertainty of being a teacher can also be revealed from her limited interactions with the learners in her teaching in which she mainly gave commands and warnings. Before the practicum, Di, from a learner's perspective, recognized the teacher as the main reason for applying the traditional way of teaching. After the practicum, she mentioned, more often form the teacher's perspective, that the learners who had no willingness to cooperate were the main reason for her way of teaching.

Di's views on the traditional way of English teaching were complex. She kept a negative image of her previous school teachers in mind. The school teachers were described by her as the teachers who were "strict" and often forced learners to learn "unwillingly"; they neither knew every one's name nor cared about their interests or characteristics. However, Di did not regard it as necessary to change the traditional way of English teaching in schools, because she viewed the traditional way of English teaching as the best choice in the current score-oriented educational system in China.

She herself also taught in this mode during the practicum.

As Pajares (1992) points out that one's teaching behavior is important in understanding ones' beliefs of teaching (Pajares, 1992), some of Di's beliefs of teaching could be revealed from her teaching behavior that appeared book-centered and grammar-centered. Di seemed to believe that the efficient way of English teaching was to transfer linguistic knowledge directly from a textbook to learners through the teacher's explanation. In order to realize this kind of efficient way of English teaching, she seemed to believe that the teacher's authority in a classroom needed to be ensured, which heavily depended on the learners who were self-disciplined and self-motivated in learning. A good teacher needed to take care of his/her students; and good students needed to follow what the teacher said and do what they were required.

The teaching behavior of the pre-service teachers can also be understood as the products of their individual interactions with the certain teaching environments in the practicum schools. On the one side, Di found that the school English teachers did not care about the students in this school. That the pre-service teachers were required to teach in the first week also gave her an impression that the school teachers did not care about how well they taught. On the other hand, through the responses of the learners, Di concluded that the students here had no inertest in learning. But Di believed that she cared about the learners by teaching in the way they needed. She interpreted that the students in this school just wanted to "get a diploma and a decent job", therefore, she repeated in her teaching "all the knowledge to help students get

familiar with those useful English expressions" "instead of making classes interesting" (Q2, q2). Di also repeated in the research for a few times the words that the school English teacher had told them: The teacher needed to do her responsibility, no matter how the learners would react. Di seemed to use the school EFL teacher's words to justify her teaching behavior. She believed that she did her responsibility, although the learners did not coordinate.

Han: "I just tried to expand a little so that they may feel interested and listen to me."

Before the practicum. Han understood CLT to be a method to improve speaking competence. She thought that qualified teachers were the key for implementing CLT.

> In my opinion, communicative language teaching is to mainly focus on communication. […] And in the process of CLT, except enlarging the speaking part, teachers are required more. They ought to try their best to come up with some creative, effective and easy to be accepted methods to communicate with the students, because teaching is an activity that requires both teachers' and students' efforts. Only teachers know what their students need, can teachers teach better. (Q1, q1)

Han also expressed the opinion that teachers were limited in by having to create communicative methods and suggested that instead this task should be completed by so-called experts. Her suggestion implies that she, as a pre-service EFL teacher, needed to see ideal forms for implementing CLT in the educational reality to guide her teaching practice.

CLT require teachers to have more solid knowledge and abilities. Not all the

teachers have the ability to use CLT. In my point of view, maybe the experts

can create some methods that are systematic, efficient, easy to understand and

easy to be carried out to help other teachers put CLT into reality. (Q1, q5)

Han also recognized the educational system in China as the main problem for

implementing CLT.

The teacher and the student should be equal. […] On the one hand, they

[teachers] play the role of leaders. They shouldn't always input the knowledge

to the learners. They ought to lead, to enlighten the learners. Then, telling

them the learning skills and to be creative. On the other hand, the teachers

should "learn" from the learners which means they are expected to receive

feedbacks from the learners. The teachers ought to know what their students

really need and communicate with them to find their interests so to think about

a way of teaching that can arouse the learners' attentions. (Q1, q2)

The problems in using CLT maybe exist in the educational system in China.

Most people believe that the only or the most efficient way to success is to go

to a great university. And in order to achieve this goal, the students have to get

a high score in the entrance examination. […] But this kind of exam has

defects. It does not check the students' oral work, so when those students enter

the universities, they cannot communicate well by using English. This may be

the main problem. (Q1, q4).

Han believed that CLT would be accepted positively by English learners, which

in fact reflected her own personal attitude toward CLT, since she had not met real

English learners before the practicum. CLT seemed that it would be a method that

would help her get rid of her feeling that the traditional teaching mode was

oppressive.

> In my opinion, most English learners may love CLT, because through a long
>
> time of learning English tediously, they have already felt sick of this way of
>
> learning. They desire to approach a new and active way. What's more, it may
>
> help the learners find a better job, for more and more jobs require the students
>
> have great oral English. (Q1, q5)

Han had more concrete ideas of about teaching English through the teaching

practicum. Maximizing learners' speaking time became her teaching motto.

> In the teaching practicum, I will try my best to obey the principle "maximize
>
> the student talking time and minimize the teacher talking time". I may
>
> encourage the students to have more dialogue practice, role plays or even have
>
> them make simple and short stories orally and so on. And after the class, I may
>
> encourage the students to speak English. For example, I can make a rule that is
>
> if they want to talk in the classroom, then please in English! What's more, I
>
> should also chat with them to know more about them. For example, if I find
>
> that they like Tang Wei [a Chinese actor] very much, I can play a video of her
>
> when she is speaking English. I may tell them, at first, her English is not as
>
> good as she is now. Through hard work, you can speak as well as her. (Q1, q8)
>
> The problems are that maybe I am not experienced enough, so I may not

choose the right way or the most suitable way to apply CLT and because I am

a new teacher and we are not familiar with each other, the students and I may

not coordinate well. In order to solve these problems, I should try to

communicate more with the students and prepare more teaching methods. (Q1,

q9)

To Han, the teacher-training program at the college was a period in which

teacher-students could prepare themselves by acquiring more abilities.

Teacher-training program is a kind of rehearsal. Suppose that if we go to teach

without any training and practice, can we do well? I think the teacher-training

program gives us an opportunity to find problems and make more preparations

for our future teaching. During this time, we can find out what abilities we

lack, how to communicate with the students and where the students' interests

lie or whatever. (Q1, q7)

During the practicum. Both Han and Di attended the second focus group (FG 2). In

comparison to Di, Han expressed different views on the learners and the English

textbook used in the vocational school. Her attitude toward the textbook was more

critical in comparison to Di. Han said:

I think the textbook is not very good. Although it is practical, but there is full

of repetitions. For example, the sentence structure of "may I help you…" is

repeated for many times - from the first unit till the last day we taught. I felt

bored too, so I explained the repeated exercises only with a few words and

then kept going to the next ones. This kind of exercises has been repeated too

many times, three times maybe. (FG 2)

Han also mentioned that she did not follow the textbook exactly in her teaching by skipping something in the textbook and selecting certain exercises for her students to do.

> I believe that interest is the key. Without interest they [the learners in the vocational school] will not listen. While doing the exercises in the textbook, I did not explain everything very deeply, especially for the very difficult knowledge. I chose the exercises for the students and let them do the simple ones that they can handle. (FG 2)

> I think it is not necessary to repeat the knowledge for many times. If you spent too much time on repetition, the students would lose their interests. While teaching a text, I just let them digest it a little bit. It should not take long, or they would not listen. Something had to be spared in teaching. (Interview after the practicum)

Han's Teaching. Han taught a second year class in the vocational school whose study focus was International Trade. I observed one class taught by Han. There were 37 students in Han's class. In this class, Han's main teaching approach was traditional; however, her teaching appeared more communicative in comparison with Di's teaching.

In the class I observed, Han just started with the lesson of "meeting and greeting". Her teaching started with talking about the pictures which were provided in the warming-up part in the textbook. Han let the students open the textbooks and look

at the six pictures which demonstrated six situations in which people greeted each other. For example, one of the pictures illustrated a receptionist who sat behind a table and talked to two foreigners. She let the students guess what they were saying. In the warming-up part, she called a few students sitting in the front to answer her questions. In the interview which I did with her later, Han explained that she had been nervous and unconfident at the beginning of the class, so she called some students who learned better to answer her questions instead of waiting for a collective answer. Through calling some "good" students to answer her questions, Han seemed to build a safe status for herself in the classroom.

Han spoke both Chinese and English in her teaching. She said later in the interview that the school required English teachers to speak English all the time, but she believed "the students' foundation is not very good and they have less interest in learning. If the students don't understand you, it would be harder to bridge the students with the teacher, not to mention communication (Interview after the practicum). So she decided to speak half English and half Chinese in her teaching. This is also what I observed in the class. For instance, after giving the English command "please open your books to page 6 and look at the six pictures", Han explained the command again in Chinese, so that all the learners could understand her.

Han's teaching also appeared very teacher-centered and textbook-centered, but her students had more opportunities to speak out in her class. After the warming-up part, Han let the students read the words in the vocabulary list after her. And then she let the students read the words for two times collectively. While teaching the dialogue, she let the students

read it first with their neighbors. Then she called two students to read it to the whole class, and then she let all of the students read it again collectively. Although reading aloud does not mean meaningful interactions, she seemed to enlarge the speaking time of her students in this way.

It is also interesting to notice that Han did not always explain the linguistic knowledge directly to the students in her teaching. She asked some enlightening questions to spark learners' interests and guide their thinking. Here are some examples:

While explaining the word "receptionist" which was a difficult one to the learners, Han asked: "Do you know 'receive'?" and wrote "receive" on the board. The students gave little reaction, then she said: "'receive' means jie shou jie dai. Do you know 'reception' then? Can you guess?'' A few students guessed the meaning. Han said: "That's right. Now do you know receptionist?" In this way, she broke the long word down and made it easier for the learners.

When she explained the word "car plate" that existed in an exercise behind the dialogue, she said by mixing Chinese and English: " 'plate' shi jin shu ban de yi si [Plate means metal board]. Na che shang de jin shu ban shi shen me yi si [Then what does a metal board of a car mean]? Can you guess?" Many students appeared curious about this question. Although no students gave a guess, most of them looked forward at her and waited for her further explanation. In explaining the word "double", she did not talk about its usage directly, but asked first: "da jia zhi dao 'double' de yong fa ma? [Do you know the usage of the word 'double'?] By asking the questions such as "do

you know" "can you guess", Han obtained the attention of her learners effectively.

Not all of the students focused well in Han's class. The students sitting in the first three lines focused on listening better. Many students in the back also lied on the desks. In the class I observed, Han went down from the teaching platform for a few times and walked around in the classroom. A few students would sit up while she passed by. She also patted the shoulder of a girl student who was lying down.

Han also tried to make her teaching interesting by expanding knowledge based on the words in the textbook. When the word "Seattle" appeared in the text, she asked her students if they knew where Seattle was. The students seemed to have no idea about this place, then she asked: "Do you know bi er gai ci [Bill Gates]? Do you know Microsoft, wei ruan [Microsoft]?" A few answered yes and some nodded. Then she asked: "Seattle is his hometown, jia xiang [hometown]. So remember this city."

In FG 2, Han also mentioned that she tried to expand a little bit in her teaching so that the learners might feel interested and listen to her. Therefore, she often felt tired after the preparation. She said: "It took me a pretty long time to think how to expand a sentence and how to make it interesting. It was exhausting" (FG 2).

Other teaching activities of Han. In the later interview I did with Han, I noticed that Han tried to apply some other methods in her teaching. She tried to add some extra materials. She explained what she did in an early morning class as follows:

> It is so boring to supervise the students to read the texts in the textbook
>
> everyday. I feel bored too, so I decided to give the students something
>
> interesting to read. One day I wrote a simple tongue twister on the blackboard.

I grouped the students into two groups and let them compete with each. I asked the members of each group to read the tongue twister one by one and I recorded the time. The group whose members spent more time on reading lost the competition and was then required to perform singing to us. What I want is to let everyone participate and read. (Interview after the practicum)

In the interview I did with her after the practicum, it is notable that Han applied many reading methods in her teaching. She mentioned that she let the students read texts collectively or individually, she let them read with their neighbors, or in groups. She also tried to let the girls read one role and the boys read another role. Also, she tried to let the students read a text for many times. Reading seemed to be the efficient way she used to encourage learners' participation and to maximize learners' talking time in class.

Han also mentioned one competition she did with the students:

In a class on Friday, when many students could not focus well in the last ten minutes, I decided to let the students do a memory competition. I divided the students into two groups and gave them a few minutes to memorize the words in the vocabulary list. After that, I said the Chinese words and let them compete to speak out the appropriate English words. The students who reacted quickly and answered correctly could earn scores for their own group. I found that almost all of the students participated, even the students sitting in the back. But I am not certain if the students could be able to memorize the words after the competition. They may only have had a temporary memory. (Interview

after the practicum)

Han also tried to make her teaching more meaningful to her students. In the post interview, she mentioned that she had not used the map of Beijing in the textbook to teach the lesson of direction, but let the students talk about how to go from the south campus to the north campus. This was more authentic to the learners. Han also pointed out that eighty percent of the students could focus on listening to her when she tried to talk about something that did not stay in the textbook or when she did some activities with the students. Otherwise, only one third students participated when something in the book was taught.

After the practicum. While describing the teaching of the vocational school EFL teacher, Han paid most attention to what the learners' interests were and how she would try to expand the amount of time that learners were speaking.

> The school teacher used methods such as making groups or in partnership to making dialogues. To some extent, it may help, because after all, it intrigues some students. But in my opinion, the students did not seem so interested in this kind of class and it still cannot make them all speak and use English. And because the students need to take an English class of 80 minutes, they may feel sleepy and tedious. I do not know how long can they keep concentrating on the lesson. As a teacher, we should resort to various methods to let them speak and use English. (Q2, q1)

Han also mentioned that the students in the vocational school did not have interest in learning and their English competence was low, as Di did. But her

understandings of the students were not limited to what the students could not do well. Rather, Han expressed more often that she found what they could do and how she encouraged them to learn. She also said that many students would sleep in her class, but she tried to make them focus on her teaching. She said:

> The students in my class are a little bit better [than Di's class]. They also liked lying on their desks sleeping. But I felt very uncomfortable when they slept over there. So I would get down, go around, and make them sit up. I may say to one student lying on the desk: 'Read the dialogue to me'. They could read it in fact. Actually, they were still listening while lying there. I had thought that they could not be able to do that, but, ha, I walked around and found that they could do it. [Interview after the practicum]

Han also believed that it was important to encourage the students and give them recognitions with the following words:

> I pay attention not only to the students who sit in the front but also the students who sit in the back. I gave recognitions to the students who wanted to learn and tried to learn. I found that they focused very well after receiving my recognitions. Maybe this is the so-called psychological drive. (Han's journal)

Han believed that she was using the CLT approach in her teaching practicum by encouraging learners to speak; however, at the same time, she expressed her uncertainty regarding the teaching effectiveness of the applied activities.

