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THE ROLE OF GRAMMATICAL INSTRUCTION WITHIN COMMUNICATIVE
LANGUAGE TEACHING AMONG CHINESE ESL STUDENTS

by

Min Zeng

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education at the
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the important role of grammatical instruction within Communicative Language Teaching from the perspectives of fifteen Chinese ESL adult students. By observing four ESL classes that use CLT and interviewing fifteen Chinese ESL students and four ESL teachers, the case study found that Chinese ESL students regard grammar instruction within CLT as a linking tool, which helps them to realize the functional purpose of grammar knowledge and to achieve communicative competence. Also based on my findings, I propose a model of effective grammar teaching for Chinese students infused into the communicative approach.

This study also provides an overview of communicative activities in the CLT classroom. Included is a discussion of how these activities facilitate grammatical competence and how Chinese students perceive these activities.

The findings from the case study suggest that it is better to combine and balance explicit and implicit grammar instruction within meaningful, authentic and communicative context, so that Chinese students can benefit from grammar instruction within the context of Communicative Language Teaching.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to all ESL Chinese students who strive to make a positive difference in their second language learning.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study is to examine the important role of grammatical instruction within the context of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach among fifteen adult Chinese students who study English as a Second Language (ESL) in Canada. By observing four ESL classrooms that use CLT and interviewing Chinese ESL learners and their teachers, I will examine how Chinese students perceive the role grammatical instruction plays in CLT and what kind of in-class learning activities/experiences are used by the teachers to facilitate the use of grammatical conventions in a communicative classroom. Ultimately, I am seeking to develop a more effective grammar teaching model within the communicative paradigm for Chinese ESL students.

A. General Statement of the Problem

Theories and methodologies of ESL have been developed for decades to help both ESL educators and learners improve their second language abilities and teaching practices. Traditional East Asian learning styles have been dominated by a book-centered, teacher-centered, grammar-translation method with emphasis on rote memory (Rao, 2002a). Four basic language skills are taught separately, and the concepts are reinforced through rigid practice and exams. The common result for Chinese ESL learners is that they are generally poor in oral expression even after years of intensive language instruction (Fotos, 1994; Rao, 2002b). Language teaching is more than teaching how to use grammatical elements of language. The main purpose of learning a language is to enable the learners to communicate. Realizing that, educators and linguists developed and promoted Communicative Language Teaching for the ESL classroom. Unlike traditional grammar-based instruction, CLT focuses on communication rather than structure, relying

largely on functional uses of language through collaboration and interaction. After years of trial and development, researchers believe that CLT plays a critical role in that it helps learners to communicate meaningfully in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Ellis, 2001; Musumeci, 1997; Savignon & Berns, 1983).

In China, however, based on my three years of teaching experience as a college teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), I noticed that even after the seminal work of Li (1984), English teaching methodology continues to be dominated by traditional grammar-based instruction. CLT has not been embraced by Chinese EFL teachers as expected. When Chinese teachers are asked why they do not adopt CLT more readily, it often boils down to a discomfort with CLT's lack of emphasis on grammar. Not only teachers but also students feel uncomfortable with CLT. When grammar is no longer taught in traditional ways, students feel at a loss because they have gotten so used to following teachers and memorizing grammatical points. To learn a foreign language more effectively, students believe that the language itself should be 'tidied up' for them because this helps them to focus on high priority language and to see the grammatical regularities clearly (Krashen, 1982). Hence, teachers and students refuse to accept CLT as their major instructional method despite a large body of research supporting CLT (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Ellis, 2001; Musumeci, 1997; Rao, 2002a, 2002b; Savignon & Berns, 1983). In their conception of what it means to be a good second language teacher, grammar-based instruction and CLT are incompatible teaching methods.

Actually, current research supports the idea that grammar plays an important role in CLT because it complements students' mastery of a second language instead of being isolated from the instruction (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Ellis, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 1991; Musumeci, 1997). Canale and Swain (1980) stated that grammatical/linguistic

competence served as a catalyst for accuracy and fluency in second or foreign language learning. It provides rules and general guidance to facilitate better understanding of the structures and syntax of the target language (Hinkel, 1998). Communicative competence, on the other hand, should be seen to incorporate grammatical competence instead of replacing it. Students would benefit from English grammar learning most effectively and efficiently within the context of CLT so that, upon completion of the ESL program of the study, they can use the language for real-life purposes (Brown, 2000; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Chen, 1999; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). To sum up, Higgs (1985) stated that the communicative teaching approach and the grammar teaching approach are inseparable aspects of second language teaching.

Although research literature has shown ample evidence that grammar occupies a prominent position as a major component of communicative competence, there is little research on how Chinese ESL students perceive the role of grammar teaching in their second language learning under CLT. As mentioned before, Chinese ESL students are known to have become so used to the grammar-translation method after years of intensive instruction in China and refuse to accept CLT (Krashen, 1982). When they come to study English under CLT in English-speaking countries, it is certainly not easy for them to quickly get accustomed to a new way of English teaching. They may find CLT confusing or frustrating. They may perceive that they can't learn as much as they did from traditional grammar-based instruction in China and may not be as well equipped to pass traditional exams. One misconception for them is that they can't see that grammar still plays an important role in CLT, that it has simply taken on a different form and no longer takes the first place or a separate place in the ESL curriculum. Another possible reason for student confusion may be that the teachers don't point out the grammatical points as

explicitly as in grammar-based methods. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how Chinese ESL students perceive the grammatical instruction within the communicative approach.

The purpose of my research is to explore the connection between grammatical and communicative approaches for Chinese ESL students studying in Canada. It looks in details at the attitudes of Chinese ESL students in Canada towards CLT who have had Chinese EFL instruction previously. It will inform how Chinese ESL students perceive CLT and its relationship to grammar teaching. I believe that the findings of study will be helpful to Chinese students who study ESL under CLT in English-speaking countries and those who study EFL in non English-speaking countries as well. Moreover, if teachers could understand how ESL learners think about grammar instruction within CLT and improve their teaching accordingly, it would become much easier for ESL learners to accept CLT and eventually achieve grammatical competence and oral proficiency.

B. Definition of Terms

Acquisition can be broadly defined as the internalization of rules and formulas, which are used to communicate in the L2 (Ellis, 1985, p. 292).

Attitudes refer to feeling and emotions towards another language or its speakers.

Competence refers to the internalized knowledge of the rules of a language that native speakers have.

Communicative competence refers to a speaker's ability to understand the implications of utterances and to appreciate what language is appropriate in different situations.

EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students mean students studying English as their foreign language in non English-speaking countries.

ESL (English as a Second Language) students mean students from non English-speaking countries learning English in an English-speaking community.

Grammar refers to studies of the formation of basic linguistic units in language learning, such as syntax and morphology.

Grammar Translation Method is a non-communicative approach that relies heavily on reading and translation, mastery of grammatical rules and accurate writing.

L1 refers to the primary language.

L2 refers to the secondary language.

Proficiency refers to the learner's knowledge of the target language (Ellis, 1985, p. 302).

Second Language Acquisition refers to the body of research into language acquisition by non-native speakers.

Target Language refers to the language that the learner is attempting to learn (Ellis, 1985, p. 304).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A. Literature Review

The following literature review consists of five sections which focus on the role of grammatical instruction within CLT. First, I will briefly discuss how grammar is defined in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and its importance in SLA. Secondly, I will examine the importance of grammar instruction in CLT after a brief explanation of the characteristics of CLT. Next, I will examine the important role of grammatical instruction within CLT through a thorough literature review on recent theories and approaches in this field. Finally, based on the findings, I will provide some suggestions on effective grammar teaching within the context of CLT. A brief introduction on Chinese ESL students' characteristics is also presented at the end.

The Importance of Grammar in SLA

Grammar is the most familiar word when we talk about language. Most people would simply say that grammar is normally presented in the forms of rules, such as past tenses or third person. Strictly speaking, grammar refers to “the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence” (Brown, 2001, p. 362). In this paper, since it deals with SLA, grammar should be defined in terms of linguistics, as studies of the formation of basic linguistic units in language learning, such as syntax and morphology.

Grammar is an integral part of the language we use in everyday communication. Batstone (1994) stated that grammar mainly consists of two fundamental ingredients – syntax and morphology. How words can be combined in sentences is an important and essential part of grammar, which we call syntax. By putting words together in a certain

order, we have followed certain syntactic conventions. We can also specify the ways in which words can be systematically modified through revisions and additions which help us to convey fundamental concepts such as number and time. We often call this morphology. Altogether, syntax and morphology help us to identify grammatical forms and to enhance and sharpen the expression of meaning. On the other hand, language without grammar would be chaotic if there were countless words without the indispensable guidelines for how they can be ordered and modified. It would be impossible to learn a language effectively without acquiring grammar knowledge. Indeed, many language learners enter classrooms with a clear awareness of the importance of grammar through which they can structure their second language or measure their progress (Batstone, 1994).

However, second language acquisition has long been plagued by a debate concerning whether we should teach grammar or not. As Blyth (1998) claimed, the debate has fostered a "dichotomous" approach to grammar instruction and a naive view of the nature of grammar. On one hand, the traditional grammatical approach was assumed to be totally amenable to explicit instruction and practice. On the other hand, other teachers maintained that grammar instruction was largely irrelevant or unnecessary to second language acquisition.

