The University of Edinburgh
Moray House School of Education

Using Poetry to Develop Teenagers' Speaking Competence at Han-Mei Language Institute in Taiwan

LEE, HUI-CHUN

This dissertation is presented in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

September 2003

Abstract

English teaching in Taiwan is usually teacher-centred and test-oriented, especially at a private sector school like Han-Mei Language Institute which functions to 'teach to the test' (Brown, 1995) and trains teenage students to pass various exams for academic purposes. The exam backwash, however, has led to the imbalance of focusing on students' linguistic abilities but neglecting their speaking competence. In addition, at Han-Mei, the required textbook, *Reference Book—English in detail for junior high school,* is written on the basis of grammatical rules. It is not always motivating and lacks target culture literary texts that could benefit learners in acquiring language, becoming involved with different cultures, and promoting personal growth. Hence, in order to strengthen students' integrative competence and motivation, this dissertation has investigated utilizing poetry as a springboard for classroom interaction through Communicative Language Teaching.

There are two poems, *What Has Happened to Lulu?* and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, which have been used as a means to allow learners to do classroom communication. The implementation, likely problems related to learners' attitudes, teachers' beliefs, and syllabus concern in this literature classroom have been taken into account, and possible solutions have been suggested for the future practitioners.

Acknowledgements

Great appreciation goes to my family. Without their support, I would not have been able to study abroad.

Great appreciation also goes to my supervisor, Ruby Rennie, and other teachers: Rosemary Douglas, Gillies Haughton, and Arthur McNeill. Without their help, I would not have been able to finish this dissertation. Thank you very much.

Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

English teaching in Taiwan is extremely competitive, especially in the private sector. In the Han-Mei Language Institute, business is the main concern. Accordingly, enhancing learners' exam skills and helping them gain better scores is usually considered the best policy to compete against rival businesses. Because of this circumstance, in Han-Mei, the language syllabus has primarily had a grammatical focus that promotes learners' grammatical competence and gives them direct help to pass exams. Although the majority of students at Han-Mei have outstanding academic results, their competence in real-life communication is relatively insufficient. In addition, the required textbook, *Reference Book—English in detail for junior high school,* is not always interesting and fails to sustain students' motivation. This situation prompted me to investigate ways of using literary texts, such as poetry, to develop their speaking competence by utilizing Communicative Language Teaching, which is favoured by most educators but hard to adopt successfully in the private sector.

Reading target language literature benefits learners, but finding a balance between what we are required to teach and what really interests both teachers and learners is not always easy; consequently, the educational conscience and practical situation may sometimes make the teachers torn between the two. Nonetheless, much curriculum development, according to Stern (1992), appropriately occurs at the classroom level and is in the hands of individual teachers. Hence, this dissertation will investigate giving an experimental literary class to a proposed group of learners. In order to fully understand the problems in the current syllabus of Han-Mei L.I., I will outline the content and teaching and learning issues. Problems about the teaching methodology, Grammar-Translation approach, and the impact of exam backwash will be indicated and discussed. In addition, the ineffective grammatical-based textbook and teachers' ability in teaching speaking will be also scrutinized.

1.1 Teaching situation at Han-Mei Language Institute

English in Taiwan is taught as a compulsory subject in schools from primary to

college and is considered the most important foreign language in the school system and in real-life situations. To be proficient in English is also required by the majority of people because it has become a successful symbol for multidimensional purposes, especially in a study environment like Taiwan, where exam results of English are very competitive and inevitably become a means to further study. Hence, in order to promote English competence and to gain the best scores at school, students usually do extra study after school at a private sector school such as my working place, Han-Mei Language Institute.

At Han-Mei, my target learners are teenagers aged around 15-16. They usually put in an extra effort up to 90 minutes a day and two days a week in the evening after their regular classes in order to get high marks in their daily tests and term exams in schools. Generally speaking, what students learn at Han-Mei is not only the same texts in their school course books but also technique skills in doing a variety of vocabulary, grammar, reading and translation practices. Often beside regular teaching hours, students have to spend another 30 minutes taking simulation tests. Teaching at Han-Mei, my responsibility is to do more detailed analysis about vocabularies, phrases, and grammar rules in the texts and further classify them to help students memorize them easily. Although the skills seem mechanical, learners do benefit from the technique exercises in dealing with tests because of the belief 'Practice makes perfect.'

1.2 Problems of Grammar-Translation approach and exam backwash

The English programme at Han-Mei is based on a grammatical syllabus, and stresses how to enhance learners' abilities in decoded reading, sentence making and Chinese-English-Chinese translation. Generally speaking, the Grammar-Translation method, which approaches a language through a detailed analysis of its grammar rules, and application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language (Stern, 1983:455), is adopted by the majority of teachers at Han-Mei. With this approach, students are first required to memorize vocabulary,

They should be able to translate sentences and texts from Chinese to English and vice versa. There is no denying that this teaching is effective in some ways; for example, it requires students to be familiar with reading texts and grammar rules, and raises their exam scores. However, this unidimensional teaching approach is in fact single purpose and has a restricted focus.

Because of the teacher-centred method, learners at Han-Mei usually lack opportunities for listening practice and classroom interaction. Furthermore, English teaching in Taiwan is usually test-oriented, a situation which Brown (1995:117) describes as 'teach[ing] to the test.' This is particularly true in Taiwan, since the *Basic Achievement Test (BAT),* which is an entrance exam for attending senior high schools, focuses only on testing learners' linguistic ability, such as vocabulary, grammar rules and reading comprehension but not students' aural and oral ability. Hence, the backwash effect has led to a situation where learners' communicative competence in interacting with the teacher and each other is ignored.

1.3 Problems of teachers' ability and beliefs in teaching communicative skills

In Taiwan, English in most schools is taught in an EFL context. In fact, English language teachers and students either share the same mother tongue, Taiwanese, or are proficient in one common language, Mandarin. In such a situation, to what extent can students see the relevance of English for communication? Often, it is taken as no more than a subject to be studied and passed in an examination. Furthermore, learners' speaking competence is exclusive of the proficiency requirement in the teaching situation for several reasons. First, English classes are often teacher-centred and speaking activities are regarded as time-wasting. Second, some teachers are not confident or not qualified to teach speaking. Third, teachers focus too much on building up learners' linguistic ability in vocabulary, grammar and reading, which give students direct assistance in coping with examinations.

Under these circumstances, learners' oral proficiency is neglected, untrained and

insufficient for they are not used to talking in the target language and seem hesitant to speak in class even when they are given opportunities to do oral practices. Examples of this would be reading vocabulary lists or model dialogue aloud, answering 'WH' questions from the text, sentence structure drills and repetition from the textbooks. Despite the fact that those activities can help learners to vocalize the sounds of English and to be familiar with English structures, learners are not really involved in real-world communication and interaction.

Hammerly (1991:139) indicates that audio-oral skills are needed for 80-90% of all communication. Weissberg (1988, cited in Lan, 1994:51) also recognises the role of *input* in second language acquisition and states, 'there is a growing recognition that students' *oral output* may also be instrumental in their acquisition.' Weissberg's *oral output* means speaking in listener and speaker interactions. Language is for communication. If one learns a language without experiencing the satisfaction of speaking it, there will be a distance between the learner and the language, and this can be a major barrier to developing general proficiency. (ibid.)

Due to the lack of opportunities to interact with the teacher and with each other, students are gradually getting used to learning by hearing and writing but not speaking. Consequently, they tend to be passive learners who are not interested in speaking English in class. This made me aware of the need to seek an alternative approach, *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)*, to develop my target learners' speaking competence. Despite the fact that CLT is not based on separate skills but rather on a continuous process of communication and negotiation in the target language' (Dubin, 1986:36), my main concern is to exploit it to develop my target learners' aural and oral competency for which they do not have sufficient input in and out of class.

1.4 Problems of teaching materials at Han-Mei Language Institute

At Han-Mei, the main English teaching material is the *Reference Book-English in detail for junior high school,* referred to as the *Reference Book*. Although CLT is

grammatical arrangement which includes various vocabulary and grammar exercises that are suitable to be taught by the Grammar-Translation Approach. The contents of the *Reference book* focus on grammatical categories such as tenses, articles, singular/plural, complementation, adverbial forms, etc. The book also lists elements to be covered, and contains sentences or passages which Dendrinos (1992) describes as illustrating the grammatical form which constitutes the object of knowledge that allows the teacher to explain or translate before or after class.

The grammar-based materials are commonly regarded as being able to help learners acquire grammar rules much more systematically. There are five books used over the course of three years with ten lessons in each book. Often, reading and writing exercises are included at the end of each lesson, and sometimes speaking practice is provided, but not much. In addition, after every three lessons, there is a practice test that helps learners predict what types of exam items will appear in their school term exams. Besides the students' book, there is another self-access practice book which is based on the grammar rules in each lesson. Learners may do the exercises in class or at home depending on the situation.

Although the editors have put much effort into designing these books, with varied topics including food, family, greetings, information requirement, weather, sports, efficient study, transportation, environment, etc., I find that they are too serious and not always relevant to teenagers' interests. The reason is that learning about culture in Chinese society is usually conservative and the topic selection therefore tends to be canonical. In addition, the language in the texts is rigid, bookish, and artificial with grammar rules overemphasized. Sometimes, in order to introduce a specific grammatical rule such as 'tag-question', the dialogue inside a text will cooperate with the 'tag-question' which has been put purposefully. Actually, the reading texts are unnatural and somehow remote to learners' real lives. Accordingly, both learners and teachers often feel bored by the dull teaching materials.

The *Reference Book* lacks authentic literary texts, which can be an instrument to introduce the target culture, increase learners' interest and promote personal growth through language teaching. Indeed, the cultural dimension, affective factor, personal

materials. They will be a means to maintain learners' motivation. Hedge (2000:38) indicates that 'it is commonplace for materials published in a particular English-speaking culture to use that culture as a setting for stories and dialogues. One of the reasons often given for this is the link between language and culture, a link expressed in discussions on the nature of language.' It is possible that teaching authentic literary texts such as short stories, poetry, and plays may allow learners to be involved in natural languages, widen their cultural horizons, and increase understanding of other people and ways of their life. By using appropriate literary texts, such as poems, as a teaching medium, I will be able to do experimental lessons to promote students' multidimensional competence in communicative skills, culture involvement and language development.

1.5 The role of literature in the EFL programme in Taiwan

Literature teaching in Taiwan, except some art or culture faculties at the university level, is not commonly advocated. This is because of its linguistic difficulty and complexity and the cultural remoteness of the texts. Chuang (1988) argues that the main reason literature is neglected in Taiwan is because it is seldom included in the college entrance examination and so is not in the Basic Achievement Test (BAT). The test-oriented educational conception has therefore resulted in the neglect of literary texts in the majority of teaching materials for teenage students.

