Taiwanese College Teachers of English as Cultural Mediators

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Abstract

In light of the discrepancies between theories, primarily developed in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) contexts, and classroom practice, situated in the Taiwanese English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) context, this study employed curriculum implementation theory as a framework for investigating how local college teachers of English perceived their experiences of adapting communicative method-based teaching in Taiwanese classrooms. A preliminary survey of 71 English teachers who earned their degrees abroad and were familiar with both local and ESL contexts showed they practiced this approach to various degrees, implying adaptation in response to local expectations and needs. A follow-up interview of 20 instructors confirmed that, in addition to students' English proficiency levels, the traditional ways of learning and expectations of teachers' roles in the sociocultural context affected their willingness to engage in communicative activities. The results emphasize the importance of teachers acting as cultural mediators to build teacher-student rapport, lower students' psychological barriers, and construct a socioculturally appropriate environment for communicative teaching.

Keywords: communicative approach, cultural mediator, curriculum implementation, college English

Introduction

Current second language acquisition (SLA) theories and teaching methodologies have been developed in ESL contexts, mainly in the U.S., the U.K., and Australia (Holliday, 1994; Prabhu, 1987). To increase credibility as legitimate English teaching professionals (Golombek & Jordan, 2005), as many as 70% of EFL pre-service teachers enroll in teacher preparation programs in the above English-speaking countries (Kamhi-Stein, 1999) to learn TESOL orthodoxy (Pennycook, 1989).

Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, and Riazi (2002) argue that researchers and teacher educators are increasingly aware that to be considered *good*, pedagogy must be informed by a socioculturally situated perspective. As indicated by Canagarajah (1999), "pedagogies are not received in their own terms, but appropriated to different degrees in terms of the needs and values of the local communities" (pp. 121-122). Therefore, the knowledge base of TESOL education should provide the tools to explore cross-cultural variation in language teaching and learning (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006) and to enact "locally appropriate response[s]" (Johnson, 2009, p. 115) in teaching practices. To this end, research is needed to explore how local practitioners adapt teaching approaches developed in ESL contexts and enact socioculturally appropriate English language teaching in their home contexts.

Nonetheless, although relevant studies exploring the effectiveness of TESOL theories and methodologies agree that approaches developed in ESL contexts cannot be fully adopted in EFL contexts (Li, 1998; Sato, 2002; Su, 2002), the current literature does not elucidate the extent to which local teachers use communicative language teaching (CLT). Only a few case studies have been conducted to explore obstacles local teachers encounter, and a scant number of studies clarify how they can modify an instructor's role to adapt the approach

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to local contexts. The common challenges include insufficient teacher communicative competence and preparation; large class size and limited class time; testing concerns; student resistance because of low English proficiency, low motivation, and unwillingness to participate; and antithetical classroom practices such as text-boundedness, all-in-English instruction, focus on form rather than meaning, and emphasis on product rather than process (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Kuo, 1995; Li, 1998; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008; Major & Yamashiro, 2004; Miller, 1998; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2009; Rao, 1996, 2002; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Su, 2002; Sugiyama, 2003; Wang, 2002). Some researchers have suggested ways to modify communicative based teaching, for example, by incorporating some elements of traditional pedagogy such as some explicit grammar teaching and applying grammar rules in context, balancing linguistic competence and communicative competence, and using both textbooks and authentic materials (Rao, 2002; Saengboon, 2002; Su, 2002). Other suggestions include allowing enough opportunity for repetition and accurate reproduction and creating chances for interaction and meaning negotiation. To overcome students' resistance to speaking in class, teachers can build their confidence by avoiding intrusive corrections and providing a supportive atmosphere; and to dispel students' anxieties, teachers can offer clear directions for doing tasks and encourage cooperative learning. That is, by balancing teacher-centered and student-centered approaches, teachers might re-orient students to take a positive look at CLT (Gao, 2006; Miller, 1998; Mitchell & Lee, 2003; Rao, 1996, 2002). However, these suggestions have been largely formulated by researchers based on the results of case studies of instructors who had textbook knowledge of how a theory had been practiced in ESL classrooms without necessarily having experiences studying abroad.