Some second language professionals do not consider grammar as an important element in second language learning or teaching. They believe that language can be learned or acquired automatically through the context without explicit instruction in grammar. For example, Krashen (1992, p. 410) claimed that "the effect of grammar is peripheral and fragile" and that "direct instruction on specific rules has a measurable impact on tests that focus the performer on form, but the effect is short-lived." He (1992)

believed that learners will acquire grammar structure on their own and believe that learning grammar makes second language learning slow. Prabhu (1987) supported the same idea. He claimed that focusing on a descriptive grammar is likely to inhibit the development of the learners' interlanguage by encouraging them to operate consciously with a description. Prabhu thinks that grammar-construction by the learner is "an unconscious process which is best facilitated by bringing about in the learner a preoccupation with meaning, saying or doing" (cited by Beretta & Daview, in Willis, 1997, p. 114). According to Prabhu, there is no point of teaching grammar.

According to Krashen's input hypothesis (1985), the learners do not need to be taught grammar, as they will automatically acquire it from natural input obtained during the course of communication, providing that the input is comprehensible. Garrett (1986) also stated that explicit grammar is useless. But these views have been largely questioned and criticized. Opposing Krashen's powerful second language acquisition theory and Prabhu's learning theory in the 1980s, Ellis (1992, 1997) argued the importance of grammar teaching in second language classroom. Ellis (1988) claimed that all language users have both implicit and explicit knowledge. While Krashen hypothesized that learning and acquisition were two distinct learning processes, Ellis argued that explicit knowledge might facilitate learners in developing implicit knowledge. No matter what kind of knowledge learners receive, either implicitly or explicitly, explicit knowledge may convert into implicit knowledge when learners reach the right stage of language development, in other words, learners may incorporate explicit grammar instruction into their implicit grammar knowledge.

Also, Pienemann's work (1989) provided support for grammar instruction. He reported that subjects who received grammar instruction demonstrated greater progress

after two weeks than those received several months of untutored instruction. Thornbury (1997, 1998) claimed that grammar is being recognized for what it has always been as an essential and inescapable component of language use and language learning. Batstone (1994) stated that grammar has a major influence in instructional design as the focal point of many classroom exercises in second language classroom. He also said that a study of grammar (syntax and morphology) reveals the structure and regularity of the target language, which enables us to talk about and apply the language system. Even Krashen (2003) modestly said that

I do not think that grammar teaching should be at the core of curriculum, but there are good reasons for including it. First, grammar teaching can be an excellent introduction to the study of linguistics, which has obvious value, e.g. the study of universals, language change, and dialects. Second, even with massive reading, complete acquisition of the conventions of writing may not take place; even very well-read people may have gaps in their first language. These gaps are typically small and rarely interfere with the clarity of the message. Conscious knowledge of grammar rules can help fill at least some of these gaps, and can be used in the editing stage of the composing process, after ideas are on the page.

In conclusion, there is enormous evidence showing that grammar plays a critical role in language learning. Likewise, it has a significant importance in second language learning and teaching. As Canale and Swain (1980) claimed, the reason why learning grammar is so important for second language learners is that it provides some general and systematic guidance on the structure and syntax of the target language. Hinkel and Fotos (2002) also supported that teaching grammar is a necessary and fundamental aspect of teaching effective and accurate communication in second language learning. Nowadays, there is common agreement among educators and researchers that grammar should be taught in the second language classroom.

Since grammar plays such an important role in SLA, the core of the issue would turn to the teachability of grammar, in other words, how to teach grammar effectively to

learners of other languages. For more than 40 years the important role of grammatical instruction has been the main issue of SLA research and discussion (Ellis, 2001). There are plenty of research findings about grammar teaching and discussions on various teaching methodologies (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1997; Thornbury, 1997, 1998). From the mid to late 19th century, the dominant grammar teaching approach was a non-communicative approach. With the grammar-translation method, grammar was taught deductively in an organized and systematic way – first studying grammar rules and then practicing through translation exercises. Generally speaking, the main focus in a typical grammar-based classroom is on reading and writing, with little attention given to speaking or listening. Students who have learned English well via this approach generally know much more English grammar than natives do. However, most of them are often weak in oral language expression. Grammar-based language teaching fails to take into account that knowledge of a language does not equal the ability to use it. If grammar is taught as a separate system that students can't use, there is no point in learning it.

Savignon and Berns (1983) suggest that the problem is caused by detachment of language from the world beyond the classroom or from the learner's immediate needs. To make sure that learners acquire the second language with all of its components such as phonetics, morphology, syntax and semantics, many theories and approaches regarding grammar teaching methods have been tried and developed to compensate for the shortness of traditional grammar-based instruction (Celce-Murcia, 1991), such as the Direct Method, Audio-lingual approach and communicative approach. After the age of grammar-translation method, the Direct Method was developed under which grammar was taught inductively and grammar correction was also emphasized (Kato, 1998). The *Audio-lingual Method* in the 1950s was well-known for its principles that the main

medium of language is oral and grammatical structures are carefully sequenced from basic level to more complex level. Language learning is formed through repetition, shaping and reinforcement (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Thus, memorization of sentence pattern is used largely and a lot of drill types are practiced in order to minimize learners' errors.

However, grammar is a mix of components consisting of phonetics, phonology, morphology and semantics. Batstone (1994) claimed that when teaching grammar, teachers should emphasize all of them instead of teaching only morphology and syntax. Since communication includes all of those components, it is the best way of teaching grammar effectively by using the communicative approach. The communicative approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who were dissatisfied with the grammar-translation methods and Audio-lingual methods. They felt that students were not learning enough realistic language because the students did not know how to communicate using appropriate gestures and expressions, or how to communicate in the culture of the target language. Interest in and development of communicative teaching methods increased since the 1970's; classroom activities where students engaged in real communication with one another became popular.

There is a need here to make a general distinction between grammatical (or grammar-based) and communicative approaches to second language teaching.

In 1980, Canale and Swain claimed that:

By a grammatical approach we mean one that is organized on the basis of linguistic, or what we will call grammatical forms (i.e. phonological forms, morphological forms, syntactic patterns, lexical items) and emphasizes the ways in which these forms may be combined to form grammatical sentences. A communicative (or functional/notional) approach on the other hand is organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a given learner or group of learners needs to know and emphasizes the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately. (p. 2)

Celce-Murcia (1991) claimed that in a CLT classroom, communication becomes the purpose of language instruction and the syllabus is no longer structured around grammar. Language teaching is meaningful and contextualized rather than sentence-based. Explicit grammar rules are not rejected. Instead, grammar is taught and used through communicative activities. To accomplish meaningful and contextualized instruction, the major characteristic of CLT is that interaction between teachers and learners or among learners is placed at the root of all activities. Learners usually work in pairs or groups for role playing, information sharing, or problem solving, which focus on the usage of language in realistic ways (Bownman, Burkart & Robson, 1989). In speaking skills the goal is to be understood, and learners' contextual interests and needs are put in the first place. But grammar seems no longer as important as before when the grammar-translation method was quite widespread (Burgess & Etherington, 2002). Shiffrin and Schneider (1977) claimed that it is not correct to simply contend that a learner will automatically be able to use it because he/she has studied and practiced English for a certain amount of time. Through the processes of re-noticing and restructuring, learners can build up a solid and comprehensive knowledge about grammar. All this knowledge exists for one main purpose, enabling the learners to use it in communication. For this we need more than just knowledge about language.

Communicative Language Teaching in SLA

Since the mid-1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become popular in second language classrooms, which aims at achieving communicative proficiency by replicating contextual and purposive features of real communication. Brown (2000) said that "CLT is best understood as an approach, not a method" and

offered the following four interconnected characteristics as a definition of CLT (p. 266-267):

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques.
4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

In one word, CLT places the focus on the learners. Learner communicative needs serve as a guideline of elaborating syllabus goals in terms of functional competence. Howatt (1984) called a weak version of the communicative approach: one that “stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching” (p. 279).

The main purpose of CLT is to achieve a high level of communicative competence. Grammar is regarded as one of its major components (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Shahidullah, 2002) because communicative competence has four major components. They are (1) linguistic/grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). As part of communicative competence, linguistic/grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of phonological, lexical, and grammatical/structural rules. It is also common sense that we cannot convey meaning without basic grammar

knowledge in our spoken and written expressions. The main purpose of grammatical competence is to achieve accuracy, in other words, to use grammatically correct forms to express the information or message (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). Although grammar is only one of the four elements of communicative competence, studies show evidence that grammar should be regarded as important and indispensable as any other components (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Musumecis, 1997). Larsen-Freeman (1997) viewed the teaching of grammar as antithetical to communicative language teaching. For example, Higgs (1985) claimed that learners' ability to express themselves in the target language is effectively controlled by the grammar knowledge of that language.

Within CLT, a number of studies argued strongly that explicit grammar teaching should be avoided. Prabhu (1987) argued that grammar teaching is impossible because the knowledge that a speaker needs to obtain in order to use a language is too complex. Krashen (1988) also supported that grammar teaching is unnecessary because knowledge can only be acquired unconsciously through comprehensible input of the target language. Yet other authors claimed that the communicative framework undermined the role of grammatical skills in second language learning (Lo, Tsang & Wong, 2000).

Defending that idea, Thompson (1996) thinks it is a misconception to believe that CLT means not teaching grammar, in other words, using the communicative approach precludes grammar teaching totally. Shahidullah (2002) also agreed inadequate grammar is useless. Celce-Murcia (1991) said,

In spite of the intuitive appeal and the anecdotal evidence supporting proposals for exclusively communicative language teaching, there is equally appealing and anecdotal evidence... that a grammarless approach ... can lead to the development of a broken, ungrammatical, pidgenized form of the target language beyond which students rarely progress. (p. 462)

In conclusion, as part of communicative competence, grammatical competence plays as important and indispensable a role as other competences.