Although sometimes there is a poem or a prose passage included in a textbook, they are usually put into optional lessons which may or may not be taught depending on the time available. In fact, the majority of teachers tend to ignore literary texts because of their constraints in completing a syllabus. If the literary text is ever used, it is usually taught by focusing on explaining the text and doing mechanistic reading or writing exercises but is rarely used as a medium to encourage learners to interact with the text and express their feelings. Accordingly, learners themselves may not be interested in reading or encountering literature texts in such a 'learn by rote' style. (Talif & Jayakaran, 1994)

1.6 Using poetry to develop oral skills

Teaching poetry may be regarded as inappropriate for a structural approach which focuses on the acquisition of grammatical structures. However, proponents aim to utilize it as the basis of classroom activities by the communicative approach because students benefit from the use of four skills of language. Lazar (1994) suggests that learners need to move beyond an understanding of the language which simply focuses on individual words or sentences. Instead, they need to expand their overall language awareness. In addition, by exploiting tasks and activities, learners are allowed to engage and interact with the text and are encouraged to express their opinions and personal experiences related to it. Sithamparam (1991:61) states that 'While an analysis of the poem may be useful, what is important is the students' response to it.' The strong response and memorable intensity may motivate further reading of poetry in the foreign language.

At Han-Mei, when possible, I have introduced poetry as an experiment to test learners' reactions. Because the selected poem was very easy to access, I merely explained some new words, and asked learners to discuss the meaning and its theme by themselves in groups. When some of the students were required to tell their opinions about the poem, they tended to provide ideas that sounded ridiculous, but everyone felt happy and laughed a lot. I later discovered that the learners were satisfied to experience the different text and had very positive reactions to this temporary release from the pressure of stressful exams, in the form of tasks like pair work or group discussion which encourage them to talk freely. This triggers my motivation to use poetry by Communicative Language Teaching, to allow my target learners to be exposed to literary texts and to develop their oral competence with integrated teaching skills.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Teaching literature in the language classroom

2.1.1 The benefits of learning literature

In the early part of the twentieth century, the central role of literature was carried over into TESL/TEFL. Literature, as Holten (1997, cited in Hess 2003:19) tells us, is 'a quintessential language content' and it is possibly the only text written for the primary purpose of reading enjoyment. An appropriate literate text with an interesting theme may stimulate learners' interests in discovering the world of literature, particularly a topic which is relevant to learners' daily lives or concerns. Literature is sometimes regarded as any form of art that involves communication of some type of meaning, through a particular medium. (Talif, 1992) Reading target-language literature benefits foreign language learners. Not only does it give practice in the pragmatic contextualization of linguistic expression but it also strengthens integrative motivation. (Rönnqvist & Sell 1994) Through literature such as novels, short stories, role-plays, and poems, learners are exposed to the real context of the target language.

There are some reasons contributed by different proponents (Duff & Malay, 1990; Lazar, 1993; Collie & Slater, 1987) in favour of literature teaching for it allows learners to exploit valuable authentic and motivated materials, reinforce language acquisition, expand their language awareness, develop their interpretative abilities, access and enrich cultural background, and become a whole person. Carter and Long (1991) use three models— the *Culture Model*, the *Language Model*, and the *Personal Growth Model*—as reasons and purposes for the teaching of literature and they are related to specific pedagogic practices. Primarily, literature can help realize wider goals.

The Cultural Model
Teaching literature with the *Cultural Model* stresses that the value of literature is to provide the students input in the form of 'accumulated wisdom'. Carter and Long (1991:2) argue that literature has addressed 'the most significant ideas and sentiments

of human beings.' Teaching literature is a means to link students with a range of expressions which have universal values over a long period of time. Carter and Long further profess that a literature curriculum based on the cultural model would transport learners into the realm of another culture and this would enable them to understand, appreciate and respect different cultures. In addition, learners' motivation to indulge in the study of humanities would be also provided.

The Language Model

In relation to the *Language Model*, Carter and Long state that one of the main reasons for a teacher's orientation towards a language model for teaching literature is to put students in touch with some of the more subtle and varied creative uses of the language. In terms of language development, there is much to be gained from exposure to such language; however, a main impulse of language-centred literature teaching is to help students find ways into a text in a methodical way, and to do so by themselves. Talif & Jayakaran (1994) explain that literature can be used to consolidate language skills taught in the classroom because the language of the ESL classroom is too rigid, artificial, and contrived. Although it has been criticized that manipulating literature to serve as purposes to language teaching can make literature mechanistic, proponents of this model argue that literature and language should complement one another and language should be treated as mother to this child called 'literature'.

The Personal Growth Model

The *Personal Growth Model* of literature teaching is student centred. It helps students achieve an engagement with the reading of literary texts. This engagement should not be measured in terms of passing examinations in literature. Teaching literature in terms of this model is rewarding because it results from 'learning how to appreciate and evaluate complex cultural artefacts; it is fulfilling because it is stimulated by understanding of our society and culture and of ourselves as we function within that society and culture.' 'Helping students to read literature more effectively is helping them to grow as individuals as well as in their relationships with the people and society around them.' In order to achieve this goal, the teacher should select texts which learners can respond to and participate with imaginatively. The role of the

continuing growth of understanding' in his students. (Carter and Long, 1991:3)

Of the three models discussed above, I will focus on the *Cultural Model* and the *Personal Growth Model*. The reason is because cultural issues are usually insufficiently provided in learners' textbooks and the *Personal Growth Model* will allow me to create topics which will not only be relevant to teenagers' concerns but also enable them to grow as individuals and build up self-identity through literature reading.

2.1.2 Using poetry in the language classroom

'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge –it is as immortal as the heart of man.'

(Wordsworth)

Traditionally, literature is defined by genre, such as novels, plays, short stories, poetry, essays, etc. Poetry, like other genres, serves not only as a model of language but as a springboard for the pedagogical function of teaching integrated skills. (Sithamparam, 1991) Coleridge defined poetry as the 'best words in the best order' and learners will be aware of the importance of the order, arrangement or even the rhyme and rhythm. (Cass, 1984) A carefully selected poem of a suitable length, with an interesting theme as well as emphasis on the vital areas of stress, rhythm and similarities of sound can serve not only as language learning but also as a source of enjoyment for both teacher and learners.

Hess (2003:19) indicates that 'reading poetry gives us a concentrated version of a parallel life and a poem can be used as a vehicle for thought, and as an instrument for shaping language.' When we read a poem, understand and interpret it, we learn language through the expansion of our experience with a large human reality. Collie & Slater (1987:226) point out that 'Reading poetry enables the learner to experience the power of language outside the strait-jacket of more standard written sentence structure and lexis.' Using poetry in the classroom can lead naturally to freer, creative written expression which is distinguished from learners' course reading contexts.

2.1.3 Specific features of poetry

The use of words in a poem is particularly concise and precise which makes it distinctive from other literary texts. Lazar (1993:96) points out that 'poetry does have some fairly distinctive features, which differentiate it from other discourse.' Poetry reorganises syntax, invents its own vocabulary, freely mixes registers and creates its own punctuation. In addition, it draws creatively on a full range of archaisms and dialects, and generates vivid new metaphors as well as patterns, sounds and ordered rhythms. (ibid: 98) Maley & Moulding (1985:136) also point out that poems make use of a variety of linguistic devices which can be found in ordinary language, but are more frequent in poetry. They include rhyme; the repetition of rhythm; the repetition of initial consonants; inversion of grammatical patterns; the use of figurative language in the form of similes, metaphors, and personification; the use of semantic ellipsis and unusual collocations; and the juxtaposition of unfamiliar elements and conventions about the appearance of a poem on a page. The effect of those features is to distil and heighten the meaning of the message. This is usually achieved more economically in poetry than in other texts.

2.1.4 Specific linguistic device of poetry in language teaching

Some specific linguistic devices of poetry are effective language teaching resources. First, there is length. Many poems are well-suited to a single classroom lesson because they have the advantage of being short. (Collie & Slater, 1987) A carefully selected poem of a suitable length can be used as supplementary material to compliment formal reading texts without taking up much time. The second is the rhythm. 'Poetry is thought expressed in rhythm.' Soars (2000:3) indicates that 'the rhythm is the way the poet's personality comes into the poem. It is the way the poet chooses the words and arranges them.' Much of the image of poetry lies in this rhythm. Take the poem *The Road Not Taken*, for example. In the end of the poem, Robert Frost ends the poem with the word 'difference.' The different rhythm implies its differentiation from other stanzas. This poetic device will allow us to generate ideas associated with the poem and imagine the feelings of the poet. Third, there is the

repetition of words and sentence structures. Sithamparam (1991) points out that the repetition of poetry enables students to pick up language patterns and provides language practice without the accompanying boredom of a drill. Fourth, the use of words, as we realize, have connotations and associations as well as denotations, and can operate at many levels. Exposure to poetry can lead students to view the world around them with new eyes. (ibid.) Other features like specific syntax, semantic image, rhyme, simile, metaphor, etc., all make poetry useful for discussions in the classroom.

It is useful to help our students identify and benefit from these features, for this will enable them to grapple with certain problems they may encounter. However, while an analysis of poems may be useful, what is most important is the student's response to it. The strategies used to teach a poem should allow the student to 'engage' with the poem personally. The most important issue is the learners' feelings and personal interpretation of the poem, not the teacher's analysis and interpretation. (ibid.) To achieve this, learners should be encouraged to interact with the text and express their personal response as well as to explore their own experiences in relation to the poem taught. Accordingly, learners' oral competence in expressing their thoughts and negotiating meaning will need to be trained. This is the main purpose and discussion of this dissertation.

2.1.5 Possible channels for approaching poetry

There are six possible channels which Maley & Duff (1989:17) suggest for establishing a mindset which will facilitate access to poems and bring students to think about themes of the poems they are to read. Those channels are through pictures, through the personal reactions of students, such as their memories, through recordings, through texts, through drama and role-play and through writing. Not only do they allow students time to activate areas of their personal experience which the poem is to deal with but it also affords them valuable opportunities for interaction with each other. Although teachers will have to spend time preparing lessons based on these channels, this work will allow them to develop their own techniques and skills. Some of the channels will be adopted in my experimental lessons and will be

discussed in Chapter 3.

2.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

2.2.1 The background theory of CLT

Over the past decade, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been the dominant 'theoretical model' in English language teaching in Taiwan. From instructional materials to teacher training, the principles of CLT are largely treated as the most effective approach due to their ability to support teaching for communicative ability. Even though it is not as easily adopted in practical teaching situations, which are test-oriented and teacher-centred in both public and private high schools, CLT is still highly recommended by the majority of educators. CLT was established in Britain around 1980. It is also called the Communicative Approach or Notional-Functional approach. (Richards & Rodgers, 1986)

The underlying theory of the CLT approach is 'communicative competence.' Hymes (1971, cited in Rogers, 1976:15) explains that 'a normal child acquires a knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate and acquires competence to know when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what matter.' He further states that 'a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.' Canale (in Richards & Schmidt 1983:5) indicates that 'communicative competence was understood as the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication.' He argues that 'Knowledge refers to what one knows about the language and about other aspects of communicative language use,' while 'skill refers to how well one can perform this knowledge in actual communication.' He further explains that there are four dimensions of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity.

which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction. *Discourse competence* refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. *Strategic competence* refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. (Richards & Rodgers 1986:71)

Generally speaking, my target learners are not bad at grammatical rules and discourse elements in dealing with reading or basic writing exercises. However, their *Sociolinguistic Competence* and *Strategic Competence* often fall behind the other two areas because they lack opportunities to do the real communicative practice and discussion which can help them share their ideas, negotiate meanings and interact with each other in and out of class. Therefore, even though they do have language knowledge, they are unable to apply it in real world situations. Larsen-Freeman (1986) explains that although students have knowledge of the target language's forms, meanings and functions, if they cannot apply them in negotiation meaning, it is still inadequate. In learning situations, students do not simply learn linguistic structures and grammar rules, but have to learn how to use the language properly. Littlewood (1981) states that one of the most characteristic features of CLT is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language. In opposition to the Grammar-Translation and Audio-lingual methods, CLT emphasizes communicative activities that involve the real use of language in daily life situations. The real use of language will enable learners to manipulate the target language effectively. This is why I am using its central ideas in my teaching situation.