> Yes, I used CLT in my teaching. As I said before, I tried my best to encourage and give them the opportunity to speak English. In some aspects, I think my

methods are successful. But I do not know how much they can remember and whether the methods can help their examinations. (Q2, q2)

Since I was in a vocational school, I think not all the students are interested in CLT. The reason maybe they do not know the meaning of doing so. (Q2, q4)

After the practicum, she still regarded the Chinese educational system and teachers' qualification as two factors preventing implementation of CLT.

It [CLT] can be used in China, but it takes time and has requirements for teachers. One of the barriers [for implementing CLT] is the educational system. And what's more important, some teachers still do not have appropriate understanding and methods in using CLT. Teachers should pay attention to whether the purpose and the methods are appropriate when using CLT. (Q2, q3)

Considering the current educational system and learners' interest, after the practicum, Han suggested combining CLT and the traditional teaching approach.

I want to be a responsible teacher in future who loves the students and is loved by the students. Of course, I will implement CLT. [I will] try to use it in every class of mine, but not too much, for example, giving 10 minutes in a 40-minute class. I think it enough because of today's educational system. (Q2, q7)

I think we need to combine the traditional teaching and CLT. Ten minutes may be enough in each class. The students' interest can be arisen right away when activities are applied, which can keep them focusing on listening at least for

another ten minutes in a forty minutes class. […] Students would also feel

bored if they played too much. (Interview after the practicum)

After the practicum, Han seemed to be able to view the training program from a

more critical perspective by expressing her confusion about bridging the gap between

the theories learned in the training program and fulfillment of the theories in reality.

The teaching methods were taught in the training program only on the

theoretical level. For instance, we know that the more students participate in

teaching and the less teachers talk in a class, the better English teaching will

be. But we don't know how to realize it and we were not introduced concrete

methods to do that. It is hard for individual teachers to create methods.

[Interview after the practicum]

This comment reflected what was trained in the teacher-training program and

what fell into the consciousness of Han as a pre-service EFL teacher. How Han, as a

pre-service EFL teacher, understood CLT did not only depend on how CLT was

understood in Western countries, but, more importantly, on her particular way of

becoming aware of it. To her, learners' participation embodied the main content of

CLT. She wanted to implement CLT that she understood, but she felt helpless for

implementing it on her own, which also indicates that she needed ideal forms as

sources for her development to become a teacher who could implement CLT

successfully. As she pointed out, the so-called experts, such as scholars and teacher

educators, should take the responsibility to create localized communicative teaching

methods.

Reflections on Han. Han believed that CLT developed one's communicative competence which was understood by her as the speaking competence. She also believed that CLT had a practical function in helping learners find a better job which needed one's oral ability. "Maximize learners' speaking and minimize teachers' talking" seemed to be the motto to Han for applying CLT in her teaching.

On the contrary to Di who regarded the learners' cooperation as the most important factor for applying CLT, Han viewed the teacher as the key in the process of implementing CLT. Through the whole process of the study, Han emphasized for many times that higher requirements of English teachers were needed for implementing CLT and pointed out that many school teachers did not understand CLT and did not know the methods for applying CLT.

In the whole process of the study, Han did not complain of the learners in the vocational school as frequently as Di did. Han agreed that the learners in the vocational school did not have interest in learning. But she did not regard the students who were lying on their desks in class as the students with low English proficiency and pointed out that these learners actually could do what she had asked them to do. On the contrary, she made more effort to explain what she had done in the vocational school to encourage the learners' participation, which mirrored her understandings that the teacher should play many roles in an EFL class.

It is notable from Han's words that two ways were mainly used by her to implement CLT - doing activities and expanding knowledge. In order to obey the rule of "maximizing learners' talking time" in her teaching, Han did many reading

activities with the learners. Although reading was far from a meaningful interaction, Han seemed to succeed in motivating the learners to open their mouths.

Han's teaching appeared communicative sometimes. She arranged various activities to motivate learners to participate. She tried to expand knowledge that did not exist in the textbook. She also used more authentic teaching materials such as the tongue twister and the campus map of in her teaching. Her attitude toward the textbook was more critical in comparison with Di. Although Han followed the textbook for the most of her teaching time, she skipped some exercises that she regarded as unnecessary duplications.

To Han, the main purpose of implementing CLT was to obtain the learners' attention by expanding knowledge and doing enjoyable activities. In fact, she expressed a skeptical attitude toward CLT after the practicum regarding transmission of linguistic knowledge. She was uncertain about the learning results of the learners after doing the activities. Moreover, she was concerned that English learners may not understand the meaning of implementing CLT. Consequently, she suggested combining CLT and the traditional way of teaching in the current score-oriented educational system. CLT seemed to play the supporting role to motivate learners to focus on learning the linguistic knowledge that would be transferred mainly in a traditional way.

While Di believed that neither teachers nor students in this school cared about English teaching and then decided to teach in a grammar-centered and textbook-centered manner to meet learners' basic needs of leaning linguistic

knowledge, Han interpreted the learners as the students who lacked interest and taught in a more interesting way to motivate their participation. That the teachers and the students in the vocational school did not attach much importance to learning English seemed to provide Han more freedom to explore and try her own teaching methods.

In The High School

Fan – "I don't know how to teach grammar."

Before the practicum. Fan was a pre-service EFL teacher who was talkative and possessed good English proficiency. To her, CLT could provide English learners with opportunities to use the language. She also believed her English speaking competence benefited from actually using the language.

> CLT is a teaching way to help students with their oral English. The most important thing is that students get involved in the language environment as much as possible. And the CLT can give this chance. Just like you learn to play a kind of instrument, if you want to play it in a fluent way, you have to practice as much as possible. (Q1, q1)

> The efficient way for me to learn English is to use it as often as possible. (Q1, q3)

Fan lived in the environment in which Chinese was used as the daily communicative tool and English was only a foreign language. She addressed the importance of using the language in her English learning experience, because her English speaking competence was developed enormously by watching English movies and speaking English after entering college. In fact, Fan did learn English

grammar in her middle and high school. However, she did not like learning English in the way that grammar was concentrated.

> Our [previous] English teachers liked to use exam-paper-strategy. Although I hated grammar, after doing so many exam papers, I learned it of course. (Q1, q7)

> Sometimes, I was even able to recognize the right answer only by taking a look at the question. I did not memorize a grammar by reciting it, more often by understanding it. (FG 2)

As a pre-service EFL teacher who had undergone a series of examinations before entering college, Fan indicated that conflicts existed between CLT and the examination system.

> I like CLT, because I am good at speaking instead of writing. I don't think CLT will have contribution to exams, because exams always follow the same pattern. CLT and exams may stay in conflict. Without exams it is perfect. (Q1, q4)

Fan pointed out that the traditional teaching approach was appropriate within the Chinese examination system, because it addressed grammar in teaching. However, Fan who wanted to teach her students how to speak English, planned to avoid becoming a normal school EFL teacher who focused on teaching grammar. To her, CLT seemed to be more appropriate in an outside school setting such as private schools.

> Of course, I will try CLT. I will do a lot of oral activities and give the students

opportunities to speak English. I don't want to be a teacher to teach a normal

English class in a school. I prefer to be a teacher teaching an oral course or a

reading course, because I don't know how to teach grammar. [Q1, q8]

In the first questionnaire, Fan also analyzed the difficulties of implementing CLT

in China by acknowledging big-sized classes and learners' interest as two mitigating

factors.

There are too many students in one class which may be a barrier for

implementing CLT. Too many students doing activities together will occupy

the whole class. Maybe some students are not interested in English at all and

they don't want to cooperate. (Q1, q4)

To Fan, CLT was a more appropriate teaching approach in more developed cities

or for children from rich families. The economic situation of a school's or family's

location seemed to determine if English would be viewed as a communicative tool

instead of a subject to be learned. To her, CLT would not be a proper teaching

approach for all English learners around China.

I think CLT may be a more appropriate method in more developed cities, such

as cities in the east. There is no condition of using it in many other places. And

teachers may not know it well. CLT requires more from the teacher and the

learner. Children from rich families may prefer this method, others may not.

[Q1, q5]

Fan showed her dissatisfaction with the teacher-training program that lacked

teaching opportunities

I don't think that we have received enough training. The only opportunity for

practicing teaching is the microcell teaching. It's not enough. We are students

studying education; however, we did not know what education was until the

third year of the study. (Q1, q7)

Fan's Teaching. Fan took the practicum in the high school in which the

pre-service teachers were only allowed to teach one formal lesson in the last week.

Fan's teaching had a very interesting start. Before she let the students get up and

greet the teacher, she wrote her English name "Techie" on the board and explained in

English why she called herself Techie:

This is my English name. Later, I will say: "Good morning, everybody." You

guys say: "Good morning, Techie" All right? You know this word? "Tech",

"technology", you have learned that. Ke Ji [Chinese for technology]. I use this

name, because I love playing computer game very much. (Students laughed.)

Also, I am good at it. If you don't believe it, challenge, all right? Bu xin de

hua ke yi tiao zhan [if you don't believe me, challenge me.] (Students laughed.)

Say it again, "Techie." (Students repeated.) All right. Now, class begin! (Then

the students stood up and greeted Techie very loudly.)

The teaching content that Fan taught was a reading text in which one Chinese

young man Xiaoli introduced Xiamen, a Chinese city in the south of China, to his

American friend John Martin. Fan started with teaching the words in the vocabulary

list by letting the students read after her. She did not explain any words after reading

them.

The city Xiamen mentioned in the reading text is located in the south of China. It is far away from Dalian, a city in the north of China. Fan did not start with teaching the dialogue about Xiamen in the textbook. Instead, she started with an introduction about Dalian, which seemed to be a more authentic topic to the students. She tried to create a meaningful environment for the students with these words:

> Most of you are local people, right? Suppose, jia she [suppose], you are a tourist guy, and a friend of you will come to Dalian. And your friend has never been to Dalian before. As a tourist guy, what would you introduce your friend about Dalian? Can you understand me? (Many students said yes.)

Then she divided the students into four-people groups and let them talk about the information they knew about Dalian. She reminded the students that they should cover the topics listed in the table that she drew on the board (See the table below).

	Location	Climate	Population	Scenic spots
Dalian				
Xiamen				

Table 5: The Table Applied By Fan In Her Teaching

The class Fan taught was one of the key classes in this high school, which means that the students in this class belonged to the top students among all the students in the same grade. I observed that the learners in this class could focus very well during the process of teaching and their English competence appeared very good. The group of four boys sitting near me tried to mix Chinese and English to describe Dalian in the group activity. They also tried to create some words like "sea city". After the group discussion, Fan called two girls to describe Dalian to the whole class and they did

very good job.

After that Fan filled the information about Dalian in the table on the board. Fan also introduced new words and English expressions while filling the table. Then she gave the students four minutes to read the text in the book loudly and search for the appropriate information about Xiamen.

After filling the information about Xiamen in the table, Fan told the students to read the text again silently and do the exercises after the text. While the students did the exercises, she walked around in the classroom. Then she called some students to read their answers of these questions. She just skipped the questions when students gave right answers and no questions were asked by the students.

Fan also explained some linguistic knowledge while dealing with the exercises. She explained mostly in Chinese in this part. It is also interesting to note that she used many symbols to explain the grammar. For example, in order to clarify the differences among the prepositions "in", "on", and "to", she did not only make some English sentences such as "Dalian is in Liaoning province" and "Mongolia is on the north of China", she also compared the usages by drawing two circles intersecting each other.

Explaining the expressions of directions, Fan drew a vertical and a horizontal axis indicating directions and explained in Chinese: "When information comes from all of the directions (North, West, South, and East), the information becomes NEWS". She also expanded vocabulary based on the word "shopping mall" that appeared in the exercises to "shopping center", "glossary", and "supermarket".

After doing the comprehensive exercises and explaining some linguistic

knowledge, Fan went back to the text and explained important grammar in the text. She addressed only two linguistic points: one was the perfect tense and the other was the phrase of "put up". Again, she drew an axis as a time line to indicate the time points of "now" and the "past". She explained in a very interesting way about the difference between "I ate noodle last night" and "I have eaten noodle since last night". While explaining "put up", Fan gave an English example and let the students translate a Chinese sentence into English.

I also observed that the students did not take out their notebooks and write down what Fan taught until Fan started with explanation of the linguistic points. Since writing is a more reliable way to keep information, writing notes of the linguistic points may indicate that these students attached more importance to grammar; teaching grammar may be more consistent with their learning habits.

Fan spent about fifteen minutes on explaining linguistic knowledge in her teaching. In fact, she spent much less time on teaching grammar in a 45-minute class in comparison with the other pre-service teachers. After completing her explanation of grammar she sighed, which may be a sign of her unwillingness and uncertainty of teaching grammar. Then she arranged the students to do another speaking activity with these words:

Ah…. Ke wen jiu mei shen me le [there's nothing more in the text to teach].

Jiang de zhi shi dian jiu zhe me duo le [So much about the knowledge points].

Bu shi te bie duo [Not very much was taught]. Xian mian ne [then], I got a

task for you. Now this time you are the tourist guys of Dalian, all right? You

have two minutes to prepare, later I will ask you to introduce Dalian to me. All

right? And you should use the new words we learned today, as many as

possible. And the volunteers, I will give a gift. All right? Go.

It is to recognize in her words above that she realized that she had not taught as

much grammar as expected by the school teacher or/and by the students. She talked

about the grammar points in Chinese and seemed not to be confident of saying it.

However, she explained the next speaking activity in English in a very certain manner.

After preparation, two girls introduced Dalian to the whole class and received candies

as the gifts from Fan.

In Fan's teaching, she had more gestures while speaking. She said "OK, let's

start" with two claps. She stopped the discussion also with claps, but when the

students did not stop, she said loudly "All right, shou shou [stop/over]" and waved her

hands like a conductor.

The class was not an English-only class. When Fan talked about Dalian and

created a meaningful context for the students, she spoke more often in English. While

guiding the students to fill the information about Dalian in the table, she mixed

Chinese and English. But she spoke almost all in Chinese to explain grammar and

vocabulary. In the later interview, she explained that she spoke Chinese in class

because she was afraid that the students could not understand her.

Fan's teaching had a student-centered sense. She gave students the time to

practice talking in groups and explore the information in the text by themselves. She

arranged the students to read the text loudly to search for important information and

then to read the text silently for doing exercises. At last, the students were given the time to practice their talking with more new words in groups again.

After the practicum. While reflecting on her teaching practice in the high school, Fan described the conflict existing between CLT and the school requirements by pointing out how her attitudes toward English teaching were different from the school teacher's.

> The school teachers seldom used CLT in their teaching, but they all did a good job at explaining grammar very clearly. Yes, I implemented CLT in my teaching and I think it was pretty successful. I gave the students much time to speak English. But the school teacher said that I did not explain enough grammar. Actually, I am not good at grammar and I don't know how to teach it. I would like to pick up some issues or the objects that students were interested in or they knew a lot about them. (Q2, q1)

Fan constructed her teaching practice and beliefs that were CLT oriented, which seemed to be opposed to these of her master teacher. This could be analyzed from two aspects. First, she was not a formal school teacher and did not need to take the responsibility of the scores of the learners as her master teacher did. Second, she did not intend to become an EFL teacher who taught in the mechanical manner in a public school, as she mentioned before the practicum. Her confidence in her English proficiency and her interest in teaching English speaking (possibly also the financial support from her family) empowered her to seek a different teaching career. The other participants did not have the courage to take the risk to seek teaching positions outside

a public school. Fan refused to become a school teacher to serve exams. In other

words, she decided not to regulate herself to fit into the educational system. Her

decision also indicates that the examination which concentrates on testing linguistic

knowledge is a huge barrier for implementing CLT in China.