The Relationship between Grammar Instruction and CLT

Higgs (1985) claimed that the relationship between a grammar teaching approach and a communicative teaching approach is antithetical and equally important. On the one hand, CLT can promote grammatical competence. The goal of language learning in CLT is for learners to acquire the grammar of the target language and at the same time to enable them to understand meaning and to become proficient users of the target language (Musumeci, 1997). Canale and Swain (1980) claimed grammatical competence should be taught in the context of meaningful communication. Under CLT, explicit teaching of discrete grammar points or isolated sentences without using them in a meaningful context is discouraged. Instead, presenting grammar in meaningful and authentic contexts with focus on production, is encouraged. Krashen and Terrell (1983) agreed that students will acquire more grammar only if the class puts focus on communication and provides students with sufficient, comprehensible and meaningful input. Grammar should be presented in a way that helps students use grammar in real-life communication. Shahidullah (2002) also believed that it is important to recall and put grammar in use in real communication.

On the other hand, grammatical competence is necessary and may facilitate the development of other communicative competences. It would be inappropriate to assume that the development of grammatical competence is irrelevant to or unnecessary for the development of communicative competence according to studies of Savignon (1972), Tucker (1974), Upshur and Palmer (1974). Canale and Swain (1980) stated that all those studies actually indicated that attention to basic communication skills does not interfere in

the development of grammatical skills. Also, Harvey (1985) based on his study, suggested that a communicative approach implemented is no more effective than a grammatical approach in developing grammatical skills. He strongly supported that understanding the grammatical framework of a language is extremely important for some learners, especially for help learners develop their other language competences in CLT.

The Role of Grammar instruction within CLT

Grammar is such an important component in CLT, but the kind of a role that grammar plays within CLT still needs to be defined clearly to help promote grammatical competence and other communicative competences.

First, as Canale and Swain (1980) claimed, the reason why learning grammar is so important for second language learners is that it provides some general and systematic guidance on the structure and syntax of the target language. Garrett (1986) discussed how teaching promotes grammatical competence. It seems there is a paradox in grammatical instruction within CLT: grammatical competence must be regarded as an integral part of communicative competence, but learning grammar does not seem to help students achieve much. Teachers are split into two camps: some believe that classroom learners will develop all the grammatical competence they need from exposure to appropriate comprehensive input, and others insist that some explicit explanation and discussion of structure is necessary to enable learners to develop their second language acquisition. To face the problem, Garrett (1986, p. 134) suggested that:

We cannot, therefore, reject either proposition of that paradox, but we can no longer afford to ignore it, either; to teach grammar without understanding how it functions in communication is a waste of everyone's time (and can seriously undermine class morale), but not to teach it may jeopardize the whole endeavor. This dilemma is the most serious problem in foreign language teaching today. (p. 134)

Larsen-Freeman (1997) and Musumecis (1997) also supported that grammar should be considered to be as important and indispensable as any other components.

Second, grammatical instruction should be viewed as the means to complement students' mastery of second language. Grammar is a means as a set of rules to describe language rather than an end. Celce-Murcia and Hills (1988) suggested that grammar should never be taught as an end in itself but always with reference to meaning, social factors, discourse, or a combination of these factors, which are true purposes of grammar teaching. Garrett (1986) suggested the teaching of grammar rules for the expression in communication is likely to play an important role in the development of communicative competence. Students may actually benefit from teaching grammar by using communication.

Third, Hinkel (1998, p.18) regarded grammar instruction as “a tool to refine and to construct new meanings deductively” based on what learners have already known or learned, “instead of presenting meaninglessly structural information that learners cannot use” or apply. Appropriate grammar teaching approaches should be applied to enhance second language learners' linguistic competence to the maximum. Rao (1996, p. 469) explained that “grammar is a tool or resource to be used in the comprehension and creation of oral and written discourse rather than something to be learned as an end in itself”. The purpose of presenting students with adequate explanations is, to teach them how the grammar rules function at first, and then to provide them with appropriate situations in which to practice the rules. Shahidullah (2002) claimed it was almost “axiomatic” that the acquisition of the grammatical system of the target language remains the most important element in second language learning. Basic grammar knowledge is the

means to achieve linguistic creativity ultimately while inadequate grammar knowledge would lead to a serious handicap on the capacity for communication.

Fourth, grammar is always an aid to facilitate effective and smooth communication in CLT. Canale and Swain (1980) stated that grammatical linguistic competence serves as a catalyst for accuracy and fluency in second language learning. Musumeci (1997) added that viewing grammar with all of its components would help language teachers understand the complexity of the grammar knowledge of the target language. Hinkel and Fotos (2002) also concurred that teaching grammar is a necessary and fundamental aspect of teaching effective and accurate communication in the second language.

To sum up, the role of grammatical instruction within CLT is 1) as a communicative component; 2) as a means to complement students' mastery of second language; 3) as a tool to refine and construct new meanings deductively, and to achieve ultimate linguistic creativity; 4) as an aid to facilitate effective and smooth communication.

Effective Grammar Teaching Methods within CLT

While there is agreement on the importance of grammar teaching within CLT, how to teach grammar more effectively within this approach has been a major issue for ESL teachers and educators for decades. Willis (1996) stated that we do not express or use language functions separately. CLT does not mean a rejection of grammar. Instead, it focuses on a newer approach to the teaching of grammar.

Canale and Swain (1980) discussed how to incorporate grammar with CLT. They suggested that grammatical competence should be taught in the context of meaningful communication. The use of grammatical structures, as Brown (2001) suggested, should be

presented through authentic and communicative tasks. Too much rote activity at the expense of meaningful communication in second language classroom could stifle the learning process. Oller and Obrecht (1969) supported the same idea. They pointed out that there is certainly not correct to focus on all aspects of grammar at the top priority, nor does there seem to be a reason to focus on aspects of grammar that are not related to the learner's second language communication needs. The teachers might begin with a combination of emphasis on grammatical accuracy and on meaningful communication according to the basic communication needs of the learners, the communicative functions and social contexts. Palmer (1978) added that, grammatical approaches that incorporate only communicative tasks with no realistic communicative tasks would seem to be no more effective than an unmodified grammatical approach for developing communicative competence. The best way of teaching grammar within CLT is to teach grammar within meaningful and communicative contexts.

Canale & Swain (1980) stated that meaningful communication should be emphasized as a means to facilitate the acquisition of grammatical competence from the beginning and maintained that meaningful communication would be impossible without some knowledge of grammar. "The meanings (and perhaps some of the social behavior options) that one is able to exploit through the second language are restricted by the grammatical means of expression that have been mastered" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 18-19). Therefore, even though the role of grammar is regarded as the means to achieve linguistic competence, its role can only be developed within meaningful, communicative and authentic contexts.

Canale & Swain (1980) refer to the optimum combination of attention to grammar and attention to other communication skills. Three major grammar teaching methods may

be taken into account: consciousness-raising task, Focus-on-Form instruction, and communicative grammar teaching.

The use of consciousness-raising tasks is characterized by an inductive approach, which offers a pre-planned grammar syllabus with no practice exercises (Ellis, 2001). The teacher provides tasks to draw learners' attentions to the grammar rules and how they function. Once the student has understood the structure, he will integrate it into his interlanguage when he is ready, that is, to reach the appropriate stage in the natural order of second language acquisition. Fotos (1994) also explored ways to integrate grammar instruction and CLT through grammar consciousness-raising tasks. The findings of his study indicated that grammar consciousness-raising tasks successfully promoted both proficiency gains and second language interaction in the participants. He even found that some grammar-based activities are useful for integrating formal instruction within a communicative paradigm. Also, in the interview (Ellis & Hedge, 1993), Ellis stated that consciousness-raising (CR) might help learners to construct their own explicit grammar knowledge. Ellis added that explicit knowledge might help in many ways: for example, it may improve language accuracy, facilitate second language acquisition, and destabilize fossilization of the target language. He also pointed out that direct instruction can facilitate second language acquisition, but it is not sufficient by itself.

Focus-on-Form instruction is characterized by a synthetic approach of language teaching, where the primary focus of classroom activity is on language forms rather than the meanings (Burgess & Etherington, 2002). As mentioned earlier, there is a paradox concerning the proper role of grammar instruction in second language classroom: grammar can be taught or it can't (Blyth, 1998). The Focus-On-Form approach, in some sense, stands right in the middle between these two extremes. It is based on a more

realistic conception of grammar as heterogeneous, meaning that some grammar points are easy to explain and to apply, while other points are difficult or impossible to apply. It answers the problem in that it “profitably” combines explicit grammar instruction and implicit grammar instruction according to the grammar item and the communicative task. With no grammar syllabus, the teachers respond to the learners’ needs and explain grammar rules as they come up during the course of the study of texts or communicative tasks. Comeau (1987) stated that interactive grammar exercises should complement rather than replace traditional activities. Under Focus-on-Form Instruction, explicit grammar and implicit grammar are kept in a good balance to achieve grammatical competence.

Communicative grammar teaching, as Savignon (2003) stated, an approach that regard language learning should be inseparable from individual identity and social behavior. Brown (2000, p. 266) said that communicative grammar teaching normally consists of the following principles:

- an explicit grammar syllabus;
- pro-active (as well as reactive) teaching;
- brief explanations in the classroom;
- a range of mainly meaningful and communicative grammar exercises;
- continuous reminding through ‘reactive’ strategies: drawing attention, correction, re-explanation, more exercises as needed.