2.2.2 Principles of CLT

2.2.2.1 The aims of CLT

Richards & Rodgers (1986:66) indicate that the aims of Communicative Language Teaching is to 'make communicative competence the goal of language teaching' and to 'develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge

the interdependence of language and communication.' Larsen-Freeman (1986:131) explains that 'Communicative competence involves being able to use the language appropriate to a given social context.' To have this, students need to know different forms to perform a variety of functions, and they must be able to choose appropriate forms, given the social context and the roles of the interlocutors. In addition, they should be able to negotiate meanings with their interlocutors. Richards & Rodgers (ibid.) further state that the primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication. In other words, students need to use what they learn in order to express their ideas, and teachers should provide situations for students to practice and discuss in order to make them understand that learning a language is to use the language.

2.2.2.2 The roles of the teacher

Byrne (1986:2) notes that in speaking practice, 'it is the students' turn to do most of the talking.' The teachers are 'like the skilful conductor of an orchestra, giving each of the performers a chance to participate and monitoring their performance to see that it is satisfactory.' Schollaert (undated) points out that the communicative classroom is no longer teacher-centred as it was in audiolingual days, when the teacher took on a part very much like that of an orchestra conductor. The communicative class is really a kind of sociological unit. Teachers in communicative classrooms assume several roles. Littlewood (1981:19) says that in the more creative types of activity, teachers should avoid unnecessary intervention because this may prevent learners from becoming involved with the activity and developing their communicative skills. He further states that the teachers' function becomes less dominant, but no less important in some situations. For example**:**

*   The teacher is a needs analyst who analyzes the situation with students personally and comes to know the students' learning style, learning assets, and learning goals. Richards & Rodgers (1986:78) indicate that 'The CLT teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs.' According to needs analysis, the teacher is expected to plan group and individual instruction that responds to the learners' needs.

*   The teacher can be also a language advisor if learners are unable to cope with

other, the teacher can help to solve their disagreement. In short, the teacher is a source of guidance and help. His presence may provide important psychological support for many learners.

* The teacher can be a monitor while learners are performing. Galloway (1993) points out that teachers set up the exercise, but because the students' performance is the goal, teachers therefore must step back and observe, sometimes acting as referee or monitor. They can observe learners' weaknesses and strengths, then depending on the situation give assistance using their weaknesses as signs of learning needs.

* Larsen-Freeman (1986:131) points out that the teacher is 'a manager of classroom activities. In this role, one of his major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication.' A classroom during a communicative activity is far from quiet; therefore, the teacher has to be aware of classroom management issues.

* On some occasions, teachers may take part in activities. Klippel (1984:8) argues that sometimes the teacher has to decide whether to join in the activity as a 'co-communicator', (Littlewood, 1981) which may be necessary when doing pair work with an odd number of students, or remain in the background to help and observe. If the teacher joins the activities the psychological distance may be reduced when students get to know their teacher better.

* Teachers may find themselves talking less and listening more, becoming active facilitators of their students' learning and facilitating communication in the classroom. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986)

The roles of teachers in Han-Mei are also various but slightly different from the above definitions. English classes in Han-Mei are often teacher-centred, for the teachers have to manage the class discipline and decide what to teach and how students should learn so that they can get high exam scores. Therefore, the teacher is not only a needs analyst but also a class manager who controls and manages class atmosphere. In addition, the teacher is dominant for he does most of the talking in class. In short, the teacher's talking time is greater than the students' talking time. However, the teacher is willing to be an advisor and a consultant to give target learners useful information

could be very challenging, for teachers are expected to teach 'the more the better' and students are not used to speaking English in class. Nevertheless, it is very tempting when using CLT because learners are given more opportunities to express their ideas compared with the method use in a conventional classroom.

2.2.2.3 The roles of the learners

Schollaert (undated) argues that 'CLT emphasizes the process of language learning, rather than the outcome. In this process, the learner functions on two levels: as an individual and as a social being, i.e. in a group.' At both levels Breen and Candlin (1980, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986:77) describe the learners' role within CLT as a negotiator—'between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes.' As a negotiator, therefore, 'the implication for the learner is that he should be contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way.' Richards & Rodgers (ibid.) further indicate that 'learners are expected to interact with each other rather than with the teacher, and correction of errors may be absent or infrequent.' In addition, they are the cooperators rather than individuals for they have to see that unsuccessful communication is a joint responsibility and not the fault of the individual learner.

Larsen-Freeman (1986) notes that students are communicators. They are expected to engage in negotiating meaning actively; therefore, even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete, they should try to understand and make themselves understood. Compared with teachers' role in the CLT classroom, the learners should be more dominant; in other words, the classroom is more student-centred as learners are expected to take some responsibility for their own learning. Because of the increased responsibility to participate, students may find they gain confidence in using the target language. (ibid.)

Puchta and Schratz (1993:1) argue that teenagers are often much less motivated and their goals seem much more distant. In addition, 'teenagers typically have a low

learners' reaction in class is usually passive. When they come to Han-Mei in the evening, they have just finished a fatiguing day of study in their schools. Therefore, most of them prefer to only listen to what the teacher says rather than talk. They are used to learning by listening but not by doing or participating. Furthermore, the lack of speech training may make them confused about what to say and hesitant to start a conversation. In addition, under the limitation of their English competence, even when they have their own ideas it is not easy for them to express those ideas in the target language, let alone to negotiate meaning with others. Teenagers often seek individual identity and self-esteem which sometimes makes them shy and embarrassed when making mistakes. As a result, they tend to keep quiet rather than take risks. To solve these problems, Puchta and Schratz (ibid.) suggest that by linking language teaching more closely to students' everyday experience, it will make the teaching personally relevant and make learning needs and goals more motivating.

2.2.2.4 Some characteristics of the teaching/learning process

Information gap, choice, and feedback

Larsen-Freeman (1986:132) notes that the most characteristic element of CLT is that 'everything that is done is done with a communicative intent. Students *use* the language a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks.' There are three features which are included in truly communicative activities. They are *information gap, choice, and feedback.*

Morrow (1981:62) argues that 'an *information gap* exercise means that one student must be in a position to tell another something that the second does not already know.' He explains 'if one student has the picture of the street scene and the other has a similar picture with some features missing which he must find out from the first student, then the same questions becomes real, meaningful—and communication.' The concept of information gap seems to be one of the most fundamental in the whole area of communicative teaching and the teachers should help by setting out situations with such a gap and thus trigger learners' motivations to bridge these gaps in appropriate ways. Larsen-Freeman (1986:132) points out that 'in communication, the speaker has a *choice* of what she will say and how she will say it.' The last feature of

that real communication should have purpose. Because of this, the speaker is able to know if her/his purpose has been achieved based upon the information she/he receives from the listener. If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker with such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative.

At Han-Mei, learners are sometimes given the chance to do oral drills, but the main purpose is to practice grammatical rules and sentence structures. Drills could be very useful for students to memorize language patterns in making oral sentences or doing writing. Nevertheless, they are passive to express their ideas and communicate in class, let alone to give feedback. I am sure that they are able to speak out and to communicate with each other. Those abilities are merely untrained and ignored. Accordingly, it is crucial to create speaking opportunities for them.

Authentic materials

The use of authentic materials is another characteristic of Communicative Language Teaching. Larsen-Freeman (ibid.) indicates that authentic materials are desirable in order to give students an opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used by native speakers. In order to help learners transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world and to expose them to natural language in a variety of situations, authentic language materials are highly advocated by CLT supporters. There are various authentic materials, such as a copy of a genuine newspaper article, a live radio or TV broadcast, a menu, a literary text, etc., which expose students to examples of natural language rather than material which has been written for language teaching purposes. (Nolasco & Arthur, 1988) However, Larsen-Freeman (1986:136) argues that it is less important that the materials are genuine than 'they are used authentically.' Accordingly, I would like to choose appropriate poems as a way to enable learners to be exposed to genuine communication tasks.

2.2.3 Methodological framework of CLT

2.2.3.1 Types of communicative activities

Generally speaking, in CLT, according to the aspects of conversational management

and production, the exercises and activity types are classified into *pre-communicative activities* and *communicative activities*. Littlewood (1981:86) uses the diagram below to make it clear:

                        Structure activities
     Pre-communicative activities   Quasi-
                                                    communicative activities

                 Functional communicative activities
     Communicative activities
                 Social interaction activities
                        (Littlewood, 1981:86)
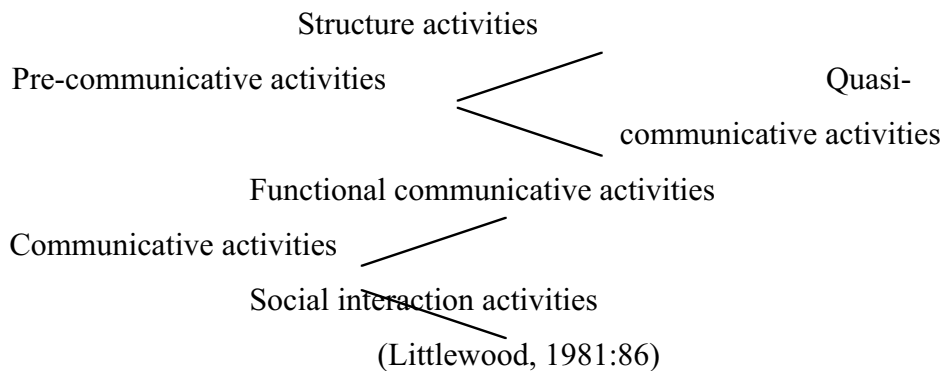
He explains that through pre-communicative activities, the teacher isolates specific elements of knowledge or skill which compose communicative ability, and provides the learner with opportunities to practise them separately. By doing this, learners are trained to get the part-skills of communication. Richards (1994:82) gives a simpler explanation for pre-communicative activities, which are those that deal with the controlled practice of formal aspects of conversation, including drills, dialogues, and other exercises where little learner input is required. In communicative activities, the learner has to activate and integrate his pre-communicative knowledge and skills, in order to use them for the communication of meaning. Learners are therefore engaged in practicing the total skill of communication.

The functional communicative activities and social-interactional activities are similar to Brown and Yule's (1983) transactional and interactional uses of conversation, and will be discussed later. The aims of the pre-communicative activities are to give learners fluent control over linguistic forms, while the communicative activities aim to enable learners to increase their skills in starting from an intended meaning, selecting suitable language forms from the total repertoire, and producing fluency in talking. (Littlewood, 1981)

2.2.3.2 Some characteristics of communicative activities

Function versus forms
In CLT, Larsen-Freeman (1986) indicates that language functions are emphasized over forms. In doing activities, a variety of forms are introduced for each function.