Therefore, to fill this gap in the literature, the purpose of this study was to investigate how 71 college EFL teachers who completed their master's or doctoral degrees in an ESL context practiced CLT in Taiwan, what their concerns were, and how they addressed these concerns. The findings represent a relatively large group of teachers' experiences and may be informative to other Asian EFL teachers and TESOL teacher educators.

Curriculum Implementation Theory

This study is grounded in curriculum implementation theory, which includes three perspectives: fidelity, mutual adaptation, and enactment (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). The main intent of a fidelity perspective is "to determine the degree of implementation of an innovation in terms of the extent to which actual use of the innovation corresponds to intended or planned use" (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977, p. 340). In the fidelity perspective, the curriculum innovation is designed by experts outside the classroom. Implementation is evaluated based on the degree to which the teachers carry out the innovation. Therefore, the properties of the innovation need to be clearly identified when researchers develop a checklist or a scale to examine to what extent each characteristic has been implemented. Following this, factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation as planned are also investigated as a reference for future improvement (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Based on the fidelity perspective, in the present study, five major CLT principles drawn from the literature are used as a scale, in response to which the participants are asked to rate the degree to which they have implemented each of the principles. The barriers identified in related studies are listed for the participants to rate as major, potential, or non-existent problems in their situation.

Researchers who hold the perspectives of mutual adaptation and curriculum enactment claim that it is impossible to implement a curriculum identical to the prescribed curriculum because the latter is an abstract document, and actual implementation is a real life re-creation (Marsh & Willis, 2007). From the perspective of mutual adaptation, innovation should not focus on technological change only; organizational change, such as changes in the structure of the institutional setting, the culture of the school, educational technology, and teachers' behaviors, should not be ignored (McLaughlin, 2004). As McLaughlin (2004) has observed, implementation is not just adopting a model, but rather "a process of mutual adaptation in which project goals and methods are modified to suit the needs and interests of participants and in which participants change to meet the requirements of the project" (p. 172). Mutual adaptation researchers are concerned with what has happened in a given context and what kinds of support adopters need for implementation with intensive,

descriptive data about the problems of education being sought (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Therefore, the participants in this study were asked to delineate the adaptation process and how they modified their teaching to address problems they encountered.

Marsh and Willis (2007) view curriculum implementation as analogous to an actual production of the text of a play, in which teachers are like directors and actors. Although the planned curriculum is there for them, they still need to enact it. From the enactment perspective, Snyder, Bolin, and Zumwalt (1992) characterize curriculum as "the educational experiences jointly created by student and teacher. The externally created curricular materials and programmed instructional strategies…are seen as tools for students and teacher to use as they construct the enacted experience of the classroom" (p. 418). The educational experiences that students and teachers undergo are emphasized in this perspective (Marsh & Willis, 2007). Curriculum enactment researchers attempt to discover the enacted experiences and the effects that outside factors have on curriculum as enacted (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Accordingly, an attempt is made to uncover the effects of each inhibitive or facilitative factor indicated and their underlying reasons.

Research Questions

Following the themes of the three perspectives, the present study starts from the fidelity perspective by looking at the current implementation of each CLT principle as well as factors that facilitate or inhibit implementation, followed by the perspective of mutual adaptation, from which, ways CLT has been adapted in Taiwanese EFL contexts are explored. Finally, the enactment approach is applied to look closely at how those factors identified influence the implementation and why the decision for the adaption has been made. The analysis sought to answer the following research questions according to the teacher participants' perceptions.

1. How have Taiwanese university teachers of English practiced CLT?
2. What are instructors' concerns when practicing CLT?
3. How do the instructors address these concerns and why?