Based on the principles, CLT proposes a new model of grammar lesson called the classical PPP (presentation, practice and production) model (Harmer, 1998). In PPP model, the grammar teaching is divided into three stages: a presentation stage which presents the grammar item, a practice stage and a production stage. The presentation stage

can be like the grammar-translation method, in which the teacher explains the rules deductively. But grammar points can also be presented inductively in a meaningful text. Students might be asked to pay attention to the particular grammar points within meaningful contexts and draw some rules about their functions. In this way, students can extract the grammar rules by themselves. During the practice stage, students are provided pattern drill, repetition and reinforcement without looking at the functions of language, but students can also practice grammar in meaningful context. CLT prefers a cyclical approach to practicing grammar, (i.e. revisiting the particular grammar rules several times), rather than a linear approach, (i.e. having an item only once). Similarly, during the production stage, both controlled practice and free practice are involved with emphasis on free production of grammar items for meaningful and authentic communication (Harmer, 1998).

All three stages involve meaningful activities that put grammar into realistic use when grammar is presented either inductively or deductively. Authentic tasks or meaningful use of language helps the learners generate their own sentences for meaningful and authentic communication. Compared to other approaches like grammar translation methods and Audio-lingual methods, the importance of grammar instruction within CLT is to enhance the functional part of grammar rules and finally to “achieve the optimal balance between functional and grammatical organization at a given stage of study” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 32).

To sum up, as an integral part of communicative competence, grammatical competence is viewed as the means to achieve linguistic creativity and communicative capacity. But its role can only be developed in the context of meaningful and authentic

context. To achieve the optimum combination of grammar and other communication skills is the main purpose of grammar teaching in CLT.

Conclusions

Based on the literature review of the main theories and effective grammar teaching methods, I'd like to suggest the main principles concerning the important roles of grammatical instruction within communicative language teaching:

- Grammatical competence is viewed as having as integral and indispensable a role as other competences, but not as an optional add-on after basic communication has been achieved.
- Grammatical competence is viewed as a means to complement students' mastery of the second language.
- Grammatical competence is viewed as an aid to facilitate effective and smooth communication.
- Grammatical competence is viewed as a tool to achieve linguistic creativity and communicative capacity, but its role can only be developed within meaningful and authentic contexts.
- To achieve the optimum combination of attention to grammar and attention to other communication skills is the main purpose of grammar teaching in CLT. Explicit and implicit grammar should be kept in a good balance and integrated in communicative activities to achieve grammatical competence and other communicative competences.

The Characteristics of Chinese ESL Students

Krashen (2003) claimed that in determining to what extent grammar should be taught explicitly, a number of factors determine what grammar should be taught, how to teach, and to which learners of which languages, such as the structure of the target language, learner style and their background. In languages such as Japanese and Chinese, where input through reading is reduced, explicit instruction may be necessary to fill the gap. In Chinese, explicit instruction will of course be concentrated on accuracy. A few charts and basic manipulation drills on each grammar point take away from valuable time that might otherwise be spent in communicative activities. The way Chinese students learn their first language will determine more or less the way they deal with their second language learning. Adult students are more likely to demand an analytical instruction of the morphological system of the second language.

The importance of grammar instruction within CLT will be different from the perspectives of Chinese ESL students and it will be meaningful to investigate how they perceive it. The main reason comes from the fact that Chinese students are used to traditional grammar-based instruction. Penner (1995) noticed that the Chinese traditional approach focused on academic study of grammar knowledge and in-depth analysis of literary texts. Burnaby and Sun (1989) explained that traditional Chinese educational strategies, which favored memorization and grammar translation, have been westernized in some ways in recent years, by the Direct Methods and Audio-lingual method, etc. The result is that Chinese English teaching methods tended toward grammar translation, intensive and extensive reading, and the study of literature. Under such an educational system, Chinese ESL students' characteristics are typical examples of 'cultures with a

long tradition of unconditional obedience to authority', in which the teacher is seen not as a facilitator but as a 'fount of knowledge [to be] delivered' (Littlewood, 2000, p. 31).

However, Littlewood (2000) in his study indicated that the stereotype of Asian students as 'obedient listeners' does not reflect the roles they would like to act in class. The students' responses during the study show that they would like to be active and independent. They do not want to be spooned with facts from an all-knowing 'fount of knowledge'. They want to explore knowledge themselves and find their answers on their own. Most of all, they want to learn knowledge with their fellow students in an atmosphere which is "friendly and supportive" (p. 34). Horwitz (1987) revealed that "most second language learners had clear ideas about which learning and communication strategies facilitate or inhibit learning" (cited in Barkuizen 1998, p. 87; Leki & Carson, 1994; Zimmerman, 1997).

On the other hand, concerning how Chinese teachers view communicative methods and grammar instruction in China, Burnaby and Sun (1989) found:

The Chinese teachers concluded that 'the communicative methods were good for teaching Chinese people who were about to go to English speaking countries to live and study, but not for other Chinese students of English, particularly not English majors.' Thus, the Chinese generally agreed that communicative methods were more appropriate for: ... the contexts and purposes of learning English as a second language while Chinese methods were more suitable for learning English as a foreign language ... The Chinese use their own methods not just because contextual constraints make it difficult for them to use communicative methods but because it suits their students' purpose. (p. 227)

Chinese teachers and students seem to realize that communicative methods are useful in developing their second language proficiency. At the same time, they believe that grammar instruction continues to play a critical role in their language teaching and learning. It appears that they treat these as two distinct methods for different purposes. If that is the case, Chinese learners' perceptions on the role of grammar instruction within

CLT may be quite different from what has been found and concluded from the studies above.

B. Research Questions

The initial literature review suggests that there is a strong relationship between grammar instruction and CLT, and grammar instruction plays a significant role within CLT. For Chinese students who are accustomed to grammar-based instruction, it is meaningful and helpful to investigate their perceptions on the role grammar instruction plays within CLT. Based on direct observation, examination of instructional materials and in-depth interviews with Chinese ESL students and Canadian teachers, I would like to explore the following questions for my research study:

1. What in-class learning activities/experiences are used in CLT classrooms by the teachers to facilitate the use of grammatical conventions?
2. What perceptions do Chinese students have regarding the role of grammatical instruction within communicative language teaching?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

This is exploratory qualitative research - a case study, designed to provide a micro-examination of the role of grammatical instruction within the Communicative Language Teaching context among Chinese ESL students. A case study is a detailed examination of one particular setting, a single participant, or one particular event (Stake, 1994). Case studies facilitate the investigation of complex social phenomena. The case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). For my research, case study is the most appropriate choice because it will result in a rich and holistic account of how Chinese ESL student perceive the role of grammar instruction in a CLT classroom. Based in real-life situations, the case study may offer insights and illuminate meanings concerning the two research questions.

Since the study is designed to examine the role of grammar instruction within CLT approach, the participants of the particular case study will be Chinese learners who attend ESL classes experiencing CLT in Canada and their teachers. These are the actual participants and therefore are in the ideal position to give their perspective on the role grammar plays in CLT and what kind of activities are better to realize the role of grammar instruction. It is a purposeful sampling. After getting permission from the Ethics Committee at the University of Windsor and YMCA New Canadian Learning Centre, teachers and students were selected and asked to participate in the study. After getting permission and consent letters, four Canadian teachers and fifteen Chinese ESL students agreed to participate in the study. The four teachers were all female teachers who have had many years' experiences teaching ESL students. They either taught English in ESL

program in colleges, or taught in ESL training centre for new immigrants. They have contact with a variety of ESL students from all over the world. They are skilled practitioners in this field.

The Chinese ESL students were 7 females and 8 males, ranging from 25 to 40 years old. All of them have received formal instruction in English and at minimum have finished Senior High School in China (equal to Grade 12 in Canada). Twelve of them actually finished a bachelor degree or something comparable. They were quite good at writing and reading English so most of them scored high in the benchmark test and were placed at an advanced level (Level 4/5) at the beginning of their ESL study. All of them were anxious to improve their spoken English so that they could get accustomed to the new culture easily and quickly.

B. Data Collection

The case study collected data in three ways to achieve triangulation: direct observation of teaching and learning in the ESL classroom, in-depth interviews with the teachers and in-depth interviews with Chinese ESL students.

Phase 1: Direct observation teaching and learning in the ESL classroom. After getting permission and consent from the teachers, I observed four classes of ESL students four days a week for a total of four weeks, approximately 3-5 hours each day. The purpose was to get to know the communicative teaching approach and other communicative activities in the ESL classroom first hand. I played the role of an observer-as-participant, by directly observing the teaching and learning activities in the communicative classroom as they occurred in natural settings without disturbing the participants. Since I was observing a specific group of people rather than trying to become immersed in the entire context, direct observation often suggests a more detached

perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In this case study, the purpose of direct observation was to gain deeper understanding of grammar instruction and CLT. In class, I also examined the teaching textbook and instructional materials to ascertain the grammatical components. Having years of intensive formal English instruction in China and basic knowledge about CLT, I have had experiential background to interpret my findings.

Phase 2: In-depth interviews with the teachers. The interview with four Canadian teachers in four ESL classes was designed to investigate teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar instruction in their communicative language teaching classrooms. The in-depth interview focused on the following topics: 1) What kind of role does grammar play in your CLT classroom? 2) What kind of grammar teaching strategies do you use in CLT classroom to facilitate linguistic and grammatical competence? Each interview ranged from 45 to 60 minutes. All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The transcripts of the interviews were also given to the interviewees for later verification.