That Fan's communicative teaching was not completely accepted by the school

teacher seemed to cause her to think more deeply about the implementation of CLT in

China. After the practicum, Fan analyzed in more depth how school teachers, learners,

and parents worked together to turn the English language into a tool to achieve high

scores. In the post questionnaire, she wrote:

> I can analyze the barriers of implementing CLT in China in three ways.
>
> The first, the teachers would not like to take the risk to spend so much time on
>
> CLT and some of them would like to teach the grammar because they think it
>
> is a better way to help the students to get a higher score on the exam.
>
> The second respect is that the students would not like to spend time on "other
>
> things" except the grammar. I don't know when and why they treat English
>
> like this. They only care about the score and ignore the importance of how to
>
> speak English in a proper, fluent or a beautiful way.
>
> The third respect is the parents. The eagerness of letting their children to be
>
> admitted in a good school makes them only care about the score. And many of
>
> them do not really understand the right way to learn English.
>
> The most important for implementing CLT is that the teachers have to let the
>
> students really take part in the CLT, to really let them talk, and to let them

know it is good for them. (Q2, q3)

Although Fan recognized that CLT would not really be accepted by teachers, learners, and parents who considered English teaching in an exam-oriented manner, she believed that CLT was a good approach to teaching English, including grammar. The benefits of CLT, according to her, were not just limited to the development of one's oral skills, as she had thought before the practicum. However, she did not think that learners understood the real meaning of CLT, as evidenced by these two statements:

> I think the CLT is appropriate, but the students have to deal with the exams which put more focus on the grammar. The students would like to spend a lot of time on doing the exercises on grammar rather than to practice to say something that can also help them on the grammar. (Q2, q3)
>
> I think to some degree they [school students] like to do some CLT in the class. But I don't think they really understand what the CLT brings to them. The CLT only makes the class "less boring". (Q2, q4)

To Fan, the exam-oriented minds of the teacher, learners, and parents prevented them from understanding the new teaching approach and giving it a try. Fan seemed to say that CLT was also appropriate to teach grammar, in other words, CLT could be used to deal with exams. But Chinese people were affected deeply by exams and had no desire to change the present teaching approach. The exam-oriented minds would not change, unless the way of examination was reformed or examination was abandoned.

After the practicum, Fan also showed her dissatisfaction with the practicum in the local high school:

Most of the courses in the training program are useful and I think learning English is a continuous progress of accumulation. […] And I think the more you stand on the platform, the better you perform. But most of the practicum school would not like to give us this chance because they think maybe we would lead the students to a wrong way. They don't trust us. (Q2, q6)

Investigator's Reflections on Fan. Fan regarded CLT as effective to practice one's oral competence before the practicum; she realized that CLT could provide an English speaking environment for English learners. CLT was understood by Fan also as a method to contribute to establishing a good teacher-student relationship, because she believed that many connections between the teacher and students were established through interactions.

After the practicum, Fan still appreciated the opportunity of speaking English that CLT provided. However, she seemed to have deepened her understandings of CLT by pointing out that CLT could help one learn grammar as well. She agreed that one could be able to learn English knowledge through speaking just as writing and reading did. Fan's understanding is close to the functions of CLT that was introduced in Chapter II: one can learn a language through meaningful interactions. Only the interactions that Fan understood were limited to oral interactions.

Fan's English learning experience appeared different from the other participants. Although she had been learning English under a traditional teaching approach in

middle and high school, she mentioned that she had not paid attention to learning

grammar. Instead, she believed that she had benefited a lot from speaking the

language. She was the only participant who felt learning English in the same way as

she had learned Chinese. These two learning processes may not be identical as Fan

mentioned, but she seemed to address that she had learned English by hearing,

watching, and using it in many ways instead of memorizing its grammar in class.

Fan's English learning experience may imply the possibility that one is able to learn

English through meaningful interactions in China.

In fact, many participants, like Fan, started to develop their speaking skills after

entering college. The learning environment at a college seemed to become a safe

place for many English learners to develop their oral abilities. There seemed finally to

be freedom and time for them to treat English as a communicative tool.

Fan also mentioned that CLT may be a more suitable teaching approach for the

children from rich families and for the schools located in a more developed city. To

her, certain economic requirements probably needed to be satisfied for implementing

CLT. The more developed economic conditions a family or a school had, the more

possibly could English be treated as a communicative tool in the process of learning.

Fan believed in the function of CLT, which may have something to do with her

"natural" English learning experience. However, she mentioned that CLT could not be

realistically accepted in China. Before the practicum, she questioned the possibility of

using CLT in a secondary school in which English teaching was understood by her as

finding correct answers to the exams. However, after the practicum, she held a more

critical attitude toward the dominant score-oriented discourse among teachers, learners, and parents. By pointing out teachers, learners, and parents as the three barriers for implementing CLT, she showed her dissatisfaction with the pragmatism of teaching and learning English that dominated in the Chinese society.

Although Fan did not like teaching grammar, she did spend some time on explaining some linguistic knowledge in her teaching. The compromise she made probably depended on her interpretation of the teaching environment in the key high school and her understandings of the current educational and social discourses in China. Her teaching could be regarded as a mixture of her own beliefs of teaching and her understandings of the exam-oriented reality. But she did not seem to decide to make a compromise in her future teaching. By planning to be an English teacher teaching an oral course or a reading course, Fan tried to avoid the mainstream of exam-oriented English teaching in schools to follow her own wish – being a teacher who could teach learners how to use the language.

Hong – "CLT is in conflict with the main Chinese tradition of exams."

Before the practicum. Hong understood CLT as a good method to develop the learners' confidence when speaking English, which may be related to her personal experience of lacking confidence when speaking English.

> CLT is a teaching method that is different from the traditional teaching mode. It can establish a very harmonious and relaxing teaching environment in which learners can develop their expressing ability with confidence. It can develop learners' interests, and more importantly, the learners' confidence. (Q1, q1)

I was born in a small town in Liaoning. I had few chances to speak English or read English books before entering the university. I was not confident in speaking English in the first year at college and dared not speak English in class. Gradually, I gained confidence in English speaking through hard working and oral practice in a weekly English corner. (Q3, q3)

To Hong, CLT was also a good way to teach culture to EFL learners in China.

I read in a journal article that the English entrance examination in last year included the content of the Western culture. Therefore, a teacher needs to combine teaching of culture with doing exercises. Students can learn very little from a teacher whose knowledge is limited. (Q1, q2)

Hong realized the limitations of the traditional teaching mode; however, she did not regard CLT as a method to replace the current teaching mode.

I think CLT may work better in a primary school where students have no pressure of learning. I am not saying that CLT is childish, but it may be in conflict with the main Chinese tradition of exams. Today, many primary schools can not satisfy their students' needs of developing the oral competence. So many students have to learn oral English in private schools. (FG 2)

Generally speaking, Hong believed that the training program was helpful.

Many courses are helpful for our teaching in future, for instance how to handle questions in class and the knowledge psychology are very important. But there are too many theories and too few opportunities of practice. I learned in the training the difference between teaching process and learning process. And I

realize that teacher's competence, good communication ability and a stable

knowledge system are very important. (Q1, q7)

Hong was aware of the contradictions between what she had learned from the

teacher-training program and the requirements of a school. She held a cautious

attitude toward the implementation of CLT and suggested applying CLT by attaching

it to the traditional teaching mode.

I think it is reasonable that different teaching styles are used in different

periods for current students. But if English teaching in high school can

connect the both styles, it would contribute more to developing our English

levels. (Q1, q6) […] CLT can be used broadly in China if neither students'

learning results nor their learning interests are affected. (Q1, q4)

I would like to use some of CLT in my future teaching. I will try to add a little

bit of CLT, maybe 10 or 15 minutes at the beginning of a class. I will use the

traditional methods for the rest of the teaching time. (Q1, q8)

Hong's solution was to use a minimal amount of CLT and returned to teaching

linguistic knowledge that really mattered in the examination system. She intended to

use CLT to compensate what was lacked in the traditional teaching approach.

However, what was more important to her was teaching for examinations.

Examinations that worked as an enormous factor stratifying Chinese people had a

great influence on her perceptions about CLT.

Hong's Teaching. Hong also taught the same reading text about travel in

Xiamen as Fan did. In comparison to Fan, Hong's teaching followed a more

traditional pattern. She spent the first eight minutes on dealing with the new words of this lesson. First, she let the students read the words in the book after her. Then she tried to introduce the words by establishing a situation about travel. She asked the students if they liked traveling. She also let the students guess the city that they would learn. The students made the guess very easily, because they seemed to have previewed the text before class. Then Hong tried to connect the words with the text she was going to teach by saying the following words:

> Today, let's travel with Xiao Li to visit his hometown Xiamen. Do you know who's Xiao Li? He is a person in our passage. OK, now, before we go into our passage, I want to know if you got a chance to visit Xiamen. What do you want to know about it?

Then she translated the question into Chinese again. In comparison to Fan's teaching, the teaching situation created by Hong was not very meaningful. Xiao Li was a fiction person in the textbook about whom the students did not know or they did not have interest to know. Also, the students may know little about Xiamen that was a city far away from Dalian.

In order to let the students get familiar with the new words, Hong guided the students to imagine what they needed to do in order to have a travel. Her guidance was mainly in Chinese; in the process of her Chinese guidance, she introduced English phrases and words. Here is how she introduced the new words[10]:

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[10] Hong explained mainly in Chinese. If Pinyin was used to indicate her Chinese words, it would

如果你想到一个地方去旅行，到那之前你要了解那个地方的什么啊[What do you want to know before you visit a place]? (A few students called out "culture," "food," and "view".) OK, place of interest. We have learned a phrase "tourist attraction", 是吧[right]? Any others? … You can think it over… Any others? (There were no responses from the students.) 你在旅行之前是不是还要想到我要怎样去啊？对不对啊？[You need to consider how you can reach the place before the travel? Yes or no?] (Students said yes.) 'Location'，我们知道了这个地点才能选择[only after we have known the location, can we choose] 'mean of transport'，选择交通工具[to choose the mean of transport]. 接下来我们还要选择带什么东西啊[And then we need to decide what stuffs need to be taken]，穿什么衣服啊 [what clothes should we wear]，我们要考虑到当地的…[We should think of the local…] (Some students called out "weather".) 'Weather'，气候是吧[Weather, right?] 接下来是不是要考虑到到那要享受什么美食啊[then, do we need to consider what delicious food we will enjoy there]? There is a very good film called *Eat Free a Lot* published in 2010, 翻译成汉语是 *一辈子做女孩* [that is called "Being a girl for the whole life" when translated into Chinese]，不知道你们有没有看过的[I don't know if you have watched it or not]? The actress in the film just enjoys very good local flavor in Italy. 在哪啊？[Where?] 在意大利[In Italy]. 'Local flavor', can you guess? (Some students guessed the Chinese

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be unclear to differ from her Chinese words and the English translations. So I use Chinese characters to record her Chinese expressions and put the English translations in braces [ ].

meaning of the word) 翻译成是风味小吃 [It means feng wei xiao chi when translated into Chinese]. 那有了食物就选一些旅游景点 [We have the food; now let's choose sceneries], 对吧[right]? 在回来的时候是不是要带些什么给亲戚朋友啊[Do we should bring something back for our relatives and friends?] 特产对吧 [specialty, right]? 很好 [good], 'specialty'. 大连的特产是什么[What is the specialty in Dalian]? (Many students answered "sea food".)

In the process of introducing the new words, Hong also wrote the English words and phrases she addressed on the board. It is to note that she tried to create a meaningful situation for the learners by imagining a travel. She guided her students to think of a travel by asking series of questions. However, the meaningful interaction in the form of asking and answering questions was mainly conducted through Chinese instead of English. English was only treated as the learning content that the learners should learn.

Hong did not let the students read the text directly after introducing the words; instead, she treated the text as a hearing exercise and let the students listen to the text that played in a CD player. Before and after the listening, she gave the students time to read and do the multiple-choice questions listed behind the text in the book. Then she called a few students to read their answers.

After this, Hong started to teach the reading text in the book. She taught this part in very grammar-translation manner. She let the students read the text and searched the answers for the three questions that she had written on the blackboard. The three

questions were 1) what's John Martin's impression of Xiao Li's hometown? 2) What's Xiao Li's feeling about his hometown? 3) How do they finally find Gulangyu Island? After giving the students a few minutes to read the text, Hong called three students to answer the questions. The students read the appropriate sentences in the textbook instead of using their own words to answer the questions. Hong also asked the neighbors of the three students to translate the sentences that they had read into Chinese.

After that, Hong concentrated on explaining the linguistic knowledge in the text. In this process, she mainly used Chinese to teach English knowledge. Here is one example of how she explained the grammar in one sentence:

Now let's look at the sentence: "This is one of the most attractive places I have been to". 看看这个句子前后的结构 [Take a look at the structure of this sentence]. (She wrote the sentence on the board.) (Hong pointed to "one of" and asked) 后面加什么形容词 [What kind of adjective should be added behind it]? (Many students answered "zui gao ji [superlative]".) 它所修饰的后面的名词是什么 [What is the noun modified by it behind]? (Many students answered "plural" in Chinese.) 复数是吧[plural, right]? 再看这句话相当于省略了什么[Take another look at the sentence. What is omitted here]? …关系代词 that [the relative pronoun "that"]. 后面这个从句什么时态[What is the tense of the clause behind]?(Many students answered "perfect" in Chinese). I guess most of you have seen the series of *Harry Porter*? 哈利波特的电影大家都看过吧？[All of you have watched *Harry Porter*?] … 有

没有喜欢的啊? [Is there anyone who likes it?] …没有啊 [nobody?] … who? (One girl seemed to show that she liked it)…anyone else? OK. You stand up and say the sentence: 哈利波特是我所看过的电影中最有趣的一个[*Harry Porter* is one of the most interesting movies that I have ever seen].

While explaining the grammar included in the text, Hong spoke Chinese for the most of time. English was treated more likely as the learning content. It is also interesting to see the students' responses to Hong's questions. When Hong asked about grammar, many students gave their responses by expressing the appropriate linguistic terminologies in Chinese. However, they gave very few reactions, when Hong asked if they liked *Harry Porter*. The students seemed not to be prepared to hear this kind of questions and show their personal views in class. In comparison with handling real topics, the students seemed to be more accustomed with learning abstract linguistic knowledge.

While explaining the grammar in the text, Hong also tried to teach the students some practical strategies to memorize grammar. With the English expression "a nice little fish restaurant", Hong explained the sequence of adjectives before a noun. She told the students a seven-character Chinese sentence in which the characters respectively symbolized "number", "appearance", "shape", "age", "color", "nation", and "material". This seven-character Chinese sentence that had a meaning was relatively more easily for these Chinese learners to memorize the order of adjectives before a noun.