Only the simpler forms would be presented at first, but as students get more proficient in the target language, the functions are reintroduced and more complex forms are learned. For example, when making requests, beginning students might practice 'Would you …?' and 'Could you…?' Students at higher levels might learn 'I wonder if you would mind…?'

Skill-getting versus skill-using
In general, it is not easy to bridge learners' linguistic competence and communicative competence in the classroom environment, for genuine communication is elusive. (Revell, 1979) Therefore, the function of activities in the CLT classroom is to bridge the gap between them and allow the skill-getting to be achieved by skill-using. In achieving this, Revell (ibid.) suggests activities like information gap, jigsaw reading and listening, and role-play that allow students to be 'playing a part' in situations which are not predictable.

Fluency versus accuracy
The main goal in teaching speaking will be *oral fluency*. Bryne (1986:9) defines it as 'the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably accurately and without too much hesitation.' Frequent pauses may cause breakdowns in communication. '*Accuracy* refers to the use of correct forms where utterances do not contain errors affecting the phonological, syntactic, semantic or discourse features of a language.' Nolasco & Arthur (1988:1) note that 'Fluency is a central concept in CLT.' It refers to language which can be used naturally, no matter whether it is native-speaker-like language comprehension or production. Fluency activities will help learners in situations where they must use all the language resources they have as effectively as possible. Brumfit (1984:81) argues that 'fluency activities will provide opportunities for students to produce and understand tokens of the language which they may have been made aware of, or even learnt, during accuracy activities.' Nolasco & Arthur (1981) note that activities which help develop fluency have features as follows:

* Students get the chance to be creative and express their own attitudes, feeling, emotions, fears etc.
* Students concentrate on 'what' they are saying (or writing) rather than 'how' they are saying (or writing) it. (i.e. the focus is on the meaning of

* Students get practice in adjusting to the demands of the situation—in speech this means that the activity must allow for the improvising, paraphrasing, self-correction and unpredictability that is typical of natural language use outside the classroom.

(Nolasco & Arthur, 1981:2)

Since communicative competence is the goal of the teaching, what if students make mistakes? In recent years, there have been some arguments which point out that if learners' mistakes are not corrected immediately, those mistakes will become habits and hard to get rid of. (Revell, 1979) The arguments are relevant to my teaching situation, in particular when doing grammatical drills in class. It is crucial that learners' mistakes should be corrected at once. Otherwise, once the wrong patterns and rules become fixed in students' minds, it will result in mistakes and failure in their testing. Accordingly, it is teachers' responsibility to prevent such things from happening, and accuracy is therefore much more emphasized than fluency. However, if the teacher keeps correcting their mistakes, students will be anxious and even terrified to speak. Given this circumstance, it will be hard for them to achieve fluency in classroom practice. This therefore makes me aware of the need to find a balance between the two concepts.

If learners make errors during speaking, the errors are tolerated in order to encourage fluency. However, it does not mean that errors are ignored and the teacher may give '*Feedback tasks*' (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987:118) which help learners to be aware of areas in which they have to improve.

2.3 Rationale for teaching conversation speaking

2.3.1 Background information of teaching speaking in EFL classroom

In the last two decades, speaking has begun to emerge as a branch of teaching, learning and testing in its own right, rarely focusing on the production of spoken discourse. Bygate (In Cater & Nanun 2001:14) indicates that there are three reasons

for this. Firstly, it is tradition. Grammar-translation approaches to language teaching still have a huge influence in language teaching. Secondly, there is the impact of technology. Before the mid-1970s, tape-recording was insufficient to enable the widespread study of speech; therefore, it led to a focus on teaching the written language rather than the spoken language. The third reason is 'exploitation' because teaching speaking has been regarded as 'a special medium for providing language input, memorization practice and habit-formation.' (Bygate, ibid.) Later, most of the speaking courses in teaching oral skills tended to limit their skills to pronunciation. Although during World War_, Audio-lingualism first offered a clear perspective on the teaching of oral skills, it neglected the relationship between language and meaning and failed to provide a social context within which the formal feature of language could be associated with functional aspects. After this, as Communicative Language Teaching developed, teachers began to be concerned that students should not only practise speaking in a controlled way in order to produce accurate pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure, but should practise using these features more freely in communication. Since this time, accuracy and fluency-based activities have become more common. (Hedge, 2000:261)

EFL teachers often assume that conversation in the language classroom involves nothing more than giving learners practice in grammar and vocabulary skills. Therefore, the conversational class may include mechanical drills for task-based problem-solving activities. (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987:5) Although these types of activity help students develop the skills of taking part in conversation, if we want to teach conversation well, we need to know something about what native speakers do when they have conversations.

2.3.2 The definition of conversation

Nolasco & Arthur (1987) note that people sometimes use the term 'conversation' to mean any spoken encounter or interaction. Conversation refers to a time when two or more people have the right to talk or listen without having to follow a fixed schedule, such as an agenda. In a conversation, everyone can have something to say and anyone can speak at any time. In everyday life conversation is sometimes referred to as 'chat'

and 'discussion,' and this will be the main focus of this dissertation.

2.3.3 The purposes of conversation

There are two purposes in conversation. One is information-transferring, which Brown & Yale (1983:13) call 'the *transactional* function of language.' This is message-oriented and its purpose is to clearly convey or exchange information. The other is called '*interactional* function of language' which is primarily listener-oriented and aims to establish and maintain social relations. Richards (1994:68) explains that 'in transactional uses of conversation the primary focus is on the message, whereas interactional uses of conversation focus primarily on the social needs of the participants.' Teaching classroom conversation and listening comprehension are fundamentally affected by the purposes of both types of language.

2.3.4 The rules and procedures of conversation

Hedge (2000:262) argues that there are many aspects of conversation. 'Studies of native speaker conversation have provided us with insights into what it involves in terms of managing interaction.' For example, these include skills relating to opening and closing conversation, the sharing of time, taking turns, attending to and responding to one's interlocutor, and interrupting. If learners are not able to manipulate these skills, then the conversation can break down. In conversation, some rules and procedures govern face-to-face encounters. Some of the specific rules that are important to language learners will be discussed as follows:

Topics
Richards (1994:71) states that 'the way topics are selected for discussion within conversation and the strategies speakers use to introduce, develop, or change topics within conversations constitute another important dimension of conversational management.' Native speakers are very aware of what they should and should not talk about with specific categories of people in their own language. What kind of topics are tellable depend heavily on cultural norms. (Richards & Schmidt, 1983) In conversation class, topics vary according to cultures. In conversational classes in

Taiwan, some topics are considered inappropriate for teenagers, including those relating to 'suicide,' 'death', 'politics' 'sex' and 'drugs.' Therefore, one thing that both teachers and students need to bear in mind is that they need to develop a sense of 'taboo' subjects if they are to avoid offence.

Adjacency

'Adjacency pairs are utterances produced by two successive speakers such that the second utterance is identified as related to the first as an expected follow-up. The two form a pair, the first utterance constituting a *first pair part* and the next utterance constituting a *second pair part*.' (Richards & Schmidt, 1983) Some examples of adjacency pairs are:

>   **A:** Hello!   (Greeting-Greeting)
>
>   **B:** Hi!
>
>   **A:** Dinner's ready!   (Call-Answer)
>
>   **B:** Coming.
>
>   **A:** Is this yours?   (Question-Answer)
>
>   **B:** No.

In some cases we can predict the second part of a pair from the first, while in other cases there are a variety of options. (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987:9) Teachers need to think about ways of developing appropriate second parts to adjacency pairs from the start. For instance, one of the drills in a textbook provides a pattern for greeting:

>   **A:** How are you?
>
>   **B:** Fine, thank you. And you?

Although there are plenty of replies for a greeting, such as 'Not bad.' 'It couldn't be better.' or 'Terrible!', learners in Taiwan are usually provided with an answer such as **B,** and are seldom given alternatives.

Turn taking

Conversation is a reciprocal activity. Therefore, a speaker does not say everything he/she wants to say in a single utterance. Conversation involves two or more people. Richards & Schmidt (1983:141) indicate that 'the distribution of talking among the participants is not merely random. It is governed by turn-taking norms, conventions which determine who talks, when, and for how long.' In order to make conversation work smoothly, Nolasco & Arthur (1987) argue that all participants have to be aware

with a contribution which fits the direction in which the conversation is moving. The basic rule of conversation is that only one person speaks at a time and he/she may choose the next speaker through the use of an adjacency pair. If a speaker is unable to manage turn taking or does not contribute to a conversation, he will receive negative evaluations.

As teachers, we have to train our students to be able to take turn when someone is about to finish speaking. Richards (1994) proposes three strategies for taking a turn, holding a turn and relinquishing the turn. The first involves ways of entering into a conversation or taking over the role of speaker. The second involves indicating that one has more to say; for example using 'first', or 'then.' The third is devices used to bring the other person(s) into the conversation, such as tag endings like 'isn't it?' and 'can't we?' In addition, interruption may be not easy depending on the learners' culture and their first language. As a result, students need to acquire the politeness phrases which make interruption acceptable in a conversation in English. (Hedge, 2000)

Repair

'The process of conversation involves monitoring to ensure that intended messages have been communicated and understood, and involves correction of unsuccessful attempts where necessary.' (Richards & Schmidt, 1983:147) Bygate (1987) defines the meaning of *repair* as correction by a speaker of his own (*self-repairs*) or an interlocutor's production mistakes (*other repairs*). The examples are as follows:

> Self-repair: Is a dollar all right or will I need more than that for the
> p…to cover the postage?
> Other repair: **A:** She married that guy from Australia…what was his
> name ?…Wilson…Williams?
> **B:** Don Wilson.
> **A:** Yeah, Don Wilson.
>
> (Richards & Schmidt, 1983:147)

The other technique is *echoing*. This happens when the non-native speaker repeats a word or phrase that is not understood and the interlocutor explains it or replaces it

with an easier item, such as:

> **NS:** We're going to try some haggis.
>
> **NNS:** Hagg…ees…?
>
> **NS:**   Haggis! The famous Scottish food.

Dealing with difficulty

When native or non-native speakers do not know a word or cannot remember it, they may use some strategies to resolve the difficulty they are encountering. The strategies that Faerch and Kasper propose include *achievement strategy* and *reduction strategy*. (cited in Bygate, 1987) Harmer (2001:265) gives a further explanation that *achieving strategies* include *improvising* and *paraphrasing* whereas *reduction strategies* contains *discarding and foreignising*. They are explained as below:

Improvising: speakers sometimes try any words or phrases that they can come up with in the hope that it is about right.

Paraphrasing: speakers sometimes paraphrase when they do not know how to say the words or terms, such as 'He is "the leader" (or father) of this city' as a substitute for the word 'mayor.' Though this will make conversation longer, it helps speakers to express their ideas and encourages them to talk.

Discarding: when the speaker simply cannot find the word for what they want to say, they may discard the thought that they do not know how to express.

Foreignising: when starting a conversation, speakers sometimes choose a word in a language they know well (such as their first language) and 'foreignise' it and they hope this will be equivalent to the meaning they want to express in the foreign language.

As teachers we should encourage achieving strategy more than reduction strategy as a more useful technique.