Phase 3: In-depth Interviews with Chinese ESL students. The in-depth interviews involved fifteen Chinese ESL students as participants. Prior to the interview, letters of information and consent to participate were sent to Chinese ESL students. After getting permission from the participants, I undertook one-on-one interviews with each student, each ranging from 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were designed to help me to gain an in-depth understanding of the Chinese students' perceptions on the role of grammar instruction within the context of CLT. The interview focused on the following topics: 1) What kind of role does grammar play in your current English studying in a CLT classroom? 2) What kind of grammar teaching strategies do you prefer in CLT classroom? Are they effective in developing your grammatical competence? Each

interview was conducted in the students' native language (Mandarin) so that the interviewees were able to express their ideas fully and clearly. All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The transcripts of the interviews were also given to the interviewees for later verification.

C. Interview Design

Because communicative language learning and teaching are indispensable components of ESL classrooms, it is necessary and beneficial to have an examination of the perceptions of both teachers and ESL learners on the role of grammar instruction within CLT. Apart from direct observation of the CLT classroom, I conducted qualitative, in-depth interviews with both teachers and Chinese ESL students. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Semi-structured questionnaires were provided in advance as guidelines for the interviews:

Sample Questionnaires for Chinese ESL students:

1. How long have you studied English in China? What do you think of the English teaching methods in China?
2. How long have you been here (YMCA New Canadian Centre)? Why did you come here?
3. Generally speaking, what do you think of the English teaching methods in Canada?
 - What communicative activities help improve your grammar abilities?
 - *Do you enjoy doing this activity in class? (Favorable or unfavorable)
 - *Do you think this activity helps you to learn more English?
 - *Do you feel that grammar exercises help you to learn?
 - *Do you feel it helps you through grammar correction activities?
 - *Do you prefer to work out the rules for yourself, or to be given them by the teachers?

- *What suggestions do you have for effective grammar teaching?
4. Comparing English teaching methods in China and Canada, what kind of differences do they have in grammar teaching?
 5. What kinds of difficulties do you have when you learn English as a second language?
 6. How would you describe the role of grammar instruction within CLT in one sentence?

Each interview, lasting 45-60 minutes, was conducted in the students' native language (Chinese) so that the interviewees were able to express their ideas fully and clearly.

Sample Questionnaires for Teachers:

Some of the questions were about views on the role of grammar instruction and some of them were about their teaching practice and activities. Since activities are usually determined by their theory and approach toward the role of grammar teaching, it is necessary and important to examine their teaching practice.

1. What do you think about Chinese ESL students? What kind of things impressed you most about them?
2. Do you have an idea of how Chinese students learn English in China?
3. In a communicative language teaching classroom, why is grammar instruction so important?
 - *When we say we want students to 'know' grammar, what do we mean and what expectations do we have?
 - * How would you describe the role of grammar instruction within CLT in one sentence?
4. In your CLT classroom, what kind of communicative activities do you usually have to enhance learners' grammatical competence?

D. Data Analysis

Data was collected through direct classroom observation and in-depth interviews with fifteen Chinese ESL students and four Canadian teachers. It took approximately one month. After observing their classes for a week or so, I initially developed a general sense of how grammar instruction was practiced in a typical CLT classroom. After that, I interviewed the students and their teachers with specific questions on their communicative activities they experienced in class. According to interview transcripts, I coded description and themes about the central phenomenon: how Chinese students perceive the role of grammar instruction within CLT and communicative activities. Since the interviews with Chinese ESL students were conducted in their first language, Mandarin, I translated the transcripts from spoken into written text in English. To make sure I transferred most of it, I went through the tape recording several times and kept notes. There was a lot of information concerning the two research questions, but a general sense of the data was categorized according to their commonalities and systemized into several subgroups. These were incorporated into a framework for a consideration of grammar teaching within CLT. After the central phenomenon was identified and key characteristics of each subgroup were formed, I selected one or two examples from classroom practice and interview transcripts to fit in each theme or subgroup. If the idea was unclear or the description did not represent the subgroup well, I went back to ask participants questions in particular to make sure their views were interpreted in a correct and complete way. These responses were analyzed and more themes or subgroups were developed. At the same time, I continued to observe the class to see if their saying corresponded with their practices in class, in order to get a fuller sense of the central phenomenon. In the end, there were two major themes dealing with the two research

questions separately. Data collected from classroom observation was the main source to answer the first question about what kind of communicative activities facilitate grammatical competence. Interviews with teachers and Chinese ESL students revealed answers to the second question concerning the role of grammatical instruction within CLT.

1. What in-class learning activities/experiences are used in CLT classrooms by the teachers to facilitate the use of grammatical conventions?

As mentioned earlier, Brown (2000) stated that CLT contains four characteristics. Based on my classroom observations, the classroom activities complied exactly with the four characteristics of CLT. Communicative competence was the final purpose while grammar was obviously a means to reach that goal. All classroom activities focused on four basic language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing and kept them in good balance. The four teachers, who participated in the study, believed that grammar was a complex concept that covered words, spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and usage. Teachers integrated all those components into one classroom. "Instead of separating four basic language skills, I use a 'whole language approach' in my classroom" (Jennifer, the teacher). There were a variety of communicative activities applying in the classes, such as role-playing, presentation, grammar correction, cloze exercises, group discussion, drama, word-playing games, crossword and self-study through educational software. Among them, three activities were helpful and meaningful for Chinese students to develop their grammatical competence: explicit grammar and implicit grammar combination activity, activities within authentic and meaningful contexts and grammar correction activity.

Explicit Grammar and Implicit Grammar Combination Activity

During classroom observations, I noticed that there was never rote-memory for grammar rules in CLT classes. Two teachers seldom used the blackboard for explanations of grammar rules while the other two used it sometimes for students to take notes. There was a certain amount of time for clear explanation and illustration of specific grammar points, while the remaining part of the class was quite flexible depending on the individual teacher's teaching styles. A typical CLT class normally went like this according to my classroom observations. There was a central grammar point or focus everyday. Various kinds of exercises and activities such as short stories and cloze activities, were applied and practiced around the central grammar point to get better understanding and strengthen its usage. For lower levels (level 2 or level 3), there were lots of cooperative group work. The teachers usually guided the students to solve the problem or help them finish exercises. Exercises explanation and practice took nearly 1/4 of the class. On the other hand, for higher levels (level 4/5), more independent work was involved. One of the teachers asked students to do exercises individually for 8 to 10 minutes. After individual work, she either checked answers with the whole class or asked students to speak out the answers in turns. In this way, explicit grammar instruction took nearly 1/6-1/4 (30 or 45 minutes in 3 hours) while the remaining was implicit grammar instruction integrated into communicative exercises and practice. In a sense, such a combination of implicit grammar and explicit grammar instruction was similar to Focus-on-Form Instruction and PPP model (p. 23-24). Also, a good balance between explicit and implicit grammar instruction helped develop grammatical competence.

In a typical Chinese EFL class, 10 or 20 grammar rules were explicitly taught in one class. One Chinese student, Liu said, they did not have time at all to absorb the

grammar points in Chinese EFL classes or even to think about their actual use in communication. All they were requested to do was to remember grammar rules for exams instead of using them. That was the main reason why Chinese students lacked sufficient oral practice in class. Whereas Chinese teachers preferred presenting and reviewing grammar rules while students remained passive, Canadian teachers usually provided sample sentences including the grammar rules. Students have enough time to understand the meaning of the rules and to practice them during class instead of repeating and remembering grammar rules without using them. By illustrating grammar rules and applying them within meaningful context, the students gradually found and concluded the grammar rules on their own. Once the students became active learners in class, they felt comfortable and stress-free. "I prefer the way they teach grammar implicitly because grammar is incorporated in my oral expression. I felt happy speaking English without worrying about making grammar mistakes" (Lily).

Activities within Authentic and Meaningful Contexts

As I mentioned earlier, the role of grammar with CLT can only be developed in a meaningful and authentic context according to Canale and Swain (1980). Authentic materials and authentic activities helped facilitate communicative competence. During my study in class, I observed the use of a certain textbook for the students in each class. Two teachers would like to teach mostly based on the textbook or strictly stick to the textbook. The other two teachers preferred to teach in their own ways, but sometimes integrated the context of the textbooks into classroom activities. But all teachers in the study insisted that meaningful context was necessary and important. "A specific topic is learned and discussed everyday or two, such as food, law and crime, capital punishment, etc. Topics are very relevant and up-to date" (Chris, the teacher). Teachers focused on exercises and

activities in four basic language skills around the topic. They didn't mention grammar explicitly. Because the topics were relevant to real life, every student expressed his or her opinion freely or participated in discussions. Sometimes, students were asked to tell their own story in their culture. For example, one student of the class was supposed to do a presentation on his home culture this week and another student next week. "Students always show high motivation during the presentation. The presenter feels excited talking about his own culture while the listeners feel happy listening and sharing each other's life experiences" (Chris, the teacher). Chinese students also responded to this activity with great enthusiasm. "It is a very interactive activity" (Lily).