Hong mentioned before the practicum that culture should be taught in an EFL

class. It is realized that Hong tried to add some cultural issues in her teaching. For instance, she mentioned the movie of *Eat Free a Lot* in the introduction part, although the topic of the movie appeared not natural in the context. She also mentioned the movie *Harry Porter* and let the students translate one sentence about Harry Porter into English.

To summarize, Hong's teaching was characterized by grammar translation. She tried to create a meaningful situation in the introduction part; she also tried to add the hearing activity in her teaching. However, she spent the most of the time on teaching grammar. She also let the students translate the sentences given by her in Chinese or English. She seldom used English to communicate with the learners. English was treated more often as vocabularies and structures that one needed to learn instead of a communicative tool. According to the responses of Hong's school supervisor, there were too many translations from Chinese to English while making sentences in her teaching. She suggested that it would be better if Hong could let the students make their own sentences.

After the practicum. According to Hong, the traditional teaching mode used by the high school EFL teachers met the needs of their students.

The teachers in this school used the Grammar Translation for the most time. They focused on teaching grammar. The teachers talk in the front and students listen; or the teachers ask questions and the students answer. The class atmosphere is not very active, but I think it is efficient for the students to remember the sentences and the words. And students are used to such ways.

(Q2, q1)

To Hong, the most important goal of English teaching in a secondary school was to transmit knowledge about the language. CLT only played a minor role to make teaching less monotonous. Hong was uncertain about whether CLT could help secondary school learners really learn English.

According to the real situation of Chinese education, I should pay more attention to repeating knowledge again and again instead of the games used in class. We can use CLT for the first unit of a lesson or in the first few minutes to arouse the students' motivation. But we should not ignore the knowledge. We can not have a class only for games. I am still wondering how to let students remember deeply after letting them learn something more interesting. (Q2, q3)

CLT, according to Hong, was in conflict with the achievement of high scores in Chinese EFL examinations. A teacher who applied different activities to let students participate was understood as a teacher who did not do her job.

The students want to achieve high scores. They may not accept CLT. If a teacher gives too many opportunities for students, I always think the teacher might not make good preparations for the lesson. (Q2, q4)

However, Hong regarded it as necessary to try CLT to develop one's oral skills by saying:

The society is changing. Speaking good English has become a fashion. Maybe this point will become the encouraging factors in teaching. (Q2, q5)

Finally, she expressed her wish to have a longer practicum in a local school:.

The microcell teaching at college is very helpful. Although it is not that real,

but it gave us opportunities to teach and I do not feel very nervous to stand in

the front of the classroom. Teaching in a real class is really a big help. I hope

the practicum can be longer. Teaching relies much on experience because we

are dealing with human beings. (Q2, q6)

Investigator's Reflections on Hong. Although Hong mentioned that CLT was a

method to develop learners' ability of English expression, she did not address this

function of CLT as many other pre-service teachers did. The more important function

of CLT appreciated by Hong was to build one's confidence of speaking, which may

relate to her own previous experience of speaking English with no confidence.

Hong also addressed the possibility of teaching Western cultures by using CLT.

However, Hong's reason for teaching culture appeared exam-driven, because she

realized that more cultural contents would be contained in future English exams. She

regarded it as important for the teacher to accumulate a huge amount of cultural

knowledge. The usage of the word "accumulate" indicates that Hong may regard the

role of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge. To her, the teacher who mastered a

great amount of linguistic and cultural knowledge was a more qualified transmitter of

knowledge. In fact, Hong seemed to pay more attention to knowledge itself than the

ways of how to teach it. The teaching contents seemed to be considered as more

important than the teaching methods.

Hong mentioned the function of CLT in the process of developing one's oral

competence and confidence, but she did not regard it as a reasonable teaching choice in secondary schools. She also pointed out that CLT would be more suitable in a primary school where there was no pressure of exams. To her, CLT stayed in conflict with the exam system in which linguistic and cultural knowledge would be tested. Her beliefs in the grammar-centered and exam-oriented teaching approach were also represented in her teaching practice, in which she mainly focused on transmitting significant linguistic knowledge carried by the text. Although Hong understood CLT as a method to teach western culture and to add pleasure to the monotonous EFL teaching, she, in fact, questioned the effectiveness of CLT according to her teaching behavior and her post-practicum reflections.

In The Middle School

Tian: "CLT needs a little bit long time of process to show its merits."

Before the practicum. Compared to the other participants, Tian was able to describe her deeper understanding of CLT more completely.

> For the communicative language teaching, the first is that language is not bits of grammar, it also involves language functions such as inviting or suggesting etc, which students should learn how to use. The second strand, briefly speaking, the focus of much communicative language teaching became what we have called language activation. Task-based learning, here the emphasis is on the task rather than the language. In the task-based learning, language activation is the first goal and study comes later if and when appropriate. (Q2, q1)

Tian understood the teacher's role and learner's role in a way that was more closely aligned with the understandings in western countries. For Hong, CLT could provide Chinese speakers more opportunities to practice English.

> Teacher is no longer an "Authority", but an instructor, who give students some appropriate guide or correctness if necessary. On the contrary, learners are the center of the classroom. Teachers should give students enough time and chances to practice their own abilities, such as a presentation or a group-cooperation activity. The best lessons are ones where student talking time is maximized. (Q2, q2)

> English learners in China are not native speakers, and they don't have the real English-using environment. But the CLT can offer English learners enough linguistic environments and enough chances to practice their English. (Q1, q4)

Tian seemed to believe that CLT was an effective method to teach English, including knowledge about the English language, but she also recognized the problem of implementing CLT among learners who were motivated by achieving high scores on exams.

> Chinese learners, especially school students, have been affected by the exam-oriented teaching for a long time. They regard CLT as helpless for exams. Although CLT can also help English learners learn English knowledge effectively, but some of them don't think that they can achieve high scores with CLT in short term of time. (Q1, q5)

Tian recognized the contributions of the traditional teaching mode; however, at

the same time, she suggested making changes to this kind of teaching.

> Before I entered the college, our English teacher just taught us two things in
> the class, that is, the grammar and the vocabulary. Frankly speaking, these two
> things offer great help to the examination-oriented education system. But these
> things are always boring us, and make us feel no interest in English. I like the
> class with different kinds of activities, with no uniform form. Some
> appropriate changes will give students some surprise and more motivation.
> (Q1, q6)

Before the practicum, Tian expressed her plan to apply CLT in the practicum by
assuming possible problems and appropriate solutions.

> I plan to try CLT in the teaching practicum. I still keep in mind that English is
> a language that should be used in daily life. Therefore, I will plan some
> activities such as a conversation or role-play activities, which can practice
> students' oral English, at the same time, can help students learn English words
> or sentences in real English environment. (Q1, q8)
> I think maybe some students are not willing to take part in the activities of
> CLT, especially in oral activities, because CLT acquires students to speak and
> to practice more. But many Chinese students prefer writing than speaking.
> Meeting these problems, I will choose group work first. Group -work can
> decrease the students' mental pressure, which can motivate them to speak. (Q1,
> q9)

Talking about the teacher-training program, Tian provided a very concrete

description about what she had learned, which may indicate her deeper

understandings of the educational theories acquired in her training.

In the teacher-training program, I learned a lot mainly from two aspects:

learning and teaching. I have acquired that the necessary element for the

successful language learning in classrooms is the ESA [engage, study, activity].

Some teaching sequences such as straight arrow sequence, boomerang

sequence, and the patchwork sequence, some teaching models like task-based

learning, grammar- translation, communicative language teaching. English

mainly consists of speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Different aspect

has different teaching method. These four parts have close relation to each

other. (Q1, q7)

Tian's Teaching. I did not make it to observe Fan's class she taught. But based

on her description, I found that many communicative features appeared in Fan's

teaching, so I decided to describe her teaching based on the interview that I did with

her after her teaching. The interview was conducted in Chinese and I translated Tian's

words in English. Fan described her teaching as follows. :

I was in charge of teaching the part of the exercises in the unit about animals.

In the first exercise in the textbook, there were one picture of a tiger and one

picture of an elephant; and under each of the picture, some information about

the two animals such as the names, orts, and food was provided. This exercise

in the book required learners to ask and answer questions according to the

pictures. I did not use the pictures in the book, because they were too small. So

I brought one stuffed elephant and one stuffed tiger to the classroom and told the students that I brought two new friends to them, a girl elephant and a boy tiger. I found that all of the students looked in the front and focused on listening very carefully. Then I let one girl student who had a sweet voice and one boy student who had a deep voice read two stories about the two animals. In fact, I had the two students prepared with reading the two stories before teaching. Then I asked all of the students some questions about the two animals and let the students answer my questions according to what they heard.

In the second step I explained the grammar about yes-no questions which started with 'do' or 'does'. According to the second exercise in the book, students were required to fill in "does" or "doesn't" in five sentences. I explained a little bit about the structure of yes-no questions. Then I let the students do the exercises in the book. While checking the answers of the students, I threw one stuffed animal to the students. The student who caught the animal should ask a yes-no question in the exercise and throw the animal to another student who should answer the question. I realized that all of the students were excited and did a very good coordination.

In the third step, I guided the students to do the reading exercise in the book. There were two very short texts about camels and kangaroos in this exercise. This time, I asked the students to do a group work. I told the students to select the words in the texts that they regarded as important in the process of reading;

and they were allowed to use dictionaries to check these words in groups with four people. At last, the groups needed to do a report about their learning results to the whole class. I think that Chinese students care about points of knowledge, so I emphasized this part. Everyone participated very actively.

In the fourth step of teaching, I did a match game. The exercise in the book required one to write names of animals behind the continents where they lived. I wrote the continents such as "Asia" and "Africa" on the board. Then I showed the students pictures of animals such as a giraffe, a kangaroo, and etc that I had prepared. Then I called some volunteers to come to the front and stick the pictures behind the appropriate continents.

Actually, I had planned to do a writing exercise about "my favorite animal" in the last step; but there were only five minutes left. So I changed the writing exercise into an oral practice. I asked the students to practice talking about the topic with their neighbors and called two students to talk about their favorite animals to the whole class. Then I told the students to write about their favorite animals at home. (Interview after the practicum)

Fan also mentioned the language she used in teaching:

I had planned to speak English for the whole period of teaching, but I found that the students were very confused when I only spoke English. They were not used to an English-only class. So I mixed English and Chinese in my teaching. (Interview after the practicum)

Based on Tian's description, her teaching had a communicative sense. She did

not follow the textbook exactly. Her teaching content was based on the exercises in the textbook, but she changed the forms of the exercises. She succeeded in motivating the learners by letting them listening to the stories, speaking to each other, looking at pictures, and touching the stuffed animals. She also gave them the freedom to check their words that were found by themselves in a dictionary and did a short report. What she did in her teaching appeared more authentic, more meaningful, and more interesting to the learners. Tian's teaching seemed to be very learner-centered.

In the interview, Tian also mentioned one early morning class she taught.

[In the early morning class,] I created a situation for the students to speak something they had learned. I asked the students to work with their partners and make a dialogue between a passenger and a crew member at the train station. It was not very successful. The most students had not experienced this kind of activity before, so they didn't know where to start. Some even didn't use English but Chinese. I asked the students why they didn't speak English, and they said that they didn't know how to say something in English.

(Interview after the practicum)

The unsuccessful activity explained by Tian may indicate two things: first, these students who were accustomed to the teaching approach of grammar translation felt lost if given opportunities to use their own words to express something; second, it may reveal the dilemma that foreign language learners in China may confront. What they were able to express in the English language was far behind what they wanted to express. EFL teachers in China who plan to apply CLT may need to make more

considerations about how to create appropriate teaching activities that keep a good

balance between learners' language competence and their personal interests, in other

words, how to design activities according to the ZPD of English learners in China.

After the practicum. Tian found that English in the local middle school was

taught in the traditional manner. She tried to analyze the advantages and

disadvantages of this kind of teaching in a very reasonable way.

> Frankly speaking, few English teachers in this school used the communicative
>
> language teaching method, but only grammar-translation. I have listened two
>
> different English teachers' classes, however, both of them just explained the
>
> words of this module, introduce these words usage, and let students use these
>
> words to make sentences, always like that. In their opinion, their English
>
> teaching was the most efficient way to improve students' scores in short period
>
> of time. Through a lot of repetition and practice, students can form learning
>
> habits in their mind. But this teaching method is only served for the
>
> examination. As for students' ability of English application, this teaching
>
> method is not an efficient one. [I learned from their teaching that] the teaching
>
> method, grammar-translation, has its own advantage. By analyzing the
>
> grammar and by finding equivalents between the English and Chinese,
>
> students will learn how the English is constructed. It has some benefits for the
>
> second language learning. (Q2, q1)

Tian also reported that the students who were used to learning grammar and

vocabulary did not adapt to the communicative teaching approach:

I tried to use the CLT in my teaching practice. According to the text, I created

a situation that we were on the train-station and worked with your partners and

designed a dialogue between the passenger and the crew member. The process

is not very successful. Because most students haven't experienced this activity

before, so they didn't know where to start. (Q2, q2)

Tian also gave some suggestions to help students adapt to CLT.

[…] teachers should give students enough time to get use to this teaching

method. Because Chinese students are not as open as many foreign students,

what's more, some Chinese students have not touched this teaching way

before. Thus, they don't know what to do and how to do.

After the practicum, Tian had more concrete ideas of implementing CLT:

The teaching materials should not be limited to the text only. Sometimes, some

out-of - class reading material about the topic can improve the teaching

efficiency as well. The standard teaching materials are used for the exam. But

some extracurricular materials or activities can broaden students' horizon and

practice their English application capability.

Tian analyzed the difficulty of implementing CLT again after the practicum. This

time she addressed the fact that Chinese students who were eager to achieve high

scores failed to see the benefits of CLT.

But in China, the application of this method is not very successful, even if we

have the so-called "curriculum reform". I understand this phenomenon,

because Chinese educational system is examination-oriented, so in most

Chinese's opinion, score determines everything. CLT is a good teaching

method, but it needs a little bit long time of process to show its merits. But in

China, sometimes, improving scores in short period of time is the most

important. (Q2, q5)

Investigator's reflections on Tian. Tian belonged to the top students in the

training program at LNNU. She was even recommended by the Department of

English to study in a graduate program in a Shanghai university after the

undergraduate study.

Tian was a pre-service teacher who could be able to use many terminologies to

describe English teaching and CLT. She used many terms like "language activation",

"authority", "English application", "exposure", "linguistic environment" etc. to

describe her understanding of English teaching; she also described many concrete

teaching methods she had learned in the training program. This may signify that Tian

did not only memorize the terminologies which she had learned from the training

program, but knew how use them to express her views. She had a deeper

understanding of CLT in comparison with many other participants, which may be the

reason why she held a relatively positive attitude toward CLT.