The rules discussed above represent some of the dimensions of conversational discourse that second language learners need to master. Richards & Schmidt (1983:149) indicate that 'while the learner has intuitively acquired the principles of conversational discourse in his or her own language, conversational competence is

competence which is the focus of much formal language teaching.' The teaching of conversation is a much more basic and comprehensive activity than we assume, and implies more than repeating dialogues. It must focus on strategies of conversational interaction. Therefore, the traditional concern of grammatically correct sentences may not be the only direction to teaching conversation.

2.3.5 Approaches to the teaching of conversation

There are two major approaches to the teaching of conversation in second language programmes. One is the indirect approach, in which conversational competence is seen as the product of engaging learners in conversational interaction. The other is the direct approach, which involves planning a conversation programme around the specific microskills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation. (Richards, 1994)

The indirect approach: teaching conversation through interactive tasks. SLA researchers (e.g., Hatch 1978) have argued that learners acquire language through conversation. Richards (1994) notes that in using conversation to interact with others, learners gradually acquire the competence that underlies the ability to use language. Hatch (cited in Richards, 1994:77) argues that 'One learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed.' In addition, through linguistic and interactional modifications and the adjustments learners receive when engaged in conversation, the grammatical structure of the language is displayed more clearly and made more accessible. Comprehension is assisted and the learner is able to experiment with the internal mechanisms of the language. By the result of the process, learners gradually acquire linguistic competence. Richards (ibid.) concludes that the conversation class should primarily provide opportunities for learners to engage in natural interaction through the use of communicative tasks and activities. Therefore, it is not necessary (or even possible) to teach conversation in any real sense because all the learners need is the provision of opportunities for them to engage in conversational interaction; in other words, the use of pair-work and group-work activities that require learner-to-learner interaction. These tasks are most likely to involve information sharing and negotiation of meaning

rather than the practice of language for its own sake.

Direct approaches: teaching strategies for casual conversation.

The direct approach focuses explicitly on the processes and strategies involved in casual conversation. Richards (ibid.) argues that they are programmes which directly address aspects of conversation as strategies for turn-taking, topic control, repair, conversational routines, fluency, and pronunciation, as well as differences between formal and casual conversational styles. Such a programme can begin with preparation of goals, and each goal can be further described in more detail as an objective or set of objectives, according to the level of language proficiency the programme addresses and the specific needs of the learners.

2.3.6 Types of activities in conversation class

When teaching conversation, teachers need to consider which functions of conversation are most relevant to the students' level and needs. Generally speaking, the most general purpose is that the students should be able to use English to give and receive information, collaborate in doing something, and share personal experiences and opinions with a view to building social relationships. In order to encourage students to talk, there are various activities which not only allow students to learn by doing but also give them practice in a pattern of interaction that is as close as possible to what competent native speakers do in real life. There are four basic types of activities that Nolasco & Arthur (1987:13) discuss:

Controlled activities: The use of controlled activities can help students develop confidence as well as the ability to participate and maintain simple, commonly encountered conversations. Controlled activities are various from building out personal security, giving students opportunities to practise English sounds by articulation activities, to dialogue and grammatical structure practice.

Awareness activities: Students should have the awareness to know what native speakers *do* in conversation. Some activities can help to facilitate and promote learners' awareness about the sound of language, the ability to interpret what is being said and so facilitate interaction in the

target language, a feeling for what is appropriate in conversation in order to minimize problems in interaction, and the target culture.

Nolasco & Arthur (1987:51)

Fluency activities: Fluency activities give students practice of using English for communication, provide the experience of using English in real time, offer students the chance to express their own attitudes, emotions and ideas, and provide the opportunity of using the language for a specific purpose. Through the practice of fluency activities, learners are expected to maintain and develop social relationships, exchange information, solve problems in English by cooperation and express ideas and opinions.

Nolasco & Arthur (1987:79)

Feedback tasks: They allow students to reflect on their own performance so that they become aware of areas in which they have to improve. Areas for feedback in a programme aiming at the development of conversational skills include grammar, appropriateness of vocabulary and expressions, fluency, pronunciation, and non-linguistic factors affecting communication.

Nolasco & Arthur (1987:118)

The concepts of controlled activities and awareness activities which Nolasco & Arthur propose are similar and can be categorized into the pre-communicative activities which Littlewood (1981) proposes. The concepts of fluency activities are similar to the conceptions of Littlewood's communicative activities. In addition, the feedback activities could be regarded as post-communicative activities.

The theories discussed above will be the fundamental supports which underpin the following discussion—the methodological experiment in using poetry to develop learners' speaking competence.

Chapter 3 Implementation

3.1 Text selection

According to Maley & Moulding (1985), a carefully selected poem can open up themes that are common to people from all cultural backgrounds. It can also serve as a powerful stimulus to students' own reflective thinking, which will lead to more mature and fruitful group discussion. In order to make English class more motivating, relevant to learners' lives and related to their personal experiences, I have selected two poems to use in class *What has happened to Lulu*, written by Charles Causley, and *Stopping by woods on a snowy evening*, written by Robert Frost. The former describes teenagers' conflicts in holding different beliefs from their parents, and the latter describes a poet's feelings about passing his friend's house on a snowy winter evening.

The following is a brief outline of my experimental lessons. First, the two poems will be taught by utilizing communicative activities and sequenced into pre-activity, communicative activity, and post-activity which will enable learners to do classroom interaction and develop their speaking competency. Then, according to their function, those activities can be categorized into *Controlled*, *Awareness*, *Fluency*, and *Feedback activities* (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987) whose underpinning rationales will be discussed in detail although they may not perfectly cover all the theories indicated in Chapter 2.

3.2 Practice/Activities

Poem: *What has happened to Lulu?*   (See Appendix 1)

Stopping by woods on a snowy evening.

(See Appendix 2)

Level: Pre-intermediate

Age: 15-16

Time: Depends on the time allowed (each poem will take
                               40-50 minutes)

Teacher role: Monitor, facilitator, advisor, manager & consultant

Learner role: Conversational partner, interactor, negotiator,
                               co-operator & communicator

Language skills: Listening comprehension
                               Read the poem and be able to discuss and reply to
                               questions
        Oral expression of their ideas and opinions
        Noting down ideas during discussion

Lesson aims: By the end of the activities, students will have
                               accomplished the following:
        * develop conversational listening skills
                               * communicate verbally and express their opinions
          * develop an acceptable degree of fluency
        * develop transactional and interactional communicative skills
        * develop skills in taking short and long speaking turns
        * develop skills when meeting difficulties, such as repair, improvising
                               and paraphrasing
        * develop skills in the management of interaction,
                                negotiate meaning
                               * share personal experiences and opinions with a
                                view to building social relationships.
                               * collaborate in doing things
                               * appreciate literature through poetry reading
                               * be aware of some specific features of poetry, such
                                as rhyme, rhythm and stress
                               * be aware of different cultures

3.2.1 What has happened to Lulu?

Procedures: Pre-reading, While-reading & Post-reading

<u>**Pre-reading**</u>

Pre-activity: Picture prediction & Brainstorming

Communicative activity: Pair or triads discussion

Post-activity: Reporting

Before teaching the poem, the teacher can pin a big picture of a girl on the blackboard. There is a suitcase in her hand and she seems to be leaving and sad. Then the teacher asks students to look at the picture. The picture can help students predict what they are going to read about, and the theme of the text. If pupils have problems coming up with ideas or with the necessary language, the teacher can give hints by asking questions, such as:

        * 'Why does the girl carry a bag?'

        * 'How old do you think she is?'

        * 'Is she leaving home?'

        * 'Does she look sad, aimless or helpless?'

This type of question-and-answer practice helps learners to produce language which is acceptable as well as to communicate meanings. The teacher can write some words generated from their answers on the blackboard.

An alternative pre-reading activity is brainstorming. To do this, the teacher can write 'run away from home' on the blackboard and asks learners to think about words or phrases which they associate with 'run away from home' by providing questions such as the following:

      'What would make you run away from home?'

      'If you are running away from home, what will you bring with? Why? '

      'Will you leave any message for your parents or family when running
        away? Why? '

      'How will your parents feel, when they know you are running away? Why?'

By brainstorming, students are also encouraged to associate words which are related to the poem by the help of those questions or topics. The learners may think of things they will bring with them, how their parents would feel, etc. The teacher can help them to generate new words from the poem or shape their ideas. Students can be split

into pairs or groups during discussion. After discussion, they are invited to report their words and ideas to the class and the teacher can write them on the blackboard.

While-reading

Pre-activity: Opinion gap

Communicative activity: Group discussion

Post-activity   Reporting

The teacher gives every student a copy of the poem *What has happened to Lulu?* Then, the teacher asks students to read it silently and think about one question: 'What has happened to Lulu?' After reading the poem, students are encouraged to say their ideas about the question. Students may have different opinions about what happened to her. Some may agree that Lulu had a quarrel with her mom and then ran away, while some may guess that Lulu has been kidnapped by someone or died. Other questions will be elicited from the poem, such as why is 'the curtain flapping free', why Lulu's mom turns her head back with tear-drops falling, whether is she sad, angry, or in pain, whether she knows what to do, whether the narrator is younger or older than Lulu, what the 'engine roar' implies, etc.

By those questions students are not only encouraged to make inferences about the poem, but also to express their feelings and exchange ideas with each other. Learners' opinions may be quite different, but they should give reasons about their thoughts and make communication. They can be split into groups with each group discussing one question. After the discussion, they may report their ideas to the whole class. Later, the teacher may ask them if they still have the initial feelings about the poem after discussion, and whether they like the poem, and why or why not.

Post-reading

Pre-activity: Pair discussion

Communicative activity: Dramatic activity

Post-activity   Feedback report & evaluation

The poem can be turned into a drama activity which encourages learners to create a

of Lulu, her mother, her friend, her teacher, and the child. They are:

     * The argument between Lulu and her mom

     * The child asking the mom questions

       * The conversation between Lulu's teacher and her mom

     * The conversation between Lulu and her friend

    * The conversation between the child and Lulu

   * The conversation when Lulu calls her mom a few weeks later

Learners can work in pairs and discuss which setting they would like to use, which role to play, and what they will say. The open-ended situation allows learners to practice language in real life situations. During their discussion and preparation, the teacher can help them to generate vocabulary and related language. Later, groups may be invited to have a performance. During the performance, other students can note down questions or feedback. After it's over, the students have an opportunity to pose questions. In this way, they elicit some relevant vocabulary words and then discuss what language forms are appropriate in dealing with the above six situations. The teacher can also give some feedback written on the blackboard and students can be encouraged to self-evaluate their performance.

3.2.2 Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Procedures: Pre-reading, While-reading & Post-reading

<u>Pre-reading</u>

Pre-activity: Topic prediction by music & sound effects

Communicative activity: Words association

Post-activity   Reporting

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher switches on a piece of peaceful classical music which can include the blowing sound of winter winds. There are slight sounds of harness bells. After fading the music out, the teacher speaks to the whole class and asks whether the music evokes any ideas. Students are encouraged to express what they heard and predict the topic of the poem they are going to read about. The teacher may give some hints like:

* What season do you think it is?

* Is it daytime or at night?

* Can you imagine the temperature?

  * Is it cold, freezing, or snowing?

  * What kinds of sounds did you hear?

  * Where do the sounds of the bell come from?