Other good examples of applying grammar within authentic contexts were telephone listening or local news listening activities. "Telephone is the biggest terror for all ESL students. They have to cross the bridge" (Magaret, the teacher). The activity "Listening to the radio" combined grammar knowledge and communicative practice like other communicative activities in class. During the radio listening activity, students were asked to keep notes while listening. After that, the teachers guided learners to repeat the news together, answering who, where, what, etc. The teacher helped students to repeat the news in complete sentences, including main ideas, key points and whatever students managed to catch. Students had opportunities to review the same content on TV themselves or in newspapers if interested. It helped them to improve listening ability and speaking abilities at the same time. The Chinese students in the study complained that because they lack language environment in China, they had awkward pronunciation and non native-like expression. The communicative activities within authentic contexts in CLT classrooms just fulfilled their needs for native language environment. Actually, nowadays, Chinese EFL classrooms have imported many original textbooks and videos

from English-speaking countries. Besides, the internet has a tremendous wealth of English learning materials. We may take for granted that we could receive authentic learning materials as well in China. However, some students argued that it did not achieve great popularity or instant results.

“We need native speakers to tell us how to use English correctly, I mean, native-like expressions. Even though we have read large amount of literacy in English version, we still stand outside their culture. I feel so comfortable when native teachers talk about yesterday local news and even trivial things that occur everyday. It’s more practical and attractive than those letters or words in textbooks. I believe only when native speakers tell us in their own natural words, for example, how to express things, how to make myself understood, can I finally find an authentic and meaningful language environment or context for myself” (Ma).

In the eyes of Chinese students, meaningful and authentic context in communicative activities helped them to facilitate communicative competence, just as Canale & Swain suggested in 1980.

Grammar Correction Activity

One teacher preferred to correct grammar all the time in both composition and spoken English while the others preferred to correct only the most obvious grammar mistakes. One example of grammar correction was as follows: the teacher corrected grammar mistakes together with the whole class. Learners corrected the mistakes orally in class instead of receiving feedback that just told them what was right or wrong. In this way, every student had a chance of viewing other students’ mistakes, identifying and correcting common mistakes. Everybody learned from others’ strong points to offset his own weakness. After the whole class identified and corrected common grammar mistakes, students worked in pairs, talking to the person beside them about mistakes, then changing partners and continuing to address mistakes. Finally students rewrote the composition and improved the content. “I’d like to correct mistakes in all areas, subjects,

verbs, object, singular, past tense, future tense, preposition, etc.” (Jennifer, the teacher). When the students discussed the same problem they were highly motivated. Some Chinese students (8/15) thought it was useful to correct grammar in their speaking and writing. Others (3/15) thought it was “very frustrating to face my own mistakes” (Zhou).

The teachers in the study understood that correcting students all the time seemed frustrating. But all teachers strongly believed the grammar correcting activities were communicative too in a sense, “because students can express their thoughts freely in public. When talking about grammar rules, they usually present the words and rules in a meaningful context. Words don’t make sense in pieces. I only correct grammar mistakes and seldom talk about specific grammar point or rules. I think students will learn them automatically” (Jennifer, the teacher). It means grammar correction activity combines explicit grammar instruction and implicit grammar instruction like other communicative activities.

Since Chinese students had a strong grammar background, teaching more grammar at one time within meaningful contexts was suitable for them and not boring. According to 8 students of level 4/5, there was one particular grammar correction activity which turned out to be more effective than others for them: the teacher summarized a list of common grammar mistakes in speaking/writing taken from students’ presentation and composition. “Because all the grammar mistakes come from my own writing, I can easily understand why it is correct and remember its correct usage”(Xing). When students reviewed the mistakes together, they could speak and communicate at the same time. Like one teacher, Jennifer said, grammar correction activity was both helpful and communicative so that Chinese students really benefit from grammar correction instead of getting frustrated.

In general, twelve of the fifteen students expressed that the grammar teaching activities integrated in communicative activities were helpful and positive. As one put it: “there are no fixed grammar points here. The teachers don’t teach grammar on purpose. The main activities here are a lot of life-related topics or stories when grammar is taught inductively during the course of such activities” (Lily). Grammar seemed invisible but existed everywhere. Grammar was not taught and learned under specific syllabus and directions, but it was used and applied everyday with improvement. The other three students felt uneasy or unsatisfied with such implicit grammar instruction in their classes. They didn’t know what the key grammar points were because teachers didn’t point them out clearly. Chinese ESL students felt as though they were “playing” in class (Zhang) or even thought it was “a waste of time” (Liu).

Nearly all students (13/15) in the study expressed that if there was a specific class for conversation or communicative skill development, it would be perfect and needs-oriented. “Grammar is too easy for me. I only want to develop my communicative competence. If we can communicate with teachers during the whole class, I will soon learn words that natives use often. Native speakers don’t care much about grammar, as far as I know” (Zhang). Among them, eight students pointed out that communicative activities are useful in certain way to enforce grammar knowledge they have learned at school in China. “The grammar rules were quite different from what I learned in China, either from textbooks or from the teachers. It was confusing at first, though. But since it is the way that native speakers do. I have no choice but to follow. If I could speak English fluently and use the language they use everyday, it would be perfect” (Ying).

When asked to compare communicative activities in CLT and oral practice in traditional grammar-based instruction in China, Chinese students stated that there was a

significant difference on the emphasis of grammar instruction. Interestingly, the students interviewed unanimously agreed, that such difference was the cause of the difference on teaching effectiveness between these two methods. Ten of the fifteen students said that each method had its own advantage and both were beneficial and instructive to ESL learners. Traditional methods as used in China were quite effective in helping students to build a solid background in grammar knowledge because teachers pointed out grammar points explicitly and systematically. “Normally, Chinese teachers would like to adapt a word-associating method to expand vocabulary or grammar rules. For example, when they teach the word *happy*, Chinese teachers would like to teach as well adjective form and adverb form of the word *happy*” (Zhang). Besides, “strict intensive instruction aimed at passing exams puts great pressure, thus forcing me to remember the grammar points by rote. In that way, I will never forget the grammar for a long time even though it was a painful experience” (Ying). However, such an inflexible instruction effective to pass exams was definitely inadequate for practicing oral English, according to ten students participating. On the other hand, eight students suggested that communicative approaches in Canada put grammar in a favorable environment with little stress, which was especially effective in improving communicative skills. Take the above *happy* example again. When Canadian teachers taught *happy*, they only said it’s an adjective and talked about its practical usage, and immediately afforded opportunities to use the word. “We don’t have to remember thousands of rules everyday. All I have to do here is to speak, speak, and speak. It’s here that I am really studying real English, because I am using it. I speak with native speakers” (Zhao).

Hence, both methods were helpful for improving English language studying. What made a big difference in the effectiveness of grammar instruction was that there were a

variety of activities in CLT classroom instead of rote-memory in traditional Chinese EFL classroom. CLT put communication at the core of their instruction and curriculum. There were a variety of communicative activities such as presentation, group discussion, small games, role-playing, short story, and pair conversation to strengthen the practical application of grammar points. One grammar rule at a time with plenty of activities provided learners with enough opportunities to put this grammar rule into practical use based on my classroom observations. “All activities are aimed at encouraging students to speak and use the grammar rules and other language knowledge into real life communication with little pressure. That’s why I prefer communicative activities here in Canada” (Ma). Unlike CLT classroom, in traditional Chinese classroom, students were “forced to remember words and grammar rules to pass exams” (Ying).

To sum up, all students in the study agreed that communicative activities are effective in improving communicative competence with some emphasis in grammar instruction (Zhao, Ma) while traditional grammar-based instructions were effective in helping build strong grammar background (Zhang, Ying). But ten of them believed that communicative activities were significant for helping them put grammar rules into actual usage. They also agreed that each teacher had her unique teaching style. Some teachers put greatest emphasis on grammar with a lot of exercises and grammar correction. The students said they felt happy that all teachers were helpful in leading students to put grammar points into practical communication usage. Similar to the conclusions on page 25, the role of grammar can only be developed in the context of meaningful and authentic context.

As mentioned before, Canale and Swain (1980) stated that the unique significance of CLT was to achieve the optimal balance between grammar knowledge and

communicative skills. The communicative activities I observed in class helped Chinese students to reinforce their communicative usage of grammar knowledge and achieve communicate competence. According to the perceptions of teachers and students, the optimal balance depends on their own language level and teachers' styles. That's why some students felt happy about implicit grammar instruction (Lily) while others were still accustomed to explicit grammar (Ying). But generally speaking, they feel satisfied with the communicative activities that enable them to speak correct and fluent English even though they had different perceptions on the place of grammar instruction in CLT classes.

2: What perceptions do Chinese students have regarding the role of grammatical instruction within communicative language teaching?

To find out how Chinese students perceived the role of grammar instruction exposed in CLT classrooms, interviewing students was the most direct and effective way. When asked to compare Chinese traditional grammar-based instruction with communicative approaches in Canada, all Chinese ESL students in the study strongly agreed that although there existed some commonalities between the two, there were more differences between the two methods especially as pertains to the role and importance of grammar instruction. Some students (7/12) thought that there was no change at all in the role of grammar instruction in their English language learning, whether it was in China or in Canada, because grammar remained of similar importance in English language teaching, and it was regarded as a *means* to meet the needs of learners. "I believe the role of grammar remains unchanged in my English studying. Both methods value grammar much" (Lily).

According to the data from the students' interview transcripts, the main difference between CLT and grammar-based instruction in China was that communicative activities in CLT helped students put grammar knowledge learned from teachers and textbooks into actual use flexibly and correctly. "The role of grammar is equally important in both methods, except the focus is a little bit different. For me, grammar instruction within CLT is totally a means to facilitate communication" (Zhao). Some students thought that, unlike CLT, traditional grammar-based instruction could only help them acquire basic knowledge of grammar but failed to help them use the grammar rules correctly or fluently. Most teachers agreed with this too. They found Chinese students had advanced grammatical competence in writing and reading, but were very poor in speaking skills. "As far as grammar is concerned, some Chinese students are excellent in reading and writing when they came here" (Jennifer, the teacher).