While answering the questionnaires and expressing her views in FG 1 and the

later interview, Tian seemed to take a "neutral" position. With "neutral" position I

mean that Tian did not demonstrate too much personal hatred, critic, or favor while

talking about her learning experience and English teaching approaches; instead, she

tried to analyze English teaching in China and tried to give rational reasons.

Tian's understanding of English teaching related to her understanding of language. She realized that a language did not only consist of grammar, but also functions that one needed to learn. She recognized the benefits of the grammar translation approach for foreign language learners, because foreign language learners could learn the construction of English by "finding equivalents between the English and Chinese" (Q2, q1). She also pointed out that grammar translation was applied by many school teachers as a practical choice for achieving high scores, which could only have a short-term effect and did not serve one's ability of using English in the long run.

Fan viewed CLT as a good approach to establish a "linguistic environment" within the macro Chinese speaking environment. Using CLT, English learners could have much "exposure" to English. More importantly, Tian was aware that CLT was not only a teaching method that developed one's oral ability, but also a method to teach English knowledge. Only CLT needed "a little bit long time of process to show its merits" (Q2, q5). Therefore, Fan suggested the teacher should give learners patient guide.

Tian was also concerned that English learners in China may feel lost in a CLT class, because they were affected deeply by the exam-oriented notions and may consider CLT as helpless for exams. Besides, she believed that English learners in China were not "as open as many foreign students" (Q2, q3). To her, learner's autonomy and an open mind seemed to be two necessary conditions for using CLT.

Another distinguishing feature in Tian's data is her attitude toward textbooks.

Although she did not mention how to use a textbook before the teaching practicum, Tian, according to her teaching behavior and post reflections, demonstrated that she did not want to limit her teaching to teaching textbooks. She wanted to "choose some interesting materials to let them know the English application in real life" (Q2, q7). She suggested adding authentic materials to English teaching.

In the questionnaire Tian did after the practicum, she also mentioned that she would organize her teaching around "concepts" rather than focusing on grammar in future. In other words, she would focus on meanings rather than structures in her future teaching. Tian's teaching practice in the practicum school also confirmed this belief of her in teaching meaningful contents; she kept the content of each exercise in the textbook but altered the forms of the exercises; in this way, she transformed the exercises into more meaningful activities to the learners.

Tian and Fan (who did the practicum in the high school) were the two pre-service teachers whose teaching appeared very communicative. While Fan's preference to CLT originated more likely from her personal and natural antipathy to grammar, Tian seemed to accept CLT as a beneficial teaching approach more likely based on her rational analysis.

Hui – "Experts should create a pack of CLT activities for us to use".

Hui did not answer the questionnaires in English, but in Chinese. She explained that she was afraid that she could not be able to express her ideas in English clearly. So her views written in the two questionnaires were translated by the researcher into English.

Before the practicum. Hui's understandings of CLT seemed to be limited to some basic concepts of CLT. She did not understand CLT deeply or even correctly.

> CLT is a teaching approach that develops one's ability of using a language through communication and dialogues. (Q1, q1)
>
> In a class using CLT, the teacher is a mediator. For example, the teacher can provide his/her experience of language learning to students, help the students make corrections, supervise and encourage students. (Q1, q2)

To Hui, CLT should be applied to people whose English proficiency was alealy good.

> I think the combination of the grammar teaching method and the audio-lingual teaching method is very efficient for beginners. Communicative methods are efficient for intermediate levels. (Q1, q3)

However, when Hui talked about her French learning experience, she seemed to agree that CLT was also appropriate for beginners.

> According to my French learning experience in a private school, CLT is the best way to make beginners open their mouths and speak. In those twenty days of French learning, many questions and answers took place between the teacher and the learners. This communication was based on a plenty of repetition of speaking and listening exercises. We memorized a big amount of dialogues, and then we could communicate. (Q1, q4)

Hui recognized English learners, the examination system, and big classes as three factors affecting the application of CLT.

The most students have no experience with CLT. High school English teachers did not use this method. They often have little body language and show a monotone facial expression. Teaching often aims at examination. Also, there is no condition for applying it in a big-sized class. (Q1, q5)

Before the practicum, Hui planned to apply CLT by combining it with other methods:

I will apply CLT and I will combine it with audio-lingual teaching methods. For example, I will let students make dialogues with one person randomly in the classroom and let the other students correct them. Then I will let the students practice the dialogue in pairs and they need to change roles in the practice. (Q1, q8)

To Hui, learners who had no interest in English were a big problem for implementing CLT. She hoped to set up a motivating environment by using CLT.

There are some problems with implementation of CLT. Some students may be lazy and cannot focus on listening to the teacher. They may regard this as not interesting. I may let them compete in groups. This can activate the atmosphere in a classroom. (Q1, q9)

Hui seemed to have changed her understandings of the image of an EFL teacher in the process of teacher training at college, which may indicate that development of new beliefs could take place among the teacher-students after entering college.

I took some courses about teaching at college. The teachers told us that we should not copy how our high school teachers taught English. We need to keep

learning and reflecting in order to look for better teaching methods. The microcell teaching was very helpful. The image of a school English teacher understood by me was a teacher who explained texts and exam papers with a long face. However, after taking many courses about teaching, I realize that the English teacher should encourage and help students to learn with their own motivation. (Q1, q7)

Hui's teaching. The unit Hui taught in the middle school was "my school day". The students had learned the texts and done the exercises of this unit with the school English teacher and the other two pre-service teachers who taught one demonstration lesson respectively before Hui. Hui was in charge of teaching the writing part of the unit which required the students to write about their own school day. Hui's teaching appeared teacher-centered, but it is notable that she tried to use some methods which were understood by her as communicative. She began her class with two English questions as follows:

Today we are going to write a passage "my school day". And Firstly, I want to ask two questions, two questions. Listen to me carefully. First one, when do you usually go to school? When do you usually go to school? Qian Chen [a stuents' name], the first one.

After calling three students to answer the question, Hui kept asking her second question: "Next question: What do you do at school everyday?" The students coordinated very well. Many of them raised their hands. Then she called a few students to answer the second question and wrote their answers on the board, such as

"to have lessons", "to do exercises", "to have lunch", "to do homework" etc. She

also let the students open their notebooks and write down the phrases which she

wrote on the board.

Then she guided the students to review the text "my school day" in the textbook

that the students had learned by pointing out three sentences that the students might

use in their own writings. It is also interesting to notice that Hui expressed a quite

critical attitude toward the reading text in the textbook in her teaching. She pointed

out that the text about "my school day" in the book sounded more like "my

schedule." She said: "The text written in a textbook must be a good writing, but this

text is kind of boring". And then she tried to encourage the students to write a better

one with the following words in Chinese: "We will write a composition today. Do

you have confidence to write a better one?" Many students answered "yes", but I

also heard one girl said in Chinese "Do we have it?"

After that, Hui focused on explaining some conjunction words that the students

could use in their writings. She not only reviewed the conjunctions existing in the

reading text such as "after that", "and then", but she also expanded the list of the

conjunctions with the words like "afterwards" "but" "however" etc which were new

to the learners. Hui applied mainly the grammar-translation approach while teaching

these conjunctions. She explained mostly in Chinese and she also asked the students

to translate some Chinese sentences given by her into English. Here is one example

of how she explained "after that"[11]:

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[11] In order to demonstrate Hui's explanation more clearly, I used Chinese characters instead of

We go to school (she said this sentence and wrote it on the board), comma (writing the comma behind the sentence), "after that". 假如说一个句子前面是[Suppose the first part of a sentence is] "I do something", after that，然后后面再加一个句子[and then anther sentence is added behind it].再加一个句子之后是一个句号[A point should be used after the sentence]. After that 是个连词["after that" is a conjunction]，after 是一个连词["after" is also a conjunction]. 比如说[for example] "I sleep after dinner" 这里面 after that 代替的是什么[what is replaced here by "after that"]. (One girl answered in Chinese "it replaces the previous part.") Very good. I get up at six o'clock, after that I have breakfast. After I get up, I have breakfast. Clear? (Very few students answered yes. They may not get her idea clearly.) 明白了之后我们再造一个句子检验一下[Let's make a sentence to check if you have understood it]. "我们吃午饭然后午睡" [We take a nap after lunch] …Volunteers? Haoyan (A student's name). (Haoyan answered: "We have lunch, after that we have a nap".) (There were some murmurs among the students.) What's wrong? Tanrun (anther student's name), what's your opinion? Make a sentence, again. Just in your opinion, 没关系, 再翻译一遍 [It doesn't matter. Translate it again]. (Tanrun said: "we take a nap, after that we have lunch") Do you agree? (Then she wrote the right answer on the board.)

At the end of all of the explanations about the conjunctions, Hui pointed out the

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purpose of learning these conjunctions in Chinese as follows:

> There are very few conjunctions used in the reading text in the textbook; so it looks like a schedule. I expanded so many conjunctions, among which you may choose one or two in your writing.

Then she distributed each of the students a passage about "my school day" as an example that she had prepared before teaching. After giving the students a few minutes to read the example, Hui asked some questions to make sure that the students understood it.

In order to let the students pay attention to the topic about "my school day", Hui also emphasized that the topic was the composition topic that had been tested in the High School Entrance exam in 2009. Hui explained in Chinese what the learners should pay attention to when writing this topic as below:

> The writing should be logical. What does it mean? We just talked about the conjunctions, right? What is a center? The composition should not be a schedule; it should have a center. What is the center in the passage that I just gave you? (Some answered: "I love going to school".) Yes, nobody will write in an exam paper that he hates to go to school. All will say "I love going to school". A real center should be about the individuality. I like geography, and why? So remember, this is a topic that appeared in the entrance exam. […] you should point out in one sentence what is the meaning of going to school. You should have your own thoughts and express your different feelings. Handwriting is also the key, so you need to practice your handwriting. Another

thing is the arrangement of ideas.

With these words, Hui focused on teaching the students the writing strategies for writing an exam paper. What she said about writing one's individuality did not necessarily mean that the learners could write their own real thinking in an exam paper; instead, what Hui wanted to address here was that the learners needed to write one or two sentences that could distinguish their writings from the others. In this way, a higher score could be probably guaranteed.

At last, Hui gave the students a few minutes to write their own compositions. Three students were called to write one paragraph about the morning, one about the noon, and one about the afternoon respectively on the board. Then Hui spent about three minutes on examining the paragraphs on the board and corrected the mistakes.

Hui's teaching was teacher-centered. She spent the most of the teaching time on explaining conjunctions and talking about writing strategies. Also, she spoke mostly in Chinese in her talking. The students participated mostly by listening, answering her questions, and translating sentences. However, I can see the effort that Hui made to make her teaching a little bit different. She asked English questions and used some English expressions in her interaction with the students, such as "Do you agree?", "What's wrong?", and "What's your opinion?" This is a sign that she tried to interact a little bit in English except for using English sentences as examples. Also, she had prepared an English text that did not exist in the textbook. The text she found seemed to be a more authentic one than the one

in textbook.

After the practicum. According to Hui, English teaching in the middle school was focused on translation as well as grammar and vocabulary. And Hui recognized this teaching approach as efficient.

> The school teacher often used grammar translation methods. She often asked the students to translate sentences and underline the key phases and sentences. I think her teaching was efficient. Although she did not use CLT, she had her own teaching way that was enough to motivate the learners to learn. [I learned from the teacher:] one teacher needs to pay attention to making good connections of knowledge. (Q2, q1)

Hui also mentioned the influence of her master teacher on her:

> I discussed with my master teacher about my teaching plan. She is a very experienced teacher and has very mature thoughts of teaching. [...] The discussion with her really motivated my interests in teaching. There is much to learn in terms of designing a class. Neither can we always teach based on the old traditions, nor should we only teach with games. We should pay attention to transmission of knowledge in an inspiring, expanding, and systematic manner. (post Interview)

Hui regarded her master teacher as a model of English teaching. Her master teacher addressed the importance of transmitting knowledge, but she tried to make the process of transmission in a less boring manner. "Games" seemed to be understood by the teacher and also by Hui as one way of implementing the communicative approach.

The master teacher did not agree with teaching English through "games", but she suggested teaching in the way that was not completely traditional. The message that Hui received from this teacher was that English teaching should be centered on transmission of knowledge; new teaching methods should be explored to make the transmission more productive.

Hui showed her disfaction with her own teaching practice in the middle school because she had not gone beyond the exam-oriented mode:

I did not apply CLT in my teaching, because the teaching time was very short. And in my teaching, I did not use the text well that I had prepared. I don't think my teaching was successful, because I went back to the entrance exam again while setting up a situation. I explained the requirements of writing a composition in an entrance exam. I think I am not very experienced with setting up a situation for learners. (Q2, q2)

Hui viewed herself as an inexperienced teacher in terms of applying CLT:

[The benefit of CLT is that it is] practical and authentic. [The problem of implementing CLT is that] teachers do not master the techniques of establishing situations well. They have too few opportunities to practice. Teachers should pay attention to every student and let all of them participate. (Q2, q3)

Hui suggested that experts create methods of CLT for teachers to use, which indicated, on the one hand, that she was not confident in her own abilities, and on the other hand, that successful models of using CLT were lacking.

The period of rote learning has gone in the era of internet. CLT can motivate

learners' passion of learning and let them learn easily. I think it is necessary to

change the current school English teaching. And it would be better that experts

could create useable package for us. (Q2, q5)

It would be more helpful if we could see more practical examples of CLT and

do more practice. (Q2, q6)

Investigator's reflections on Hui. Hui understood some concepts of CLT, but, in

comparison with Tian, she did not understand CLT deeply, and sometimes not

correctly. In the first questionnaire, she used "providing teacher's personal

experience" and "correcting students" as the examples of applying CLT, which were

not correct in fact.

Before the practicum, CLT was understood by Hui more as a method to motivate

learners to work hard rather than to improve their communicative competence. She

understood implementation of CLT as giving learners more motivation to learn

linguistic knowledge. In the questionnaire after the practicum, Hui pointed out that

she would try to set up a real situation in an EFL class through pictures, movies and

etc. in her future teaching, which may indicate her realization of applying authentic

materials in an EFL class. Hui also believed that CLT could be able to motivate

learners' passion of learning.

Hui's beliefs of teaching represented in her data were not always constant. In the

first questionnaire, she mentioned that CLT was appropriate for intermediate learners.

However, by answering another question, she pointed out that CLT was the best

method to let the beginners open their mouths. She may not have developed a certain integrated understanding of CLT, but only answered the different questions based on her separate personal experience.

Hui showed her interest in the topic of CLT and realized that it was necessary to change the current way of English teaching at schools. But she admitted that she lacked concrete ideas of how to implement CLT. She felt unconfident in creating teaching methods by herself and hoped that experts should create packages of CLT activities available for EFL teachers. She seemed to believe in the authority of experts in the field of English teaching but neglected the power of each individual teacher in exploring their own new ways.

Hui was not satisfied with her teaching behavior in the practicum; the reason she pointed out is that she had emphasized the stuffs about examination in her teaching. Her dissatisfaction with her exam-oriented teaching illustrates that Hui was conscious about the disadvantages of teaching in an exam-oriented manner. But it is also to notice that this consciousness of her had to make way for the exam-oriented teaching in her teaching practice. On the one hand, this may imply that Hui interpreted the teaching environment in this school as exam-oriented and taught in the way that the school and the learners could accept. On the other hand, this may also indicate that Hui could hardly come out of the exam-oriented teaching beliefs that had been deeply rooted in her. It seemed to be difficult to her to find other ways to teach.