* Why do the sounds stop?

The learners can generate words associated with the music and from those move on to formulating questions in pairs or groups. This can help them predict the ideas of the poem. Later, they are encouraged to report to the class. The teacher can write their answers on the blackboard and lead them to elicit some new words from the poem.

While-reading

Pre-activity: Listening to the poem recitation

Communicative activity: Pair work & group discussion

Post-activity   Reporting

When learners have some ideas about the poem, the teacher gives everyone a copy of the poem. Later, the teacher switches on an audio cassette with the recitation of the poem. After the recitation, pupils are asked to imagine a picture of woods on a snowy evening. A traveller is passing by, stops for a while to look into the woods, and then leaves. The teacher can ask some questions to prompt the pupils' imagination, such as to imagine the scenery of the poem, the gender of the traveller, the colours of the horse, etc. Pupils are encouraged to describe their mind-pictures to each other. After this, the teacher plays the cassette again. Some questions elicited from the poem are offered to be discussed:

* Why is the narrator passing by? Where is the narrator going?

* Do you think the narrator misses his/her friend? Why?

* Does the narrator feel like visiting his/her friend? Why?

* Can the horse tell that it is a strange place to stop by shaking its bells, or is the
   poet merely imagining it?

* What is the narrator's feeling on that evening? Why?

* What kind of promise does he/she have to keep?

* Does the journey symbolize a kind of responsibility to the narrator?

The pupils are spilt into pairs, and each pair takes two or three questions for discussion. Later, they are required to share their ideas with another pair. The teacher can then move around and offer help. Then, one or more groups are invited to report their ideas to the class. After reporting, the learners are encouraged to ask questions to the reporting groups. Again, the teacher can offer the necessary language help.

Post-reading

Pre-activity: Questionnaire & Sound focusing activity

Communicative activity   Pair work

Post-activity   Reporting

In order to make classroom reading more relevant to learners' experience, a questionnaire will allow them to recall their memories as well as to create opportunities for oral interaction. To do this, the teacher prepares a piece of paper with some questions on it.

Questionnaire
1. Do you keep your promise?   Always _ Usually _ Sometimes _ Seldom _
2. What kind of promise is most important to you?
3. Why do you break your promise? Is it on purpose?
4. How do you feel when you break a promise?
5. Do you think a promise is a responsibility?

Learners can then find a partner and note down their answers. Next, they may compare their notes with another pair and exchange their ideas. In the meantime, the teacher moves around among the different pairs offering advice, answering their questions and facilitating their talking. After several minutes, the learners are encouraged to talk about their own experience or retell their partner's to the whole class. This kind of communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students and gives them an opportunity to know each other further by sharing their experiences.

In order to help pupils be aware of the rhyme, stress and rhythm of the poem, the teacher can play the recording again and require pupils to pay attention to its rhyme, stress and rhythm. To do this, the teacher can first explain what 'rhyme' means to them. Then, the pupils are encouraged to pick up the words having similar sound at the end of lines in this poem; such as the words 'know', 'though' and 'snow' in the first stanza and 'queer', 'near' and 'year' in the second. In addition to rhyme, the teacher further explains the word 'rhythm' to them. There are eight syllables in every line and the rhythm alternates between stressed and unstressed syllables. In order to help pupils understand easily, the teacher can read the poem again and ask them to pay attention to its regular beats. Example of this is from the third stanza of the poem,

> He **gives** his **harn**ess **bells** a **shake**
> To **ask** if **there** is **some** mis**take**
> The **only other sound's** the **sweep**
> Of **easy wind** and **downy flake**

(The words or syllables in bold-face are stressed.)

When pupils hear stressed words or regular beats of the poem, they are encouraged to make stress notes on the poem with a pencil, or alternatively they can clap their hands or tap their feet to feel the rhythm of the poem. Later, they may form groups of three and check the stresses they have marked. The tape will be played again.

3.3 Rationale for methodology

In the above experimental literature class, speaking activities based on the theories discussed in Chapter 2 can be categorized into four basic types: *Controlled, Awareness, Fluency,* and *Feedback activity* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.6). (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987) They will be discussed as follows.

Controlled activity

The controlled activity is also called 'Pre-communicative activity' (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3.1) (Littlewood, 1981) which, Richard (1994) explains, deals with the controlled practice of formal aspects of conversation. This includes words, drills, dialogues, and other exercises where little learner input is required. The function of controlled activity is to help students overcome a psychological barrier and develop confidence before they are prepared to speak in the foreign language. There are two activities that may help students to achieve this and be familiar with vocabulary they may encounter in the poem.

Picture prediction

Maley & Duff (1989) suggest six possible channels for approaching poems (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1.5); one of them is using visual aids, especially pictures. Visual materials can be used for teaching meaning, for cueing responses in intensive practice work, for indicating some of the meanings of a tense form, and for providing the cultural background and setting for dialogues. (Wright, In Morrow, 1981) Using pictures not only suggests the theme of the poems but also allows students to build up a sense of 'schemata.' Schema is important to language teaching because schematic knowledge is an essential component of successful communication as linguistic knowledge. (Widdowson, 1983 cited in Cook, 1997) In the poem *What has happened to Lulu*? when students look at the girl in the picture who is carrying a bag and seems sad, they may use their schematic knowledge to image what has happened to her. In addition, the students should be invited to identify the unknown aspects of the picture; namely, what is implied but not seen. Byrne (1986:82) indicates that the unseen features in a picture will provide a framework for discussion. Besides this, the teacher may lead students to generate some words or ideas so that little learner input is required before doing 'Communicative activities.' (Littlewood,

1981)

Brainstorming

It is a useful strategy to do brainstorming in the communicative teaching situation. Klippel (1984:97) indicates that 'brainstorming increases mental flexibility and encourages original thinking.' Brainstorming about *What has happened to Lulu?* allows participants to generate ideas, words, and phrases which may later appear in the poem. Many learners may have a great deal of passive vocabulary but this may not directly translate into productive capability in the classroom. Brainstorming can activate this and helps learners organize their ideas. (Cullen, 1998) In addition, through the process of discussion and negotiation among participants, learners may have a chance to think creatively. Even though some of students' ideas and words may be inappropriate to the topic and not always usable, at least through the process, students are encouraged to generate words which they learn before moving into practical usage. This activity will make learners' linguistic competence involved in their communicative competence (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.1) and so makes *skill-getting* be achieved by *skill-using* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3.2). (Revell, 1979) Furthermore, asking students to associate some key words in the text makes them aware of the thematic contrasts in the text as well as personalizing the lesson and encouraging them to relate what they have read to their own experience. The learners' role in this activity is as a co-operator rather than an individualist (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.2.3), and if there are words which they are unfamiliar with and don't know how to say, the teacher can be a language advisor and consultant (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.2.2) who offers the necessary help.

Awareness activity

The following two activities are expected to evoke students' awareness of the target culture and the devices of sound, rhyme, and rhythm in the poem *Stopping by woods on a snowy evening.*

Topic prediction by music & sound effect

In addition to visual aids, the use of sound recordings is another channel to access

poems (Maley & Duff, 1989) and can be exploited as basic material for discussion in a literature class (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1.5). Duff & Maley (1990) argue that the sensory aids like touch, vision, hearing, and smell can be utilized for pupils to speak about their personal experience. Also the senses and sensuality are part of the fabric of literature. Before teaching the poem *Stopping by woods on a snowy evening,* the use of music and the sound of winter winds is a powerful stimulus for student engagement precisely because it speaks directly to their emotions and allows them to analyze them. When the music is accompanied by some questions, students in pairs or groups can start doing classroom interaction that covers both the *transactional* and *interactional* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.3) uses of conversation. (Brown & Yale, 1983) Once learners get an imaginary picture of the snowy winter evening of the poem, they may be aware of a different geographic environment that relates to the target culture. This will allow the teacher to teach the poem with the perspective of a culture model (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1.1).

Sound focusing activity

According to Nolasco & Arthur (1987:51), this awareness activity (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.6) can promote learners' ability to 'sound' English by drawing attention to critical elements that can usefully be imitated. Poetry can help us to grasp the rhythm of a language. It consciously makes use of sound patterns to achieve its effects in many ways, such as through rhyme, rhythm, metre, etc. (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1.3 & 2.1.4) Those devices will help enhance our understanding and enjoyment of most poetry. (Maley & Duff, 1990:95) Driving learners' awareness about the rhythm of a poem by utilizing physical responses, such as clapping or tapping, will promote the enjoyment of poetry reading. In addition, listening and marking stresses on the copy of the poem aims to bring out important features of language for the learners that may not be obvious in silent reading, and encourages them to listen more attentively.

<u>Fluency activity</u>

The use of fluency activities (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3.2 & 2.3.6) can help to maintain and develop learners' social relationships, and allow them to

exchange opinions and information, express ideas and co-operate in activities. In the post-reading state of the lesson, there is a fluency activity for each poem which is expected to enable learners to do transactional and interactional (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.3) communication as well as build up fluent speaking competence.

Dramatic activity

Drama or role-play is also a channel that can be exploited to access poems (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1.5). (Maley & Duff, 1989) Dramatic activities, either role-plays or simulations, are very important in CLT, because they give students an opportunity to practice communication in different social contexts and different social roles. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986) Drama activity in the first poem is set up in a less structured way; in other words, although the situation has already been set, learners can choose who they are, what they are talking about, and what they will say. This kind of open-ended practice is more in keeping with the CLT and gives students more *choices* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.2.4) to create their conversation according to their own beliefs. Golebiowska (1987:4) argues that 'real life communication is usually stimulated by the fact that people either know different things or have different opinions.' Therefore, participants in dramatic activities are expected to have different opinions or disagreements because they know things that others don't know. This results an *information gap* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.2.4) between people, and closes real-life communication.

There are benefits in using dramatic activities in a language class. First, they involve fantasy and provide realistic situations which trigger learners' imagination and help them to escape from the classroom setting. In addition, they provide opportunities for the learners to develop fluency skills in using language freely, purposefully and creatively. (Byrne, 1976:115) Furthermore, they offer a chance for rehearsal and engagement that other activities fail to give. To conclude, dramatic activities that cover both transactional and interactional uses of conversation also allow learners to bridge the gap between *skill-getting* and *skill-using* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3.2) as well as to make their learning be fulfilled by doing those activities.

'Getting students to conduct questionnaires and surveys is one way to provoke conversation and opinion exchange.' (Harmer, 1998:89) Questionnaires are useful because they allow both questioner and respondent to have something to say to each other. The questions can be devised briefly depending on to the theme of the poem, or other questions can be used to prompt learners' thinking. The idea of using a questionnaire is that learners should work in pairs or groups and then report back to the whole class or the group members on their findings. (Revell, 1979) In doing this, the teacher may go through one or two questions with the class before they divide up, to show them that the words on the questionnaire are just prompts and not intended as models of the actual answers.

By doing the questionnaire provided for the second poem, students can recall their own experiences about keeping and breaking promises. This allows classroom reading to be involved in learners' real lives and encourage them to achieve *personal growth* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1.1). (Carter & Long, 1991) While students are asking each other questions and noting down what their partner says, the teacher can not only listen but also offer help and prompt them to talk more. In addition, if learners meet language difficulty when reporting to group members or the class, the teacher may encourage them to do *achievement strategies* (Bygate, 1987)—*improving* and *paraphrasing* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.4). Example of this would be the word 'responsibility' in question 5, if pupils cannot say it properly, they may be encouraged to paraphrase or substitute it for 'my duty' or 'things that I have to do'.