During the interviews, students (8/15) agreed that such an imbalanced language proficiency was largely caused by the restricted emphasis and teaching methods of traditional grammar-based instruction.

Grammar-based instruction in China usually devotes the whole class explaining grammar rules and practicing sample exercises. Eh, the sample quiz is always in written form. Although we do sometimes have oral practice after the explanation and illustration of the teachers, it is totally insufficient and artificial of course. I can answer all the grammar rules 100% correctly in the exams. But when I speak, it is full of grammatical mistakes. I don't know why there is such a gap between my spoken and written English. But I am pretty sure of one thing: I lack practice, oral practice, I mean. Even though both methods value grammar very much, the way they teach grammar is totally different. I have plenty of time here to practice my oral English using the grammar rules in China. (Zhao)

The seven Chinese students unanimously agreed that grammar teaching within CLT definitely has the effect of facilitating communicative skills. "I can speak English all the time here. That's what I want from the class. I don't feel any uneasiness and

frustration because everybody here is almost at the same level” (Lily). At this point, we may say the role of grammar instruction was regarded as the means to facilitate communication from the perspectives of Chinese ESL students.

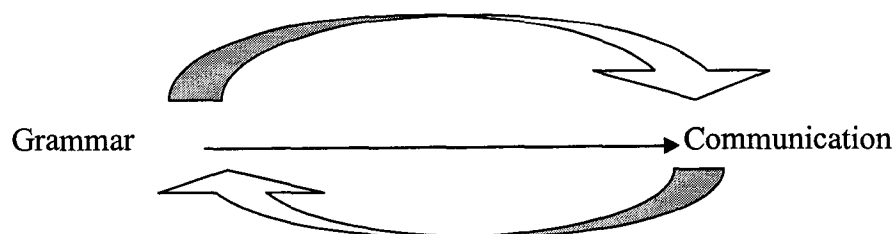
Eight of the fifteen Chinese students believed firmly that there was no need for grammar instruction in CLT. They felt grammar instruction in CLT classroom was sometimes boring, or a waste of time. “I don’t need grammar instruction any more. I already acquired enough grammar knowledge in China. I feel the grammar knowledge here is so boring. It is a waste of time for me. I don’t feel like using those rules ‘cause it is so easy for me. I came here only for the purpose of oral proficiency” (Liu). Like Liu, most Chinese students believed that they had achieved solid or even advanced grammatical background. Grammar was no longer as necessary and important as before. What was lacking most was survival English or conversational English. Communicative skills were most important at present for all the students even though they had different individual purposes or needs. They thought grammar instruction and communicative approaches should be two different methods in language teaching. Since they had achieved solid grammar background from traditional grammar instruction, all they wanted at present was to benefit from CLT to improve oral language competence. “CLT for me is functional English or communicative English. I don’t want to suffer once again from remembering grammar rules without any actual use. I want to speak out English” (Ping). They perceived that they only require communicative learning without grammar-specific instruction.

In summary, Chinese students expressed two different opinions concerning the role of grammar with CLT. Grammar was either regarded “as the means to facilitate communication” (Zhao) or contrarily “useless in CLT classroom” (Liu, Ping). In the

literature review, we concluded that there are several roles that grammar plays within CLT (page 25-26). However, one of all Chinese ESL students' perceptions on the role of grammatical instruction seems to agree on one role: "grammatical competence is viewed as an aid to facilitate effective and smooth communication" (page 24). The rest of the students did not think there was a point of teaching grammar at their present level. The importance of CLT for these group of students was first to compensate for oral practice and communication skills which they lacked in traditional grammar-based classrooms. To analyze this situation which was common among Chinese ESL students, I highlighted the reasons in the following paragraph.

When Chinese ESL students came to Canada, they only had a solid grammatical background on which to pursue improvement in oral proficiency. The situation was the opposite for ESL students from other countries. Those students communicated easily in English but generally received little grammatical instruction. What they mainly wanted was to study basic language knowledge in grammar and vocabulary to help them survive in the new culture. So in other words, they were basic communicators in pursuit of a grammatical base whereas Chinese learners were in pursuit of a communicative base.

After several months of instruction with communicative approach in Canada, some Chinese students appeared to develop a conceptualization which is represented in the following model.



Those interviewees who favored grammar instruction in CLT strongly believed that basic and solid knowledge of grammar in China helped Chinese students to concentrate on improving their communicative skills. During the practice of communication, they not only depended on solid grammar knowledge from grammar-based instruction but also integrated their knowledge of grammar into various communicative activities during class, thus strengthening their application with grammar knowledge in real situations. I contend that a positive learning cycle was developed gradually to improve both linguistic competence and communicative competence.

However, for students who believed there was no point in teaching grammar in CLT like Ping, they failed to form a cyclical relationship between these two. They have a lineal view and do not attribute sufficient credit to their solid base of grammar knowledge.



As we can see from the illustration, the backward link didn't take place. I suggest that the reason was that although students understand communication was the main purpose of language learning, they didn't attribute communicative improvement to knowledge of grammatical components and vice versa, they didn't think grammar instruction within a communicative approach was beneficial or useful for language improvement. Grammar instruction and communicative approach were two distinct learning processes to them. "I don't think grammar instruction is helpful for me at present. Besides, I think if I receive grammar instruction like this in such a stress-free atmosphere, I will not achieve anything. I strongly believe that grammar should be taught

in the traditional way in China while communicative approaches should ignore grammar parts and aim for communicative skills only” (Zhang).

The main reason for such a difference among Chinese students was that most Chinese students still had deep-roots in their learning ideologies, learning styles and strategies, which were far removed from the constructivist learning theories of the west and still largely teacher-centered and textbook-driven. Some teachers had an idea of how Chinese students learned English in China while some had no concept but they noticed that Chinese students were very rules-driven. “Chinese students are always hard workers. They are very inquisitive. They want to know the exact reasons for everything. They like rules very much” (Margaret, the teacher). Chinese students acted exactly like “a logical thinker” or “linear thinker”. They wanted to know the exact reason for how the language was structured.

“Chinese students are very serious. They work very hard. But they have a strange sense of humor, I mean, Eastern sense of humor. For them, nothing is spontaneous. Everything must be planned... I know in China, EFL was treated and learned as a subject with little spoken English... The common result is of course that students just give back information and not apply them at all” (Chris, the teacher). It is very hard for a person to change his old habits. For Chinese students who received years of intensive and explicit grammar instruction, it is not easy for them to change their learning styles in second language learning.

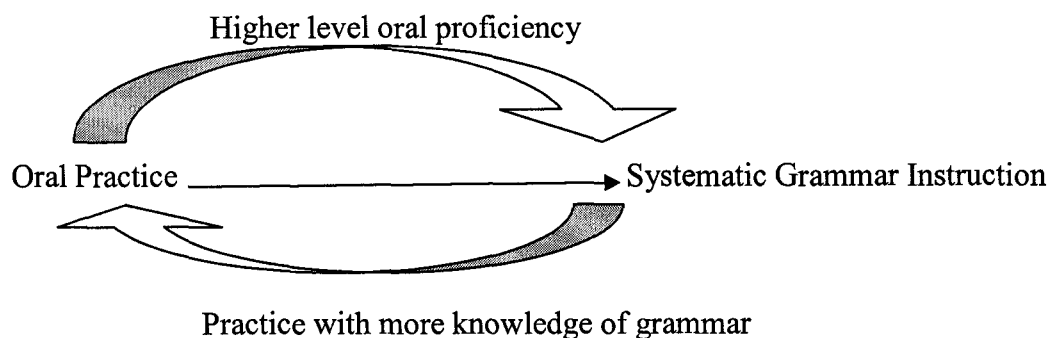
Recalling the findings from the first research question, the purpose of communicative activities for them was to speak English until they could speak it easily and fluently. “We can use the grammar, because the teachers encourage us to speak. In traditional classrooms in China, I have no time to practice oral English at all. Every time I

study a grammar point, I only remember it for exams. But here, I can use grammar knowledge learned from traditional methods to understand what the teachers teach and have sufficient time to put the grammar into practice. I usually spend the whole class listening and talking. It is almost like playing. I don't have to take notes and worry about the exams" (Lily). In this sense, grammar instruction within CLT may still be regarded as the basis and the means for Chinese ESL students to facilitate progress in their oral proficiency.

No matter how the students perceived the role of grammar teaching within current language teaching, all ESL students in the study supported that grammar instruction and communicative methods were both useful in their second language learning . "Grammar instruction helps me develop a general, clear, and correct understanding of English. Communicative activities on the other hand, help me to develop a native-like oral language. If we could apply both methods in China instead of being dominated only by grammar-based instruction, we could make magnificent progress, at least I think so" (Zhao). Believing the above relationship between grammar and communicative approach, some students (4/15) suggested a better model of teaching grammar, which I am calling the infusion model. They strongly believe if they could receive this kind of instruction they expected in Chinese EFL context when they were young, their English would be much better than their present level.