Methodology

Participants

The targeted participants in the present study were Taiwanese EFL teachers who completed their master's or doctoral degrees in the field of English teaching in teacher preparation programs in ESL contexts such as North America, Great Britain, and Australia. These Taiwanese teachers were selected because they were more likely to have communicative competence to conduct CLT classrooms and to be familiar with TESOL theories, classroom cultures in ESL contexts, and local EFL contexts.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Information

Education		School		Class	
Master's	Doctorate	Public	Private	English Major	Non-English Major
49 (69%)	22 (31%)	30 (42.3%)	41 (57.7%)	18 (25.4%)	53 (74.6%)

To better represent the general situation in Taiwan, a systematic sampling was utilized (Creswell, 2005). Out of 158 postsecondary schools listed by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, every fourth was selected, so 39 schools were chosen. Based on the staff information posted on the school websites, 383 teachers were identified

as meeting the criteria for participation in the study and were sent the survey with a request to send back their course syllabi along with the completed questionnaire. The response rate was 19%, resulting in 71 teachers recruited from 20 different universities. The demographic information of the participants is described in Table 1.

Data Collection
The data collection included two stages. First, a preliminary survey of the overall practice of CLT was conducted (see Appendix A for the questionnaire). In the questionnaire, the participants were requested to provide basic demographic information, rate their practice of five CLT principles from 1 (rarely practice) to 5 (fully practice), and indicate their difficulties. The five principles included communicative objective, communicative role, four-skill integration, authentic material, and communicative-function evaluation, which are commonly mentioned in the literature on CLT (Canale & Swain, 1980; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 1986; Savignon, 1997, 2001; Thompson, 1996).

The second stage was to conduct semi-structured follow-up interviews with 20 participants, during which they were asked to narrate their learning of CLT, experiences with CLT practice, current CLT classroom practices, adaptation processes, challenges encountered, and concerns about adaptation (see Appendix B for the interview questions). The syllabi provided blueprints of the participants' classrooms. Some interview questions were generated based on the syllabi to delve into how each instructor processed CLT in their classes. The interviews, which lasted 40 to 90 minutes, were conducted in Mandarin Chinese to elicit more information from the participants. All of the interview data were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. In sum, the data sources include 71 questionnaires, 71 syllabi, and 20 interview transcripts.

Analytical Procedure
To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were employed to tabulate the mean scores and percentages of the quantitative data. The contents of the syllabi were coded based on the five CLT principles. The interview data were coded based on the themes of the three perspectives of classroom implementation theory. The codes included Practice of Principles 1-5 (fidelity), Concerns, Adaptation (mutual adaptation), and Reasons for Adaptation (enactment). Themes that emerged from coding were identified. For trustworthiness, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Language Education at Indiana University, with college teaching experience in Taiwan, served as a second rater. To answer the first research question, Item 10 of the questionnaire, syllabi, and interview data were used. To answer the second research question, Item 11 of the questionnaire and interview data were used. The answer to the third research question was based on interview data.

Findings
How Have Taiwanese University Teachers of English Practiced CLT?
As an indication of the extent to which CLT is implemented in Taiwan, of the 71 respondents to the survey, 56 (79%) claimed to be practicing CLT to some extent, whereas 15 (21%) said they were not. Only two (2.6%) claimed to be implementing it fully. As Table 2 shows, the mean level of implementation among the practicing group was 3.54/5 or approximately 70%.

These results suggest that according to the teachers, although CLT is not practiced to its fullest extent, teachers make efforts to adhere to its principles. The following representative excerpts from the interviews show that instructors were aware that this Western theory could not be adopted unchanged in Taiwanese classrooms but must be adapted in ways that respond to local realities and expectations.

> If more than half of the students are really low achievers, you might need to combine Grammar Translation and communicative approach. Sometimes you can't just use it only because the theory is good. (T6 Interview)

Because our culture is different, of course we need to adjust. And it's impossible that one of the American patterns can be used 100% in Taiwan. (T9 Interview)

Table 2
The Extent of Practicing CLT Principles

	Mean	Percentage
Communicative Objective	3.68	73%
Communicative Role	3.41	70%
Four-Skill Integration	3.41	70%
Authentic Material	3.75	75%
Communicative-function Evaluation	3.46	70%
Average	3.54	70%

Note. (N=56)

What Are Instructors' Concerns When Practicing CLT?