Hui also mentioned in the first questionnaire that her understanding of the teacher role had been changed in the process of the teacher training at college. She

realized that the teacher should encourage learners instead of only explaining the linguistic knowledge in an exam-oriented way. The change of her understanding of the teacher role implies that the training program did play a role in developing some new beliefs of teaching of the teacher students.

To summarize, Hui was a pre-service teacher who was deeply affected by the traditional way of English teaching. Although she realized that CLT may be an effective teaching approach in teaching English, her understandings of CLT and her teaching practice could hardly get rid of the influence of the exam-oriented teaching approach. She seemed to be a pre-service teacher who was struggling to come out of the shade of the exam-oriented teaching tradition but had no clear ideas to guide herself.

Summary of The Six Cases

In this chapter, I illustrated six pre-service teachers as six concrete cases by presenting their verbal expressions and teaching actions. Vygotsky (1994) suggested using the concept of *perezhivanie* (*emotional experiences)* to examine the influence of the environment on the individual, because the influence of the environment depends not only on the nature of the situation itself, but also on one's perception, understanding, and awareness of the situation. *Perezhivanie* that arises from any situation or from any aspect of their environment determines what kind of influence the environment will have on children (Vygotsky, 1994). In my study, the participants resided in Liaoning Province and lived in the particular Chinese educational environment. How the educational environment influenced the individual pre-service

teachers can be examined through the *perezhivanie* of the pre-service teachers. In this chapter, I reported six pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about English teaching in their particular practicum period and demonstrated how they were aware of, understood, interpreted, and emotionally related to English teaching using a communicative approach in a secondary school.

Han, Fan, and Tian were the three pre-service teachers who taught more communicatively in comparison to the other three peer pre-service teachers in each practicum schools. Some commonalities can be found among the three participants. First, they had a relatively deeper understanding of CLT comparing with the other three pre-service teachers who seemed to favor the traditional way of English teaching in secondary schools. Tian had a more insightful understanding of CLT by regarding CLT as appropriate in teaching English knowledge and developing learners' communicative competence regarding the long period of time. Fan recognized CLT as the effective teaching method by pointing out that speaking could be an effective way to learn English as reading and writing did. Han emphasized the motivating function of CLT in term of learners' participation.

Second, the teaching behaviors of Han, Fan, and Tian demonstrated certain features of CLT. More authentic and meaningful materials were applied by the three in their teaching. Fan addressed the information about Dalian in her teaching rather than the topic of Xiamen in the textbook, which was more meaningful to the local students in her class. Han guided her students to read a tongue twister instead of the texts in the textbook, which achieved a high rate of participation of the students who had little

interest in learning. Tian kept the teaching contents of the exercises in the textbook, but altered the forms of doing them. The stuffed animals and the pictures she brought to her class made her teaching more real and more interesting to her students.

Third, the three pre-service teachers hold a critical attitude toward the textbooks they used, the current exam-oriented educational system in China, and the dominating discourses of teaching English in the society. Based on their teaching behaviors and their verbal expressions, the three pre-service teachers did not follow the textbooks exactly and intended to make alterations or adding authentic materials to teaching the textbooks. They also criticized the exam-oriented educational system in which achieving high scores was regarded as the most important purpose of teaching and learning English. To them, English was not only a means to reach high scores, but, more importantly, a communicative tool that one should learn how to use it. They also criticized the discourses dominating among school teachers, learners, and parents who only paid attention to one's scores instead of one's competence. They recognized the dominating discourses about English teaching in China; however, they (especially Tian and Fan) seemed to decide to make their teaching more communicative in a classroom within the macro English teaching context.

In comparison with Han, Tian, and Fan, the other three pre-service teachers (Di, Hong, and Hui) preferred more likely a traditional way of English teaching in secondary schools. Although they were also aware of the limitations of the exam-oriented teaching approach, they seemed to accept this kind of English teaching for the sake of a better educational and economic opportunity in future. They often

did not understand CLT as deeply or even correctly as the other three pre-service teachers did. There may be many reasons for their inadequate understandings of CLT; however, it is certain that their early developed beliefs of teaching played an important role when they contacted with CLT as a new teaching approach. Because of their monotonous English learning experiences at schools, the three pre-service teachers were more sensitive to recognize that CLT could create interesting and relaxing learning atmospheres in an EFL class. But they did not accept CLT as an effective teaching approach for teaching English grammar and doing exams. Di believed completely that grammar translation was the most effective method to achieve high scores. Hong suggested that the teacher should accumulate and teach cultural knowledge to ensure high scores of students. Although Hui had desires to make changes, she emphasized how to attain high scores of writing in her teaching and could hardly get rid of the influence of exam-oriented teaching mode.

According to the six pre-service teachers, the teacher educators of the training program taught them theories of CLT and encouraged them to change the traditional teaching approach in their teaching by applying CLT. What they had learned in the training program was in contradiction with what was required by the school teachers in the local practicum schools. Di, Hong, and Hui, who applied the more traditional approach in their teaching, viewed CLT as a teaching method that was in conflict with the educational reality in China. They focused on meeting the requirements of the exam-oriented reality and resisted change. However, the other three pre-service teachers (Han, Fan, Tian) treated the contradiction between the training and the local

school requirements differently. They criticized the exam-oriented discourse about English teaching that dominated in the society. Moreover, they (especially Fan and Tian) believed that CLT could be appropriate to teach English, including its grammar. However, the score-oriented mentality prevented Chinese teachers, students, and parents from understanding and appreciating CLT.

In the six cases, some concrete methods that were understood by the six pre-service as CLT activities could be explored. Generally speaking, the methods applied by them could be summarized as "expanding knowledge", "encouraging participation", and "making alterations".

"Expanding knowledge" means that the pre-service teachers added extra knowledge, both linguistic and cultural knowledge, to their teaching. All the six participants tried to expanded words based on the ones given in the textbooks. Fan and Hong also added some cultural knowledge based on the contents in the books. In this way, they actually connected some realities outside school with a classroom teaching.

"Encouraging participation" means that some of the pre-service teachers made efforts to encourage the students to participate. Han did many reading activities and competitions to encourage the participation of the students in the vocational school whose motivation of learning was very low. Tian used the stuffed animals and the pictures as well as designed different activities to achieve students' attention and active participation. Fan did group discussions to encourage all of the learners to talk in English. By creating some activities, they intended to make their teaching more

learner-centered.

With "making alterations" I mean that the pre-service teachers tried not to follow what existed in a textbook exactly, but made some changes. Although none of the pre-service teachers divorced completely from the textbooks in their teaching, some of them did make some changes. Fan changed the topic of the reading text about Xiamen to the topic about Dalian that was more authentic and meaningful to the learners. Tian changed the exercising forms in the textbook into more interactive and more interesting forms. In this way, their teaching appeared more authentic. Hui added a new writing text that she found in the internet as an example for the students.

Although the methods of CLT applied by the six pre-service teachers were limited, these methods they used imply the possibilities of implementing CLT in the Chinese context and indicate the possible directions of how to apply CLT in China.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

I conducted the case study research under the background that the Chinese government required Chinese EFL teachers to apply the communicative approach to teach English by issuing the *NEC* early in 2001; however, the traditional teaching mode is still prevalent today in EFL classes in China. I did the case study research on twelve pre-service EFL teachers of the Liaoning Normal University before, during, and after their six-week educational practicum in three local secondary schools in Dalian, Liaoning, with the purpose of exploring the personal and local perceptions of the pre-service teachers about the communicative teaching.

Examining the pre-service teachers' words and actions before, during, and after the particular period of the educational practicum, I intended to explore the two research questions: a) What are Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about CLT and its implementation in the Chinese context? b) What are the important factors that affect their perceptions about CLT and its implementation?

I applied various research methods with the main purpose that a rich and thick description and analysis of the views and actions of the local pre-service teachers in Liaoning could be provided. Readers can read more details about what perceptions about implementation of CLT and what beliefs of English teaching the pre-service teachers obtained in Chapter IV, V, VI, and VII. In this chapter, the main effort is made to summarize some common themes about the perceptions of CLT among the twelve pre-service teachers and to analyze some significant factors that may affect their perceptions. It is necessary to emphasize again that the teaching behavior of the

participants was described mainly based on the one-time teaching observation of the researcher. That the pre-service teachers had limited opportunity to teach in the public schools was a limitation of the study.

The Perceptions of CLT

With regard to their understandings of CLT, almost all of the participants viewed CLT as various concrete teaching methods or tasks in classroom practices rather than a broad teaching approach which includes a list of general principles or features. With the understanding that CLT is a broad teaching approach under which different methods can be carried out based on learners' needs, a free space of creating methods is actually guaranteed to a teacher. But when CLT is understood as concrete teaching methods in practices, the teacher's creative agency may be ignored and his or her attention may be mainly paid to accumulating different methods of teaching. That is actually what happened to the participants. Many of the participants complained that they did not know enough CLT methods, admitted their inability to create their own methods, and hoped to learn more methods from the so-called experts. In this way, they tended to give up their own initiatives as teachers and put themselves under the educational authority.

The most common understanding of CLT among the participants is that CLT was various oral tasks that aimed at improving learners' communicative competence, more exactly the oral ability. In fact, this understanding of CLT was inconsistent with the understanding of many Western scholars who regarded CLT as a broad approach characterized by series of principles or features (Hui & Jin, 2010). And the

communicative competence which the participants often used to indicate the oral

ability does not match the content of communicative competence that includes

grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and

strategic competence (Liao, 1997). While CLT is understood to develop the synthetic

competence of using a language in the areas where CLT originated, CLT was more

likely understood by the participants as teaching methods to develop only one single

skill among the hearing, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Another common understanding of CLT among the participants is that they

understood CLT as methods to create a better English teaching environment within a

Chinese EFL classroom. However, the participants attached different meanings to the

so-called teaching environment. First, the teaching environment was considered by

some as an English-speaking environment within the macro Chinese-speaking context;

therefore, English learners had opportunities to practice speaking English in an EFL

class. In order to create an English speaking environment, some participants (such as

Tian and Di) suggested creating "real" situations in which learners could use the

language to interact with foreigners. They intended to make the teaching environment

more realistic to the learners; however, many of the school learners did not have

opportunities to use English with foreigners in their daily lives, and the so-called

"real" situations were in fact only the imaginative possibilities.

Furthermore, the better teaching environment created by CLT was often viewed

as a relaxing and interesting environment in which English learners would not feel

bored and sleepy and the mechanical teacher-student relationship could be improved.

Although the participants hoped to bring pleasure into an EFL classroom through applying enjoyable activities such as competitions and games, they, at the same time, questioned the effectiveness of these activities regarding transmission of linguistic knowledge. Therefore, some of the participants suggested that CLT should not play a main role in an EFL class as the traditional teaching mode did.

Many of the participants often clarified their understandings of CLT by indicating the differences between CLT and the traditional teaching mode that they had experienced in their previous secondary schools. CLT was often understood as something that Chinese school English teachers did not do. They addressed the "learner-centered" principle of CLT that was completely converse to the "teacher-centered" mode they had known. They recognized CLT as series of speaking methods to improve learners' oral competence which was often omitted in the exam-oriented traditional way of English teaching. They appreciated that CLT could create pleasure and learning interests that they had lacked in their previous English learning experience. In a word, CLT was understood more likely as series of anti-traditional teaching methods. What was completely different from their previous learning experiences turned out to be easier to fall into the consciousness of their understanding.

The meaning of the "learner-centered" principle of CLT for the participants in this study was that learners participated actively in different tasks and that learners motivated themselves to learn more diligently. In fact, they did not catch the real meaning of the principle as understood in western countries: Learners learned a

language through communication by using the language; and learners contributed to the construction of knowledge. They overlooked or misunderstood the real meaning of this principle. More exactly, they understood the term of "learner-centered" teaching based on their previous English learning experience that had lacked oral activities and had appeared monotonous. Based on the post reflections of the participants, many of the participants admitted that the current mechanical teaching approach that existed in the local public schools would satisfy the learners' needs of English learning. Their narrow or incorrect understandings of the principle were most likely in response to the "teacher-centered" EFL class they had experienced. CLT was often understood as a teaching approach that was completely opposite to the traditional teaching mode.

Furthermore, CLT was understood by many participants as doing something extra in an EFL classroom. Something extra was regarded by the participants as additional enjoyable activities that decreased learners' pressure of learning, extra interesting activities that motivated learners to learn harder by themselves, extra speaking activities that developed learners' speaking ability, additional teaching contents that did not stay in a textbook, and extra efforts that teachers had to make in their preparation. That CLT was understood as doing something extra besides teaching in the traditional way may be the reason why the participants complained that the teaching time was limited and why they believed that the teacher would have a tiresome burden in the process preparation.

Perceptions of The Implementation of CLT

The participants' understandings of CLT and their perceptions about its implementation in Liaoning, China are in fact intertwined; the understandings of CLT they hold often affected what views on its implementation they had.

Almost all of the participants mentioned that they were impressed by CLT and would apply it; however, they believed that implementation of CLT was in conflict with the current educational system in China. Although the participants had little experience with or little evidence about the effectiveness of the communicative approach regarding doing exams, they firmly believed it to be true. They seemed to prefer the traditional teaching mode considering the educational system in China, but hoped to use some methods of CLT to remedy the defects carried by the traditional mode such as suppressing one's interest in learning. Thus, implementation of CLT was treated more likely as a medicine that could soothe the pain caused by the traditional mode. In their minds, the traditional mode needed to be adapted through implementation of CLT, instead of being replaced by it.

Although the participants did not think it was possible to implement CLT completely in an EFL classroom in the current educational context in China, they all believed that application of CLT showed the direction of English teaching in future. Since utterances are forms of social interaction that are anchored in past actions that will engender future actions (Bakhtin, 1986), their utterances about the implementation of CLT in future probably imply an optimistic prospect for implementation of CLT in China. An anticipation of an optimistic future of applying

CLT may also imply that implementation of CLT was believed to be going ahead of the current Chinese educational context. In other words, the Chinese English teaching context may not have prepared well for implementation of CLT. The participants seemed to be certain that a more developed and more mature educational and social context would come into being in future.

In the study, the participants recognized some aspects existing in the current educational system as the factors preventing Chinese EFL teachers from applying CLT in an EFL classroom. Chinese English learners were often mentioned by the participants as a big concern about implementing CLT. They questioned the learners' language ability in doing activities, their willingness of cooperation, their interests in learning English, and their self-control abilities in the process of doing activities. Some even compared Chinese learners with foreign learners by pointing out that Chinese learners lacked independent learning autonomy as many foreign young learners did. Based on their learning and teaching experiences, they also pointed out that Chinese young learners who were already acquainted with the traditional teaching mode would not get used to CLT easily. Therefore, English teaching that centered in transmitting knowledge seemed to meet the needs of the current Chinese English learners better.