<u>Feedback activity</u>

Apart from *information gap* and *choice,* truly communicative activity also includes the feature of *feedback* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.2.4). (Larsen-Freeman, 1986) Through feedback activity, the speaker is able to know if his/her purpose has been achieved based on the information he/she receives from the listener. Apart from this, students are able to 'look at their performance critically and try to improve through trial and error.' (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3.2 & 2.3.6) (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987:117) The example activity discussed below is from the poem *What has happened to Lulu?*

Feedback report & evaluation

During dramatic activity, the students are required to note down points or questions about which they can give feedback later. After the performance is over, the students have an opportunity to ask any questions and learn some relevant vocabularies. They then discuss what language forms are appropriate in their dialogues. The teacher can explain, for example, that if Lulu's mom tells the child that Lulu will come back soon, it is better for her to say 'She'll come back soon,' rather than 'she will come back soon.' Doing this will make learners aware of natural language *forms* (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3.2). Even though in CLT, language functions are emphasized over forms (Larsen-Freeman, 1986), it does not mean that forms are ignored but that more natural forms are used in this lesson. In addition, students have the opportunity to do self-evaluation about their performance and give feedback to others.

Pair and group work

In a CLT class, pair work shifts the responsibility for determining who should speak from the teacher to the students. (Nolasco & Arthur, 1988) If we get students to make decisions in pairs, we allow them to share responsibility as well as promote learner independence without the necessary guidance of the teacher. (Harmer, 2001) This is also true of group work (as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.5). It provides students with an environment within which they can communicate easily, freely and independently. In addition, it encourages broader skills of cooperation and negotiation than pair work, and increases the amount of talking time for individual students. Tsui (2001:122) indicates that 'compared to teacher-fronted interaction in whole class work, both pair and group work provide more opportunities for learners to initiate and control the interaction, to produce a much larger variety of speech acts and to engage in the negotiation of meaning.' Tasks involving a small number of participants are believed to facilitate better second language acquisition. Although group work is considered to be noisy and time consuming for grouping learners and waiting for them to move around the classroom, it is worth trying if the teacher organizes the procedures and is able to manage and handle the chaos.

Chapter 4 Evaluating the implementation

4.1 Likely teaching problems and possible solutions

Sometimes learners' performance and reactions in class may not meet our expectations. How to overcome these problems becomes crucial. Some potential negative issues will be discussed as follows.

<u>Making errors</u>

Larsen-Freeman (1986) argues that in a communicative language classroom, errors of form are tolerated and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. To prompt learners to talk and interact in English, which is not frequent in a conventional class, teachers' encouragement should be the priority rather then the correction of errors. Because of this, even students whose linguistic knowledge is limited will still be able to communicate fluently. Larsen-Freeman further points out that ignoring errors does not mean that the accuracy of using language is less important but that focusing on the function of communication is much more crucial than forms. To handle this situation in a literature class, the teacher can walk around among the pairs or groups, observing their talking and making notes. Later, after the final reporting activity in each lesson, the teacher can then indicate the errors and specific language areas of which learners should be aware, and write them on the blackboard. Doing this not only saves time but also encourages learners to achieve fluency as well as accuracy.

<u>Keep using mother tongue</u>

The students' native language has no particular role in the CLT and the target language should be used during communicative activities. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986) However, in English teaching in Taiwan, it is common that learners and teachers share the same native language. To talk in English will be therefore a challenge to learners who are not used to it. Using the mother tongue when doing pair work or group discussion may occur because learners want to communicate important opinions about the poem or because it is much easier for them to argue with each other.

To handle this situation, I will adopt some strategies suggested by Harmer (1998). For example, when learners are completing questionnaires in pairs after the second poem, I will move around the class during their discussion, encouraging them to speak English and offering help if necessary. Second, I will keep reminding them that overusing their native language means they will have less chance to learn English. Furthermore, if the situation doesn't improve I will make it clear by my behaviour that I would like to hear English and will ignore what they say in their mother tongue and only respond to English users.

<u>Other issues</u>
First, students sometimes do not know or cannot remember the words which they need during a discussion, so they may give up their turn to speak. Teachers should encourage them to improvise their speaking and offer hints to help them paraphrase what they want to say. Second, if some students or groups finish tasks before others, teachers can work with that group, providing them with some spare activity materials like a worksheet for the poem, or simply asking them to observe other groups. Third, the basic assumption of literature learning by exploiting communicative activities should be more motivated for students to share their ideas and opinions. However, if learners do not like the selected poem, its topic or the activities, they are sometimes unwilling to cooperate with each other. To solve this problem, teachers may encourage them to express their dissatisfaction at the end of the class. After all, students' opinions and reactions in a communicative classroom should be taken into account as an important reference for both teachers and learners.

4.2 Material evaluation

According to Carter & Long (1991) there are three models which allow us to evaluate the suitability of the two poems. They are *language model, culture model* and *personal growth model.* In the language model, the sentence structures of the first poem *What has happened to Lulu?* are simple and similar to the genuine language. The text is therefore accessible and can be used as a medium to consolidate students' language skills taught in the classroom either in spoken or written forms. In the

culture model, some issues will be elicited from the two poems. First, by reading the poems, pupils will be aware if there is any differentiation between western and eastern parents in the way of communication and in handling conflicts with their child. In addition, pupils will be able to imagine the seasonal differences of geographical environments, including a snowy winter evening and a frozen lake (from the poem *Stopping by woods on a snowy evening*) which are not often seen in Taiwan. This will allow pupils to broaden their culture horizons. As for the personal growth model, the poem *What has happened to Lulu?* indicates teenagers' conflicts with parents during this phase of their life and will help students to achieve an engagement between their personal experience and the poem. The second poem, relating to the topic of keeping promises and taking responsibility, will allow pupils to recall their memories and generate further thought.

4.3 Outcome assessment

Within a teaching system, tests will be needed for as long as it is thought appropriate for individuals to be given a statement of what they have achieved in a second or foreign language. (Hughes, 1989) In general, testing is believed to be a natural extension of classroom work, providing both teacher and student with useful information that can serve as a basis for improvement. (Harrison, 1983) This is particularly true at a private sector school like Han-Mei Language Institute where learners' test scores are regarded as a 'stake' to compare with other business rivals. Accordingly, if teaching is unconnected with the exam process, it is not surprising that it will be believed to do nothing for students' academic performance. Nevertheless, the experimental literature class aims to build up learners' interests in reading poetry and develop their speaking competence rather than training them to become experts in taking exams. Therefore, strategies for making a compromise between these two goals but doing no harm to learners' motivation become crucial.

Hedge (2000) points out that in order to assess learners' genuine language ability, the process of exams can be adjusted into focusing more on learners' ability in communication and interaction. To approach this, the assessment can be changed in content, format, and marking criteria. The assessment device will therefore incorporate literature and communicative skills that emphasize the development of

language skills, enjoyment, and creativity. In other words, the content, the format, and the marking criteria of the test will be changed to be more diverse and flexible than the conventional pencil and paper test. There are four types of assessment for this poetry class:

1.   Oral assessment by telephone:

An integrated approach which assesses learners' listening comprehension and speaking competence by asking them to explain their feelings about the poem, their opinions about the classroom activities and their attitudes towards literature study. When conducting the test, language accuracy should not be the deciding factor; instead, learners should be encouraged to express their ideas even when they make grammatical mistakes. This method of assessment allows them to interact outside of the classroom setting.

2.   Tape recording:

Learners will be required to hand in an oral recitation of the poem on an audio cassette. This will allow teachers to assess students' pronunciation, intonation, and stress when reading the poem. After listening to the tape, the teacher can give feedback about their performance and efforts.

3. Poetry recitation competition & drama performance:

This is a creative method of assessing students' learning outcomes. Doing a poetry recitation competition and drama performance developed from the poem, either individually or in groups, offers students opportunities to develop their linguistic and communicative competence through the combination of real-world and pedagogical approaches. In addition, it will foster enjoyment of the text with a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the language. If students are encouraged to use language imaginatively through dramatic performance, their interest and motivation for English learning will increase, and further lead them to use and perform in the language.

4. Telephone interview with their parents:

In order to know learners' attitudes and parents' feedback about the literature class, it is useful to conduct a telephone interview with parents. This provides an opportunity for communication between teachers and their students' parents. A checklist can serve as a way to assess parents' opinions about the effectiveness and impact of the literature teaching. Teachers and the institute will also be able to get useful information and recommendations. Some sample questions are given as follows:

* Do you………….id……..bi……….i.l….h…f…?

* What's your opinion about teaching poetry in the classroom?

* What's your opinion about teaching speaking in the classroom?

* Will your child practice English speaking after class?

* Does your child enjoy reading poetry?

* Has your child recited the poem to you?

* Can your child read the poem properly?

* Would both of you read together?

* What do you think about the speaking test of the poem?

* Do you agree that poetry teaching will help develop language competence?

4.4 Learners' attitudes

Generally speaking, learners' attitudes towards studying poetry and practicing speaking in a manner different from the conventional drills are usually very positive, unless the selected poem is inappropriate for its linguistic difficulty and remoteness of topic. Both will demotivate learners' interests in exposing them to different reading materials. In addition, there are other inappropriate approaches in literature teaching, such as emphasising structural methods to language learning, which O'Sullivan (1991:54) explains as 'emphasis on discrete-point teaching, "correctness" in grammatical form, repetition of graded structures and restricted lexis.' These approaches are unsuitable to literature teaching and are unable to accommodate literary texts because literature is taught as a separate subject, but not as a medium to allow learning to be relevant to learners' concerns or to inspire personal growth.

Learners who do extra study in a private sector school like Han-Mei usually have pressure from various examinations. Therefore, if they are sometimes given opportunities to be released from stressful study to do pair work, group discussion, and dramatic activities, they are willing to engage and enjoy the alternative method of gaining knowledge. After all, learning should not only focus on passing examinations, but the pleasure that comes from its process which is often neglected. Consequently, teaching poetry by utilizing communicative activities is a reciprocal method to develop learners' oral competence and maintain their study motivation.

4.5 Teachers' belief

In Han-Mei, English language teaching is usually teacher-centred, especially programmes for teenage students. Teaching speaking through poetry by using CLT, which is learner-centred, is therefore a challenge to a teacher who has to consider self-competence, classroom management, the syllabus and students' progress in exams. Nonetheless, I believe that education should be a means to generate students' capability to learn by themselves and enable them to gain personal growth through the classroom setting. Teaching events are for students; therefore, classroom activities should focus on learners themselves, promoting personal growth and moving away from the traditional over-emphasis on the teacher-centred and grammar focus methods interpreting of text. In this respect, language teaching would be more balanced and not just a means of preparing students for their examinations. In addition, in CLT, the role of the teacher is very important for they facilitate students to speak and communicate through asking questions. Although some teachers may doubt their competence in teaching poetry and speaking, improving and promoting teaching ability should be set as a goal. After all, the process of teaching and learning should allow both teachers and learners to gain language development and improvement simultaneously.