Item 11 in the questionnaire and the third interview question were used to explore factors that inhibit CLT implementation and their effects, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Inhibitive Factors

	Questionnaire			Interview	
Ranking	Inhibitive Factors	Coded Scores	Ranking	Inhibitive Factors	Instructors
1.	low proficiency	297	1.	low proficiency	14 Ts
2.	large class size	287	1.	large class size	14 Ts
3.	low motivation	271	3.	resistance to class participation	12 Ts
4.	limited time for developing materials	240	4.	low motivation	11 Ts
5.	resistance to class participation	231	5.	fixed curriculum/unified exam	6 Ts
6.	teachers as knowledge transmitters	229	6.	traditional concepts of learning	5 Ts
7.	insufficient funding/facilities	223	7.	traditional concepts of teachers' role	3 Ts
8.	fixed curriculum/schedule	217	7.	difficult to tell effects	3 Ts
9.	heterogeneous class groups	209	7.	heterogeneous class groups	3 Ts
10.	teachers' in-service training	207	10.	limited time for developing materials	2 Ts

Item 11 asks what difficulties the participants have perceived and encountered. The coding criteria were MP (major problem) coded as 5, PP (potential problem) as 3, and NP (non-existent problem) as 1. These codes were represented as points, which were calculated to produce scores and ranked. The same issue was addressed in the third interview question. The numbers of the instructors who indicated the same inhibitive factors in the

interview were also calculated and ranked in Table 3. Of the top 10 inhibitive factors in the two data sets, eight appeared in both and were therefore considered as major concerns, which include students' low proficiency, large class size, students' low motivation for developing communicative competence, students' resistance to class participation, teachers' limited time for developing materials, the traditional concept of teachers as knowledge transmitters, fixed curriculum/schedule, and heterogeneous class constituencies. In the following section, the teachers' perceptions of the effects of each factor on CLT implementation and classroom practice will be discussed.

In interviews, the instructors explained that in general they realized that some administrative policies, such as unified exams and textbooks, class size, and degree of teacher autonomy, were incompatible with CLT principles but beyond teachers' control. What they were realistically able to do involved mainly their own teaching strategies and student requirements, so their top concerns included students' low proficiency levels, low motivation due to low acceptance of CLT, and reluctance to participate in class. The following section delineates how these local teachers chose to address these concerns and why.

How Do the Instructors Address These Concerns and Why?
Proficiency level
Students' English proficiency was the critical basis on which the teachers decided the extent to which CLT should be practiced and how much of their instruction should be in English. As T5 put it, "high level students adapt to the new environment. As for lower level students, I can tell they have felt pain all these four years." While CLT urges use of the target language in class as much as possible, one of the consequences is that students with insufficient English proficiency cannot understand all of their teacher's speech. Another CLT principle is to involve students in interactive activities, but students with limited English may not have the necessary language resources to participate in activities or discussions.

After experiencing frustration with such issues, the instructors realized that this approach does not fit all situations. They needed to proceed cautiously and practice CLT incrementally, modifying their instruction and use of English based on students' proficiency levels, designing different types of activities, and focusing on different aspects of students' language production. A common modification was to adjust the percentage of English used in instruction in accordance with students' proficiencies, as mentioned by T8. The survey revealed that 72% of the participants used English 80% of the time with English majors whereas only 17% used the same percentage of English with non-English majors. When using English, T18 tried to talk slowly and pause between phrases and found that students started to answer questions when they understood. T12 started with simplified English and used L1 if needed. T16 explained instructions for activities in Chinese.

Another modification was to use structured activities with lower level students, whose proficiency levels might not be advanced enough for them to elaborate on their opinions, and open-ended discussion questions or free activities with higher-level students. For example, T16 used activities based on the Total Physical Response method with beginners. When learning prepositions, T16's students followed such commands as "Put the pen on the dictionary," performing the actions and taking turns to give their own commands. On the other hand, T10's students were English majors at a top-ranked public university, so the activities T10 used were much more challenging, as shown in the activities below.

Presentation: Job Interview
A group of three students conduct a job interview, including two interviewers and one interviewee. The jobs may be that of clerk, secretary, assistant, teacher, manager, engineer, salesperson, and so on. You can include the interview questions on page 74 in the textbook and those from the handout. There will be seven groups with 8-10 minutes for the interview.