Some participants also pointed out that the qualification of school EFL teachers was a big barrier for applying CLT in China, because EFL teachers, according to the participants, did not know CLT or understood it correctly, or they did not master many methods of CLT. Implementation of CLT was believed to require higher qualification

of teachers. A qualified English teacher, based on the participants' words, needed to obtain a huge amount of (linguistic and cultural) knowledge, cared about students' needs and interests, motivated learners to learn, had a good relationship with learners, as well as had ability to divorce from textbooks occasionally.

The big-sized class was also mentioned as an obstacle of applying CLT. The participants seemed to worry that the teacher would lose control of students in a big-sized class; the students would speak Chinese and would not focus on doing activities. A big number of students in one classroom seemed to constrain the possibility of applying various forms of tasks.

The participants did not only recognize teachers, learners, and the big class size within a classroom as the factors that prevented EFL teachers from implementing CLT, but they also identified some preventing factors that existed in a broader educational, social, and cultural environment in China. Some participants criticized the in China broadly accepted standard by which a personal success was assessed: Only the person who could go to university was believed to be successful. This understanding of success may originate in Confucianism, according to which education is perceived as important for self-realization (Hu, 2005b; Lee, 1996). Based on this standard, teachers and learners in secondary schools seemed to become very exam-oriented.

Furthermore, the dominating criterion for evaluating a good teacher in the whole Chinese society was recognized by the participants as score-oriented. Schools, learners, teachers, and parents seemed to evaluate EFL teachers by examining the scores of their students. In such a social and educational context, some participants

admitted that they would gradually lose their enthusiasm of trying new teaching methods and would be assimilated into the main stream of English teaching. They seemed to be forced to accept the short-term and practical use of the traditional mode, though they recognized its shortage in long period of time. *Utilitarianism* of English teaching seemed to dominate in the educational and social context in China.

These preventing factors that were recognized by the participants are consistent with many factors that many scholars identified in their studies. Lack of support from schools, parents and students (Xie, 2010), lack of qualified English teachers (Yu, 2001), the form-oriented examinations, low teacher enthusiasm for change, and low learner proficiency and motivation (Fang, 2011) can be recognized in the data given by the participants as well.

Factors Affecting The Participants' Perceptions of CLT

Vygotskian theory serves as a framework that helped understand the participants and analyze the data collected in the study. Each participant in the study, based on the Vygotskian theoretical framework, represents a certain historical unit living at a certain historical period and in certain historical circumstances (Vygotsky, 1994). Since mental functioning in the individual derives from participation in social life, the perceptions of the participants actually derive from their participation in the particular social life in Liaoning, China. By the time the study was completed, the school education and the teacher training at college remained the two main forms through which the pre-service teachers participated in a broader social life. By participating in the school education and the college training, the participants developed certain

beliefs of teaching that heavily affected their perceptions of the new teaching approach.

Internalized Chinese culture of learning.

An individual develops socially by interacting with the environment and internalizing what is socially accepted (Vygotsky, 1994). With regard to foreign language learning, internalization is a process in which learners construct a mental representation of what was at one point physically present in external form (Lantolf, 2003). In the long period of schooling, especially during the period of English education in secondary schools in Liaoning in which the participants learned English intensively, the participants internalized how English should be taught in secondary schools, what teachers and learners were supposed to do in an EFL classroom, and how the English language should be treated in an EFL classroom. In other words, they internalized, during the schooling time in Liaoning, the so-called *Chinese culture of learning* - the socially and culturally constructed forms over history with respect to learning and teaching behavior (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006; Shi, 2006). The internalized Chinese culture of learning illustrated the framework for the participants to understand English teaching within an EFL classroom.

The views of the participants reflect some features of the Chinese culture of learning that have been recognized by some scholars. First, the participants often preferred to transmit linguistic knowledge rather than to use the English language in teaching, which reflects the feature that learning in China is often perceived as a process of knowledge accumulation rather than knowledge construction and

application (Yu & Wang, 2009). Second, that the participants were uncertain about applying and creating different methods in teaching may reflect the cultural feature that the teacher pays more attention to transmitting knowledge than to applying different teaching methods in China (Jin & Cortazzi, 2008; Parry & Su, 1998; Yu & Wang, 2009). The content of teaching seemed to be regarded as more important than the forms of how to teach it. Third, it is to notice from many teaching examples of the participants that many participants concentrated on teaching the grammatical knowledge that was embodied in a reading text or an exercise rather than emphasizing the meaning of the text or the exercise, which may reflect the cultural feature that an English text is often read not for meaning but deciphered for extending vocabulary lists and for refining the mastery of grammar (Yen, 1987; Zhang & Gao, 2001). The participants seemed to have internalized the Chinese culture of learning in the long period of schooling, based on which they understood and perceived CLT which obtained many different teaching beliefs.

Culturally constructed understanding of knowledge.

In the Chinese culture of learning, the meaning of knowledge that should be taught in a school is culturally constructed as well. The study provides an opportunity to look at how the local participants understood the *culturally constructed meaning of knowledge*.

To the participants, knowledge that should be taught in schools seemed to have a clear boundary. Knowledge that stayed in a textbook and was transmitted directly from the teacher to learners within a classroom was regarded as the knowledge worth

of teaching and learning. From the teaching behaviors of the participants, it is to recognize that the abstract knowledge about the English language was treated as more significant knowledge comparing with the practical and miscellaneous information coming from realities. To the participants, deep language structure and transformational rules seemed to count toward real knowledge, which implies that positivism (mentioned in Chapter three) may have played a role in shaping the cultural understanding of knowledge. However, this cultural understanding of knowledge that had a clear boundary may stay in conflict with the belief of CLT that tended to bridge the gap between school teaching and realities outside schools.

This cultural understanding of knowledge also affects how the participants perceived the enjoyable activities of CLT. Playing or doing fun activities were recognized by the participants as the methods to motivate English learners; however, the participants questioned the effectiveness of learning knowledge through plays. According to their understandings, one could learn little from playing. Plays seemed not to match the framework of teaching the knowledge they understood. CLT-activities seemed to succeed in creating pleasure, but these enjoyable forms seemed not to be able to carry the content of knowledge. Teaching the real knowledge that was understood by the participants ought to take place more likely in a serious and formal way.

Deep-rooted pre-existing beliefs of teaching.

The participants developed certain beliefs of teaching by internalizing the Chinese culture of learning during their schooling time in Liaoning, China. Pajares

(1992) points out that beliefs of teaching are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience. Though the participants received certain teacher training at college, many of their beliefs of teaching still appeared to relate more closely to their previous learning experience rather than the educational theories acquired at college. Some early constructed beliefs of the participants that are reflected in their words and actions could be summarized as follows:

- Linguistic knowledge was the main teaching content in an EFL class in secondary schools. Direct transmission of linguistic knowledge from the teacher to learners was effective.

- Enjoyable activities were not an efficient way to teach knowledge, but they could add pleasure into teaching and motivate learners to learn harder.

- Good teachers need to explain knowledge logically and clearly; good learners should be self-motivated and focus on listening carefully.

- Textbooks were the foundation of teaching and learning.

- Leading the reading of words and explaining their meanings directly are an effective way to teach vocabulary[12].

- The main purpose of teaching English in secondary schools was to achieve high scores in exams.

These beliefs seemed to be rooted deeply in many participants' beliefs of

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[12] Fan, Hong, Di, and Han led reading words in their teaching, rather than teaching words through meaningful interaction.

teaching and appeared difficult to be altered. The participants seemed to believe in these statements without questioning them. Depending on the pre-existing beliefs of teaching, the participants understood and interpreted CLT that contained series of different teaching beliefs, which may be the reason why the participants could not accept CLT completely, and why they questioned the effectiveness of CLT in term of teaching English knowledge.

The early developed beliefs also affected how the participants perceived CLT as a new knowledge in the process of training. The belief system has an adaptive function in helping individuals define and understand the world and themselves. The potent affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted (Pajares, 1992). How the teacher educators in the teacher-training program taught the participants about CLT was not examined in the study; however, it is certain that the participants' pre-existing beliefs of teaching built a factor influencing how the participants interpreted the information of CLT. They seemed to give more attention to some information about CLT such as the information about pleasure and motivation that CLT could create, but neglected or refused some information about CLT such as conducting meaningful interactions between the teacher and learners using English. They seemed to understand, interpret, and evaluate CLT based on their own needs caused by their pre-existing beliefs. What did not belong to their pre-existing beliefs was more likely regarded as unimportant or incorrect.

Newly developed beliefs during the training at college.

Pajares (1992) points out that beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student gets to college; and the earlier the beliefs are shaped, the harder it is to change them. It is to recognize in my study that many early constructed beliefs were prevalent to the participants, such as the beliefs mentioned above. After a few years of training at college in which they had taken particular courses about English education, their beliefs in the teacher-centered, textbook-centered, and grammar-centered teaching mode still appeared very stable. Although some teacher educators told them to teach differently and taught them various theories of English education, the pre-existing beliefs of the participants seemed not to be altered.

Although belief change during adulthood is a rare phenomenon (Pajares, 1992), the teacher-training program did make some changes in the participants' beliefs of teaching. The teacher-training program made the participants master some basic features of CLT successfully. They seemed to understand the differences between CLT and their previous learning experience and recognize the functions of CLT to create relaxing, enjoyable, and motivating English speaking environments. Some new beliefs of teaching seemed to be formed in the process of training as well. The participants realized that the teacher-learner relationship needed to be improved, that the traditional teaching mode needed to be altered, that learners needed to be put in the center of teaching, and that various tasks needed to be applied. Some participants such as Han and Fan seemed to internalize the principles of CLT more successfully and even tried to carry out some of their newly developed beliefs in their teaching

practice.

Pajares (1992) also pints out that newly acquired beliefs are more vulnerable to change in comparison with early created beliefs of teaching. In the study, signs indicating the instability of the newly developed beliefs can be recognized as well. When the participants talked and wrote about their views on CLT, they mentioned more often the benefits of CLT and even expressed some ideas of implementing CLT. However, in their teaching practice, these new beliefs seemed not to be used to direct their teaching behavior; more often, their pre-existing beliefs in the traditional teaching mode often gained the upper hand to guide their teaching.

Since internalization of culturally produced sign systems can bring about behavioral transformations and form a bridge between early and later forms of individual development (Vygotsky, 1978), Learning a foreign language, under certain circumstances, can lead to the reformation of one's mental system, including one's concept of self (Lantolf, 2000). Learning another tongue provides another way to create, convey, and exchange signs.

Based on the data given by the participants, it could be revealed that how the participants contacted with the English language at college. While the English language was treated only as a learning subject in their secondary schools, the participants seemed to have more possibilities of using the language at college. Watching videos was often mentioned by the participants when talking about their English learning at college. Series of the visual signs in movies that carried another language and another culture may have an influence on their understandings of the

foreign culture and foreign people. The participants also mentioned that some teacher educators had showed them videos about how foreign teachers taught a language. These visual and verbal signs may have provided them the materials for understanding the new teaching approach. By watching many English movies and the videos about teaching, the participants seemed to be able to live in an environment that was not limited to their original Chinese social and cultural values.

Moreover, the participants needed to use English to take courses taught by English native speakers and Chinese English professors, to read English books, to search in English websites, or to communicate with foreign people. By using the English language to see, to hear, to read and to speak, the English language seemed to have mediated them to interact with the relatively new study environment at college to some degree. Using English to deal with their course works and maybe to participate in their daily lives, the participants seemed to have more freedom to treat English as a communicative tool, which may have given them opportunities to look at their own communicative ability, check what lacked in English education in secondary schools, and even develop some new beliefs of English teaching.

Although the study did not show that the participants applied various teaching methods of CLT in their teaching, a few ways of realizing their new beliefs of teaching could be recognized. Almost all the six pre-service teachers who were illustrated as six cases in Chapter VII made efforts to apply something different from the traditional teaching mode. Fan encouraged her students to talk about Dalian; Han encouraged the learners' participation by doing some enjoyable activities; Fan applied

many different forms to do the exercises in the textbook; Hong tried to add cultural information to her teaching; and Hui prepared a writing example that did not stay in the textbook for the students. All of them seemed to make an effort to do a little bit of change in their teaching, which may indicate that they developed some new beliefs of teaching in the training program at college.

Some ways of English teaching of the participants may also suggest the directions of localization of CLT in Liaoning, China. The four-people group work was applied by Fan and Tian, which may indicate an appropriate form of doing tasks in a big-sized classroom in China. Tian's teaching also indicates that the EFL teacher may be able to keep the teaching content of exercises but alter the forms of doing them. Also, the participants tried to expand knowledge or information in their teaching, which may imply that the EFL teacher can add some outside school information to teaching based on the teaching content in a textbook. Many participants believed that short tasks could be applied in an EFL class and they should be combined with the traditional mode of teaching, which shows the possible direction of implementing CLT in the current Chinese educational context - the traditional mode as the primary teaching approach and CLT as an auxiliary approach.

Personal interaction with the local schools.

The study shows that no sharp change in the participants' beliefs took place in the process of their practicum. Some reasons can be summarized as follows. First, the educational practicum in a local school only lasted for six weeks in comparison with the long period of schooling and training. Second, the pre-existing beliefs of teaching

often played a steadier role to guide their teaching behaviors comparing the newly developed beliefs. Third, the participants had little freedom to carry out their newly developed beliefs of teaching. For example, the local schools, such as the high school, tried to reduce the influence of the pre-service teachers by reducing their teaching time to the minimum. Furthermore, the participants interpreted that the teaching environment in the local schools almost kept the same as in their previous schools. Without the consciousness of the changes in the teaching environment, they did not find it necessary to change the traditional way of teaching.

In the process of the practicum, the participants needed to follow the school teachers who arranged their daily work, demonstrated English teaching, and supervised the participants' teaching. Many of the participants mentioned in the study what the school teachers told them about teaching and what they learned from their teaching demonstrations. The participants interacted with the school teachers and interpreted their words and behaviors, which may have affected the participants' understandings of English teaching in secondary schools. More exactly, the school EFL teachers who often taught in the traditional approach seemed to strengthen the participants' beliefs in the exam-oriented and traditional mode of teaching.

The participants' interpretation of the learners in the local schools seemed to be another factor affecting their perceptions about implementing CLT. The participants who did the practicum in the middle school and the high school realized that the learners in these schools were very self-motivated and coordinated very well in an EFL class; therefore, it seemed unnecessary to apply different methods of CLT to

motivate them. The participants who did the practicum in the vocational school considered its learners as the ones without interest in learning. Based on the interpretation of the learners in the vocational school, Di decided to teach in the traditional mode to avoid the learners' coordination. Although Han intended to arouse their interest by applying some interesting methods, she was uncertain about the effectiveness of teaching knowledge with these methods.

To summarize, through the individual interactions with the educational environments in the local schools and through their interpretations about the school teachers and learners, the participants' estheticism of implementing CLT did not seem to be improved.

Other issues that may affect their perceptions.