The first step of this model is of course to establish oral practice as the main activity and instruction in class. Teachers can explain some basic grammar rules and correct grammar mistakes from time to time. After practicing oral language for a certain time, the students should develop awareness of language, consciously or unconsciously, when they know basic communicative skills and some grammar rules induced during the

course of communication. Language awareness, as Carter (2003) stated, refers to the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language. In one way or another, implicit grammar instruction within communicative activities helps learners internalize the L2 system by directing their attention to grammatical form. Diffey (1995) said that “awareness thus acquired is then reinvested in new language experiences, which give rise to other kinds of awareness by the same processes” (p. 197). At this stage, the teachers can guide the students to organize and systematize the grammar rules. Because students already have an idea of how to talk or express in daily life, it would be easier for them to find examples that correspond with the grammar rules. Such a jump from implicit understanding to explicit and scientific understanding is the key in realizing the purpose of grammar instruction. Only at this stage do systematic grammar rules have a positive effect on language improvement, helping students achieve correct and useful language. There should be a different grammar focus according to different language levels, individual backgrounds and requirements. After students have a better understanding of how to put words in the right order to make sense, they will have more meaningful and communicative activities. To illustrate this, a spiral cycle may help:



With more systematic grammar knowledge, the students will practice English more easily and accurately. Diffey (1995) explained the process by saying that “learners

refine their hypotheses about the structure and functioning of the L2 and may even tune out in classroom activities that do not advance their personal learning agenda” (p. 197). After they reach another advanced level, the teachers will teach higher level of systematic grammar knowledge. After several times of oral practice-systematic grammar instruction-higher level of oral proficiency-higher-level of systematic grammar instruction, the learners will achieve fluent and correct oral English gradually. In this way, grammar is actually learned during oral practice implicitly when grammar is taught during systematic grammar instruction explicitly. It is consistent with the principle of CLT - explicit and implicit grammar combined within communicative activities (Brown, 2000). Strozer (1994) supported that explicit input alone is not enough for optimal acquisition of all aspects of grammar. Other researchers have shown evidence that implicit grammar learning allows learners time and space to develop their own affective and experiential responses to the language, especially to its contextual meanings and effects (Ellis, 1998; Rutherford, 1987). This will foster the learner’s involvement and increase motivation. During this positive cycle, both implicit grammar and explicit grammar combined play a linking role in second language teaching and learning, connecting knowledge of grammar rules to their application in communication. As I mentioned earlier, Blyth (1998) said there was a dichotomous approach among educators about grammar teaching in second language classroom: to teach all or to teach nothing. As we can see, the model that I am advocating here is a much more holistic one. It emphasizes all aspects of grammar and mix explicit grammar instruction and implicit grammar instruction. Grammar is infused in every stage of this model. It may be very suitable for Chinese students because they are quite good at systematized rules and they can still develop communicative skills as they expect. During the first stage, grammar is infused implicitly, and the second stage is what

Chinese students favored most, the explicit grammar instruction. They can quickly absorb grammar rules and keep them in mind. During the third stage, there may be both explicit grammar instruction and implicit grammar instruction. That's why it is called an infusion model. Communicative teaching and grammar teaching are inseparable. This model is based on several students' suggestion and a general idea of their perceptions on grammar instruction and CLT. Part of it may come from my personal experience.

Although Chinese students' views are different, the four ESL teachers' perceptions seemed to be much similar to one another concerning the role of grammar instruction within CLT. Generally speaking, grammar didn't play a highly valued role in CLT although it was very important. One teacher said with strong belief that:

“Grammar is tied in with the Communicative approach. But the communicative approach is not tied in with grammar. Communicative approach is of primary importance in the ESL classroom. The main goal is to teach communicative skills while grammar instruction happens during communicative activities. Undoubtedly, the students need to use grammar but to use it in context. Grammar only helps them to understand how to put words together in a sentence. Grammar rules are both implicitly and explicitly taught and integrated in activities or exercises. The ultimate expectation is to use grammar and guide students to find rules on their own. If stuck on grammar, it will lose to communication”. (Jennifer, the teacher)

Coincidentally, the teachers' expectations on grammar instruction within CLT corresponded with the students' needs for communicative skills. Recalling from the findings of research and studies on page 26-27, it appeared that teachers agreed with most of the roles that grammar plays within CLT. Another teacher also pointed out, “Grammar is like the roots in trees. If the roots are strong, the tree will grow. If the roots are weak, the tree will die. How to put words together into sentences to make sense is the purpose.”

In conclusion, based on the interviews of both Chinese ESL students and their teachers, I found that eight Chinese students believed grammar instruction within CLT

served as a means for Chinese ESL students to realize the functional part of grammar knowledge and finally achieve communicative competence. All kinds of communicative activities combined explicit grammar and implicit grammar in a fine balance within a meaningful, authentic and communicative context. Seven other Chinese students on the other hand, think there is no need for grammar instruction within CLT. Recalling the misconception among Chinese students mentioned earlier that they think grammar instruction and CLT were two incompatible teaching methods, it is interesting to find that the eight Chinese students still did not realize the connection between these two methods even after they received CLT, while their teachers strongly believed the two methods were interconnected where grammar plays as a linking tool within CLT.

CHAPTER IV

IMPLICATIONS

A. Implications

Educators and researchers have been developing effective grammar teaching methods for years. We have moved far beyond the perception that there is only one best way of learning second language (Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Stevick, 1980). Krashen (2003) stated there is no need to find a fit-for-all grammar teaching method for all language learners but the importance of grammar instruction should continue to be emphasized in the second language classroom. Prabhu (1987) also supported that there is a best method for each different teaching situation because “diversity and the need for changing, sensitive response will manifest themselves in each context, at all levels and on all scales of operation” (Edge, 1996, p. 12). Based on what was found from this particular case study, Chinese students aimed for developing communicative competence rather than grammatical competence, it is better to teach grammar implicitly and let them apply grammar knowledge as much as possible in speaking. The following suggestions might be helpful and beneficial for Chinese ESL students and teachers.

First, teachers should guide students to use grammar in various communicative activities as much as possible. Thompson (1996) suggested wherever possible, after being exposed to new language in a comprehensible context at first, learners are able to understand its function and meaning. Only then will their attention be turned to examining the grammatical forms that are used to convey that meaning. With the guidance of their teachers, their new knowledge of the language can be easily and usefully expressed. CLT emphasizes viewing language as a system for communication. It also takes into account the fact that second language learning is likely to be more efficient

if the learners have an opportunity to talk about what they are learning. By noticing the expectations of the students in terms of what they wanted to learn and how they were used to language learning, it might become possible to meet their needs, to expose them to new ways of learning the target language, and to encourage them to put their language to use in meaningful ways. For example, let Chinese students provide sample sentences for each grammatical rule on their own. Then, read the words they find themselves and repeat by making more complete sentences. They learn and use the grammar at the same time within meaningful contexts. This method is very suitable to Chinese students because they already have enough vocabulary and grammar rules. They can search their memory to find suitable elements to put words in a sentence, at least to make them understood. Similar to Canale and Swain's idea in 1980, the role of grammar within CLT can only be realized in meaningful contexts. Such activities will provide them with enough opportunities at their appropriate level.

Second, a stress-free or favorable language environment is proven effective for Chinese students who for many years endured serious and teacher-centered instruction. The teachers in this study strongly believe that their instruction and classroom activities will serve to open doors for Chinese ESL students into a new culture. The class should be supportive and humorous. Providing some games will provide joy to lift the stress, as two teachers suggested.

Another teacher valued humor in her way of teaching. "I don't want my students to sit there and suffer" (Jennifer, the teacher). Jennifer's classroom atmosphere is comfortable and relaxing. In such a stress-free classroom, students will remember more words because it is hard to pronounce and remember all those technical words. The students, regardless of age, enjoy an interactive and relaxing atmosphere. Eight Chinese

students felt when they practiced and communicated in English, they believed that they started to get used to the culture of the target language as well.

Third, the language has to be taught in meaningful and authentic contexts using perhaps radio, TV and newspapers. Due to the lack of language environment, Chinese students have little opportunity to get contact with first-hand authentic materials in China. In a CLT classroom, Chinese ESL students will develop listening ability and understand real-life events and daily conversations with the guidance of native speakers.

To make a significant difference, one teacher suggested that Chinese students should find a native friend to solve their problem of poor communicative skills. Chinese students don't speak much in two teachers' opinions. They don't like to express their feelings. A lot of level 2 students changing to level 4/5 have the same bad habits. Some of them are fairly strong in reading and writing, but the functional part of grammar knowledge doesn't improve at all. Even Canadian teachers in the study are well aware that Chinese students aim for communicative competence. "If they are determined to cut their first language social circle and speak only English everyday everywhere, I am sure that 6-9 months is enough for breaking same bad habit" (Jennifer, the teacher).

Since grammar instruction within CLT serves as a linking tool that connects the language and its usage together, it is better and effective for Chinese students to practice and speak English within a meaningful, authentic and favorable context.

B. Significance of Study

This case study is designed to examine the perceptions of Chinese ESL students and their teachers on the role of grammatical instruction within the context of CLT. The case is intended to examine the ways grammar is used, taught and learned within the CLT context and Chinese students' perceptions on its significance. The findings of the study

may inform our understanding of English grammar acquisition for Chinese ESL students in this context. Results suggest that grammar teaching plays an important role in CLT. It also provides some recommendations about what kind of communicative activities are effective in developing Chinese students' second language proficiency. Therefore, the result of the study will be helpful to ESL teachers and learners in Canada because it discusses the role of grammar teaching within CLT from the perspectives of both teacher and students. It has the potential to give more understanding and insights into ESL learners' metacognition about English grammar. It may also be valuable and meaningful for EFL teachers and learners in non-English speaking countries to consider infusing both explicit and implicit grammar instruction into CLT. If teachers in China could more explicitly see the role of the grammar instruction within CLT, it may become easier for them and their learners to embrace CLT and move towards the dual goals of grammatical competence and oral proficiency.

CHAPTER V

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