4.6 Syllabus concerns

Teachers may complain that they cannot cover sufficient material in a 90-minute class, let alone do extra poetry teaching. To overcome this difficulty, there are some strategies which are worth trying. First of all, use a poem which is short in length, in which the language is simple and accessible. It won't occupy too much time but increases enjoyment in class. Second, make better use of time by reducing unnecessary tests and let learners enjoy poetry reading, classroom interaction and communication instead. Third, make poetry teaching an extra-curricular activity that can complement the regular curriculum and create fun for learners to play with language through different activities.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and recommendations

Out of my serious interest in developing learners' speaking competence and classroom engagement through the teaching of poetry, this dissertation has been conducted to explore a learner-centred approach to teenage students at Han-Mei Language Institute in Taiwan. Regarding the benefits of literary text poetry, and the alternative teaching methodology Communicative Language Teaching, in Chapter 1, I placed the grammatically based teaching material *Reference Book* and the Grammar-Translation approach under careful scrutiny. In Chapter 2, the significant place of poetry teaching in the EFL classroom has been discussed and so have the background theory of CLT and the rationale of teaching speaking. Based on the theory discussed in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 demonstrates the implementation of a learner-centred literature classroom experiment where teaching activities are provided, and their rationales have been discussed. It is expected to serve as a means to promote students' speaking competence and as suggestions for teachers who are interested in literature teaching. Chapter 4 foresees the potential problems which may be encountered and gives possible solutions that aim to help the teachers, particularly teachers in the private sector who prefer an innovative curriculum to a conventional one, and who wish to develop students' linguistic, literary, and communicative competence and to enhance their learning motivation. To sum up, the common opinions about the linguistic knowledge that learners should gain needs to be complemented with aural and oral acquirement. Poetry teaching that can achieve both aims as well as cultivate multicultural sensibility, prompt personal growth, and create enjoyment in a language classroom should be used to augment the conventional syllabus and serve as an appropriate instrument in terms of pedagogical and business concern.

Looking back to this experimental CLT-based literary class, it is clear that even though I have put much effort into proposing strategies about teaching, implementation, evaluation and syllabus, it will not comprehensively cover all the theories and potential problems. Hence, some limitations of this research need to be indicated. First of all, the proposed group is junior high students at a private sector school, whose linguistic competence has achieved average or above average levels for their age; however, if the learners have a low level of linguistic competence, will this

method still be suitable using poetry, or should other texts be chosen which are much more accessible, and would this be able to maintain their motivation? A second problem is the limitation about the specific age group of learners. Can the proposed experiment be adopted to elementary students whose language ability is lower, or senior high students who have more time constraints and study pressure in dealing with exams? Third, this experimental class mainly focuses on developing speaking competence, which I find extremely insufficient for my target learners. Would it be better to exploit an integrated teaching method that seeks on a balance of enhancing the necessary four skills? Last but not least, there are issues about the working environment in my teaching place, Han-Mei Language Institute. At Han-Mei, teachers' ideas, opinions and advice about programme improvement are usually respected and will be taken into account although they may not be fully fulfilled. Nonetheless, the majority of schools in the private sector may have different considerations in terms of business; teaching poetry and speaking, activities which have little to do with exams, may not be acceptable. As a result, how to overcome those limitations as well as the constraints described above will be worth further investigation for future researchers.

Appendix1

What Has Happened to Lulu?

What has happened to Lulu, mother?
What has happened to Lu?
There's nothing in her bed but an old rag-doll
And by its side a shoe.

Why is her window wide, mother,
The curtain flapping free,
And only a circle on the dusty shelf
Where her money-box used to be?

Why do you turn your head, mother,
And why do the tear-drops fall?
And why do you crumple that note on the fire
And say it is nothing at all?

I woke to voices late last night,
I heard an engine roar.
Why do you tell me the things I heard
Were a dream and nothing more?

I heard somebody cry, mother,
In anger or in pain,
But now I ask you why, mother,
You say it was a gust of rain?

Why do you wander about as though
You don't know what to do?
What has happened to Lulu, mother?
What has happened to Lu?

                              (Charles Causley)

Appendix 2.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.
 His house is in the village, though;
 He will not see me stopping here
 To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

(Robert Frost)

Bibliography

Brown, G. & G. Yule 1983 *Teaching the Spoken Language* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Brown, J. D. 1995 *The Elements of Language Curriculum* Boston: Heinle & Heinle

Brumfit, C. 1984 *Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching: The roles of fluency and accuracy* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bygate, M. 1987 *Speaking* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bygate, M. 2001 Speaking In: Cater, R.& D. Nunan *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p14-20

Byrne, D. 1986 *Teaching Oral English* Harlow: Longman

Canale, M. 1983 From Communicative Competence to Communicative Language Pedagogy In Richards, J. C. & R. W. Schmidt, 1983 *Language and Communication* New York: Longman p2-29

Cass, J. E. 1984 *Literature and the Young Children* Harlow: Longman

Carter, R. & M. Long 1991 *Teaching Literature* Essex: Longman

Chiou, M. C. 2000 *Reference Book-English in detail for junior high school* Taipei: Chien Hung Press

Chuang, H. L. 1989 *From 'Fog' to 'Dust of Snow'*: *teaching poetry in the classroom* English Teaching Vol. 22/3 Jan 1989 p13-28, National Taipei Normal University

Collie, J. & Slater, S. 1987 *Literature in the Language Classroom: a resource book of ideas and activities* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Cook, G. 1997 *Key Concepts in ELT* ELT Journal Vol. 51/1 Jan 1997 p86 Oxford University Press

Courtney, M. 1996 *Talking to Learn: selecting and using peer group oral tasks* ELT Journal Vol. 50/4 Oct 1996 p318-325

Cullen, B. 1998 *Brainstorming before Speaking Tasks* The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. IV No. 7 July, 1998
Available from: http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Cullen-Brainstorming/
Accessed 13 July 2003

Dendrinos, B. 1992 *The EFL Textbook and Ideology* Athens: N. C. Grivas Publications

Donald, R. undated *Teaching Speaking Skills* Britain: Teaching English by BBC British Council Available from:

http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/speak/speak_skills.shtml

Accessed 21 June 2003

Dubin, F. & Olshtain, E. 1986 *Course Design* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Duff, A. & Maley, A. 1990 *Literature* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Edwin, M. 1992 *Extension Activities in the Literature Classroom* The English Teacher Vol. XXI Oct 1992 p24-31 Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

Galloway, A. 1993 C*ommunicative Language Teaching: An Introduction and Sample Activities* Washington: ERIC Digest Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics

Available from: http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed357642.html

Accessed 15 June 2003

Golebiowska, A. 1998 *Getting Students to Talk* Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall Europe

Hammerly, H. 1991 *Fluency and Accuracy* Avon: Multilingual Matters

Harmer, J. 1998 *How to Teach English* Harlow: Longman

Harmer, J. 2001 *The Practice of English Language Teaching* Harlow: Longman

Harrison, A. 1983 *A Language Testing Handbook* London: Macmillan

Hedge, T. 2000 *Teaching and Learning in The Language Classroom* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hess, N. 2003 *Real Language Through Poetry: a formula for meaning making* ELT Journal Vol. 57/1 Jan2003 p19-25 Oxford University Press

Huang, S. J. & H. F. Liu 2000 *Communicative Language Teaching in a Multimedia Language Lab* Taiwan: The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. VI, No. 2, February 2000 Available from: http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Huang-CompLab.htm

Accessed 15 June 2003

Hughes, A. 1989 *Testing for Language Teachers* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Klippel, F. 1984 *Keep Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teaching* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lan, L. S. 1994 *Fluency and Accuracy in Spoken English-Implications for Classroom*

p49-59 Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

Larsen-Freeman, D. 1986 *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Lazar, G. 1993 *Literature and Language Teaching: a guide for teachers and trainers* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lazar, G. 1994 *Using Literature at Lower Levels* ELT Journal Vol. 48/2 April 1994 p115-123 Oxford University Press

Li, P. F. 2000 *Pronunciation: Using poems to improve sentence rhythm/stress* Illinois: The University of Illinois—Collaborative Lesson Archive Nov 2000
Available from: http://zubov.atmos.uiuc.edu/CLA/LESSONS/3370.html
Accessed: 24 Oct 2003

Lin, H. R. 2002 *Effects of Communicative Language Teaching on English Learning and Culture Learning of Children* Kaohsiung: National Kaohsiung Normal University

Littlewood, W. 1981 *Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maley, A. 2001 Literature in the Language Classroom In: Cater, R.& D. Nunan, 2001 *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p180-185

Maley, A. & A. Duff 1989 *The Inward Ear: poetry in the language classroom* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Maley, A. & S. Moulding 1985 *Poem into Poem: reading and writing poems with students of English* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morrow, K. 1981 Principles of Communicative Methodology In: Johnson, K. and K. Morrow 1981 *Communication in the Classroom* Harlow: Longman p59-66

Nolasco, R. & L. Arthur 1987 *Conversation* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Nolasco, R. & L. Arthur 1988 *Large Classes* London: Macmillan

Nunan, D. 1989 *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

O'Sullivan, R. 1991 *Literature in the Language Classroom* The Language Teacher Vol. XX Oct 1991 p53-60 Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

Pachta H. & M. Schratz 1993 *Teaching Teenagers* Harlow: Longman

Revell, A. 1979 *Teaching Techniques for Communicative English* London: Macmillan

University Press

Richards, J. C. & R. W. Schmidt 1983 *Language and Communication* New York: Longman

Richards, J. C. & R. W. Schmidt 1983 Conversational Analysis In Richards, J. C. & R. W. Schmidt 1983 *Language and Communication* New York: Longman p117-155

Richards, J. C. & T. S. Rodgers 1986 *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rogers, S. 1976 *They Don't Speak Our Language: Explorations in Language Study* London: Edward Arnold

Rönnqvist, L. & Sell, R. D. 1994 *Teenager Books for Teenagers: reflections on literature in language education* ELT Journal Vol. 48/2 April 1994 p125-132 Oxford University Press

Schollaert, R. A. undated *Theoretical Background to Communicative Language Teaching* Available from:
http://www.curdev.hull.ac.uk/ecc/assets/images/TH_BCK.PDF
Accessed 17 June 2003

Sithamparam, S. 1991 *Strategies for the Use of Poetry in the Language Classroom* The Language Teacher Vol. XX Oct 1991 p61-68 Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

Soars, C. J. 2000 *Line by Line: Selected Poems & Short Stories* Malaysia: Pearson Education/Longman

Stern, H. H. 1983 *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Stern, H. H. 1992 *Issues and Options in Language Teaching* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Talif, R. & M. Jayakaran 1994 *Using Literature in an Advantaged Situation: Issue and Prospects* The Language Teacher Vol. XXIII, 1994 p90-98 Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

Talif, R. 1992 *Literature: A Broader Definition* The Language Teacher Vol. XXI, p19-23 Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

Teachit, 2000 *Drama: What has happen to Lulu_*on line_
Available from: http://www.teachit.co.uk/pdf/lulu.pdf

Tsui, A. B.M. 2001 Classroom Interaction In: Cater, R. & D. Nunan, 2001 *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p120-125

Wright, A. 1981 Visuals In: Johnson, K. and K. Morrow 1981, *Communication in the Classroom* Harlow: Longman p117-125