The study shows that some other issues may also affect the participants' beliefs of teaching, but more evidences still need to be collected. For example, the economic situation of a family and a school location may be an issue affecting the participants' perceptions of CLT. Pre-service teachers who grew up in a richer family or in a more developed city may have more opportunities to use English, tended to view English as a communicative tool, and appreciate CLT more possibly.

The English competence may be another issue affecting their perceptions. Han, Fan, and Tian who understood CLT more deeply and taught in a more communicative sense seemed to be the three participants who were more capable in using English, which means that one's foreign language competence may interrelate to one's perceptions about the CLT.

What All This Means to English Education in China?

Since the pre-service teachers recognized the tensions between application of CLT and the exam-oriented educational system, Chinese policy makers may need to pay attention to the coherence of the series of English teaching policies they made. *NEC,* as a top-down policy, represented the reform decision of the government to change the exam-oriented teaching and encourage the use of English. According to the *NEC*, English is the most important carrier of information and has become the language widely applied in every field of human life (MOE, 2001). However, in secondary schools, English as a foreign language is considered more likely as a learning subject, just like many other learning subjects in schools; and the main purpose of teaching and learning English is understood as preparing for examinations.

School English teachers apply a bottom-up practical strategy to deal with the exams that are also given by the government. Due to the disparity between the new curriculum and the standard examinations, the pre-service teachers preferred to keep the teaching way that still worked. When the teaching environment was interpreted as not changing, their teaching beliefs would not change either. So, new assessment systems are needed to free EFL teachers and learners from the exam-oriented pressure. Only in this way, are pre-service EFL teachers able to appreciate CLT in deed and motivate themselves to explore new teaching approaches. It is impossible to expect a change of English pedagogy without a political and educational environment supporting it. The recent news shows that the Chinese educational authorities are aware of this problem and are making efforts to reform the English examination

policy. The Chinese educational authorities in a few places such as Beijing, Jiangsu, and Shanghai are making the plans to reform the English examinations in these areas. The reform plans include reducing the proportion of the scores of the English examination, testing the competence of using the language, or even canceling the English examination (张[Zhang], 2013). How the English examination is going to be reformed and how in-service and pre-service Chinese EFL teachers respond to these reforms in their teaching pedagogy are still needed to be examined.

This study provides some suggestions to EFL teacher educators as well. The study confirms that student teachers have developed their beliefs of teaching by the time they enter a college; and these beliefs are rooted deeply in their minds and student teachers may not be conscious about them. Therefore, it is important that teacher-students reflect on their previous school learning experiences and discuss about English teaching in secondary schools in order to realize their deep-rooted beliefs, based on which new beliefs of teaching can be developed.

The study also shows that the participants who believed more deeply in the communicative teaching approach held a more critical attitude toward the exam-oriented teaching mode. The critical thinking of pre-service teachers should be encouraged by teacher educators; and based on this kind of critical views, teacher-students are able to shape new desires of exploring new teaching approaches to change the teaching reality.

Teacher educators also should look at what these teacher students' major concerns are. The study demonstrates the pre-service EFL teachers' dilemma between

the exploration of the new teaching approach and the exam-oriented educational system. They believed that CLT did not match the examination system in China. Teacher educators need to encourage their teacher students to dig deeper beneath the superficial differences between the principles of CLT and the traditional mode. It is necessary to organize discussions about whether CLT stays in conflict with transmitting knowledge, whether CLT is an efficient teaching approach for knowledge transitions, and how to localize CLT to meet the educational goals of teaching linguistic knowledge in China.

With regard to the meaning of English, learners in China are facing a dilemma as well. English as a foreign language is considered as a learning subject in secondary schools; and the main purpose of teaching and learning it is understood as preparing for taking examinations. However, from a communicative teaching perspective, English is a communicative means. Therefore, it is also important for teacher educators to organize discussions about what are the possibilities of using English in China. If student teachers realize more possibilities for EFL learners to express themselves in English, English can be treated more possibly as a communicative tool.

It is also important for teacher educators to encourage their students to create their own teaching methods that are more meaningful to local educational situations in China. Teacher educators need to demonstrate as many communicative methods as possible to teacher-students. Many of the participants only grasped the theoretical concepts of CLT, and they were often confused about possible ways to implement CLT. The final ideal form of development mentioned by Vygotsky (1994) did not exist

for the pre-service teachers in the process of their becoming teachers. Because of the lack of the "final" "ideal" form of applying CLT, the participants were often unconfident and confused in trying to create their own methods. By demonstrating many possible methods of CLT, teacher educators can show teacher students the broadness and deepness of possible ways of implementing CLT, based on which teacher students will recognize the direction of implementing of CLT and create their own methods.

To summarize, in order to develop EFL learners' competence of using the English language, a reformation needs to be carried out both on the political level and the school level. In the process of the reformation, teacher educators need to make efforts to help teacher students develop to qualified EFL teachers who not only master good English competence and educational theories but also have capability of applying and creating different teaching methods to meet various local teaching situations in China. In this way, CLT, as a teaching approach which originated in the Western countries, can be localized in China to benefit Chinese EFL learners.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Short Answer Questionnaire

1. How old were you when you began to learn English?	
2. What methods were used to teach you English in school?	
3. Did you learn English outside school settings? Such as in a private English school, with a tutor, or with a TV program? If yes, please indicate how and why you learnt English outside school. What teaching methods were used?	
4. Did you have any native English-speaking in elementary and/or secondary school? If yes, what methods did they use?	
5. Please indicate the percentage of teacher's talking and students' talking in English class in your elementary and secondary school.	Teacher's talking _____% Students' talking _____%
5. Did you ever have opp 6. ortunities to use?	
7. What was your motivation to learn English in elementary and secondary school?	
8. What is your motivation to learn English at college? If the motivation is different from the answer to question 14, please indicate why.	
9. If the whole grade is 10, how would you like to assess your English competence in the four skills?	Hearing Speaking Reading Writing
10. What is your attitude toward communication in English?	
11. How would you like to assess your face-to-face communicative competence in English?	
12. Do you expect to use English in the future? What opportunities would there be?	
13. What teaching methods do you think can improve	

your communicative competence in English?	
14. What learning strategies do you think can improve your communicative competence in English?	
15. How does your ideal English class look like? Please describe.	

Appendix B: Face-to-face Communicative Scale

Directions: on a scale from 0 (no chance) to 100 (completely certain), how confident are you of being able to successfully communicate, face-to-face in English, what you want to say in each of the following tasks. You may select any number between 0 and 100.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

No chance   completely certain

_____ 1. Exchange greetings with a foreigner

_____ 2. Give information about self (name, age, hometown)

_____ 3. Talk about your family

_____ 4. Talk about a your favorite movie

_____ 5. Talk about your personal interests

_____ 6. Talk about daily activities

_____ 7. Ask for directions

_____ 8. Talk about your summer vacation

_____ 9. Express how you feel after reading a novel

_____ 10. Give an American tourist a tour in Dalian

_____ 11. Chat online with an English native speaker

_____ 12. Take a job interview

_____ 13. Make a presentation about your familiar topic

_____ 14. Express your view on a topic, such as how to learn English

_____ 15. Introduce a Chinese tradition

_____ 16. Participate a discussion related to your major subject

Appendix C: Presentation Handout

Communicative language teaching (CLT): Interaction is both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It is also referred to as "communicative approach".

Linguistic Competence = grammatical knowledge or knowledge about the language form
Communicative Competence = Knowledge & ability for rules of form/grammar + rules of use

Features of CLT

• CLT stresses the need to allow students opportunities for authentic and creative use of the language (authentic materials; tolerance of errors)

• CLT focuses on meaning rather than on form

• CLT suggests that learning should be relevant to the needs of the students;

• CLT advocates task-based language teaching (TBLT) (purposeful, meaningful tasks);

• CLT emphasizes a functional approach to language learning and culture awareness of the target language.

• CLT links classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom

• It emphasizes collaboration

• Teacher is a guide, counselor, organizer, facilitator

• The teacher needs to creates a secure, non-threatening learning atmosphere
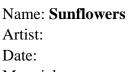
Appendix D: Gap Info

Famous Artists   A Sheet

Use this dialogue to talk about famous works of art:

Who painted/sculpted _____?	It was painted/sculpted by _____?
When was it painted/sculpted?	It was painted/sculpted in _____?
What was it painted with/sculpted from?	It was painted with/sculpted from _____?
Let me get this straight: It was painted/sculpted by ____ in _____ with/from _____.	That's right/correct.

Name: **Sunflowers**
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

Name: **The Thinker**
Artist: Rodin
Date: 1882
Materials: Bronze

Name: The Ox
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

Name: **Mona Lisa**
Artist: Da Vinci
Date: 1503-1506
Materials: Oil

Name: **The Scream**
Artist: Munch
Date: 1893
Materials: Oil Paints

Name: **David**
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

Name: **Guernica**
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

Name: **Mobius Strip**
Artist: Escher
Date: 1963
Materials: Woodcut

Famous Artists   B Sheet

Use this dialogue to talk about famous works of art:

Who painted/sculpted _____?	It was painted/sculpted by _____?
When was it painted/sculpted?	It was painted/sculpted in _____?
What was it painted with/sculpted from?	It was painted with/sculpted from _____?
Let me get this straight: It was painted by _____ in _____ With/from _____.	That's right/correct.

Name: **Sunflowers**
Artist: Van Gogh
Date: 1889
Materials: Oil Paints

Name: **The Thinker**
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

Name: **The Ox**
Artist: Joong-sup Lee
Date: In the 1950s
Materials: Oil paints

Name: **Mona Lisa**
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

Name: **The Scream**
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

Name: **David**
Artist: Michelangelo
Date: 1501-1504
Materials: Marble

Name: **Guernica**
Artist: Picasso
Date: 1937
Materials: Oil Paints

Name: **Mobius Strip**
Artist:
Date:
Materials:

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Appendix E: Questionnaire Examples

These two questionnaires are created based the three following dialogues. There are six questions given by me, the learners needs to ask their own seventh question. When doing the questionnaires, each learner has a questionnaire, goes to seven classmates, asks them one question among the sevens, and writes their answers in the questionnaire. These two are only two examples of using questionnaires and aim at showing the participants possibilities of creating their own questionnaires in teaching.

A:
LI LEI: Hi, Jim! Can you come and play football?
JIM: Sorry, I can't. I have to tidy my room.
LI LEI: Oh! Do you have to?
JIM: Yes, I'm afraid I do. I may come later.
LILEI: OK.

B:
LUCY: Where's Meimei?
LILI: She can't come. She has to help her Mommy!
LUCY: What does she have to do?
LILY: She has to help with the washing.
LUCY: Is she coming later?
LILY: She'll come if she can.
LUCY: Oh well, let's ask Wei Hua instead!

C:
JIM: Where's Li Lei?
BILL: He can't make it today. He has to stay at home.
JIM: Why?
BILL: I'm not sure. I think he may have to help his Dad in the garden.
JIM: Is he coming later?
BILL: He 'll come if he can.
JIM: Oh well, we'll have to ask Zhang Li instead.

Questionnaires (See next page)

Do you have to

1. tidy your room?	Yes	No
2. wash your clothes?		
3. clean the floor?		
4. wash plates after meals		
5. help your mom with the washing?		
6. stay at home at this weekend?		
7. _____		

Do you have to

1. tidy your room?   Name   Answer
2. wash your clothes?
3. clean the floor?
4. wash plates after meals
5. help your mom with the washing?
6. stay at home at this weekend?
7. _____

Appendix F: Grammar activities

These two activities aim at illustrating that grammar can be learned in a communicative way. Because the questions based on a certain grammatical structure are all related to learners personally, in other words, the questions are meaningful to learners, learner may have more interest in doing these activities.

These two questionnaires can be used while teaching future progressive tense. In these tow activities, learners need to form questions based on the given information. These activities can be used between two students, among a small group, or in whole class.

What do you think about your future?	T/F	
Five years from now… 1) You will be living abroad. 2) You will have had two children. 3) You'll still be studying English.		
Twenty-five years from now… 1) You will have become a perfect English-speaker. 2) You will have become very rich. 4) You will have achieved all your goals in life!		

Find some one who   Name   Additional Information
(Five years from now)
1. will be living abroad.
2. will still be living in the same city as now.
(Twenty-five years from now)
3. will have retired.
4. will have become a fluent English speaker.
5. look very different to today.
6. _____

Appendix G: Evaluation sheet

Evaluation Sheet

	Comments (As a student, do you like/dislike it? Why or why not? From a potential teacher's perspective, what kind of difficulties may be met by the teacher or the student? Is it possible to overcome these difficulties? Any suggestions to modify the activity in order to use it in teaching? Anything else you want to say? ...)
1. Questionnaires (have to do…/ grammar)	
2. Information gap	
3. Reading (I went walking) (Ads)	
4. journal writing	
5. Other activities (Drawing + speaking) (Guessing Birthday) (Interview) (Number games)	

What issues may prevent you from using CLT in teaching? What issues may encourage you using it?

Would you like to try some CLT activities in your future teaching? Why or why not? And how (such as using one activity per unit)?

Appendix I: Short-Answer Questionnaire before the Practicum

1. Please describe your understandings of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

2. Describe the role of the teacher and the learner in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom according to your understanding.

3. What is an efficient way to learn and to teach English according to your experience?

4. How is CLT appropriate in the Chinese context? What are the possible benefits and/or problems in using CLT in Chinese EFL classrooms?

5. What, in your opinion, do English learners in China think of CLT?

6. Describe how teachers taught you English and how you learned English before you

entered college? (Which kind of teaching did you like? Which English class has left deep impression on you?)

7. Describe how the teacher-training program at college has prepared you for future teaching? What knowledge have you acquired? What skills have you learned? How did the training affect your understandings of language teaching?

8. Do you plan to try CLT/ TBLT in the teaching practicum? How would you like to use CLT in your future teaching, especially during the teaching practicum?

9. What problems might arise if you apply CLT during the teaching practicum? How would you plan to handle these problems?

Appendix J: Short-Answer Questionnaire after the Practicum

1.   a) Describe how the school teachers teach English in this school?

    b) Do you think their English teaching was efficient?

    c) Did the school teachers incorporate CLT in their teaching? If yes, do you think their implementation of CLT was successful or not? Why or why not?

    d) What did you learn from their teaching?

2.   a) Did you try to implement CLT in your teaching practice? If yes, how did you do it?

    b) Was your teaching with CLT successful? If not, what were the reasons?

3.   a) How is CLT appropriate in the Chinese context based on your experience in the practicum school?

    b) What are the benefits and/or problems in using CLT in Chinese EFL classrooms?

    c) What should EFL teachers pay attention to when they implement CLT?

4.   What, based on your observation, do the school students think of CLT?

5.   a) Do you think that your English learning experience in middle and high school encouraged you to implement CLT or prevented you from using CLT in your teaching?

b) What are the encouraging and preventing factors?

6.   a) What in the teacher-training program at college has prepared you well for your teaching in the practicum school? What not?

b) What kind of training would be more helpful based on your experience in the practicum school?

7.   a) What kind of teacher do you want to become in future?

b) Would you like to implement CLT in future?

c) How would you like to use CLT in your future teaching?

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