Presentation: Role Play (Impromptu)
With only 3 minutes for preparation, two students choose one of the situations from the handout and conduct a 3-minute role play. (T10 Syllabus)

Third, these instructors proposed that fluency should have priority for lower level students. Only after a basic level of fluency is acquired should the focus be on accuracy and exposure. Lower level students confront psychological as well as linguistic barriers in language production, so the initial step for teachers should be to convince students that getting meaning across is the most important task when learning a language. Teachers in this study helped students build a foundation by gradually integrating grammar instruction and also adding reading, so students would have something to say and be more willing to talk. T13 used the foundation of a building as a metaphor to emphasize that grammar knowledge should be developed.

In the beginning, in order to increase communication, I encouraged them to talk a lot. I don't emphasize grammar….Afterwards, I find that with solely communicative teaching, if you don't give them basic materials, it's like you don't give bricks and cement when you build a house….They say whatever they want, but they don't improve. They need guidance. When the foundation is correct, at least I know the living room is here and the dining room is there. We can work on decoration of the living room later. This is the difference of my teaching process….The purpose is to encourage students to talk in the beginning, so I won't correct their errors. (T13 Interview)

In contrast to non-English majors and lower level students, T2 found some English majors tried to talk fast to show their fluency and excellent pronunciation, but their English output was full of errors and lacked content, suggesting that accuracy should be required of these higher-level students. To improve their content, T2 provided English majors with a large amount of input and constantly challenged them to learn by assigning higher-level readings or tasks.

Acceptance of CLT
Prior to college, the majority of students in Taiwan experience Chinese traditional ways of learning that emphasize rote memorization and knowledge accumulation, so they learn English by studying grammar rules, memorizing vocabulary, and translating sentences. T1 reported that when asked to do open-ended interactive activities, some students felt "they were not learning anything. It was different from the intensive drills and exercises they had done before." T4 characterized their thinking as, "I am this old, and you are still telling me to play games?" T3 confirmed this observation, saying that "they absolutely couldn't accept this."

It is noteworthy, however, that not all comments reported resistance on the part of students. In T1's and T18's classes, these communicative activities created a pleasant atmosphere and motivated students. T4, in addition to observing negative attitudes, also reported, "students who fell asleep woke up" and "would be less afraid to speak English." T7 was glad to see "every student had a smiley face and looked like they were ready to talk" in communicative classrooms, unlike teacher-centered, lecture-based classrooms, in which "students lowered their heads and did their own stuff."

This dramatic contrast between negative and positive student perceptions suggests that instructors should be alert to the need to introduce the purpose of this approach to students before putting it into practice. T2 and T6 emphasized the importance of familiarizing students as to effective ways to learn a language by introducing the new approach at the beginning of the semester, continuing to communicate its purposes, and gradually letting students try interactive activities. Also, to persuade students that doing activities was not just for fun, T19 always kept a specific objective in mind when designing an activity and informed students about its purpose beforehand.

Students reject playing games, because the games don't have goals, themes, or purposes. I learned this from my experience. I play games when there is a purpose. I never use game-playing to kill time. Because of this goal, …we have a lot more interactive activities. For example, I provided some questions, so they could practice critical thinking, and then I gave them feedback. Instead of just delivering content, …we had real interaction, and this interaction was purposeful. (T19 Interview)

Resistance to class participation

These teachers' experiences suggest that Taiwanese students, regardless of their English levels, are inclined to withdraw from class participation due to their predisposition to be shy, their fear of losing face, and their general exposure to traditional ways of learning (Bowers, 2005; Liu, 2001). As T2 pointed out, students in Taiwan choose to keep silent because "in other classrooms or in the society, our (Chinese) culture still proposes the less you talk, the fewer mistakes you will make," which is unlike the generally held idea of American culture, where diverse perspectives are often encouraged. T12's students were also reluctant to talk in front of others for fear of losing face. Some of T14's students hesitated to talk because they had experienced being laughed at for pronouncing English with Taiwanese accents. "They feel that to have Taiwanese accents is a shame. They'd rather die than speak English."

To reduce students' fear of making mistakes, these instructors made great efforts to create a comfort zone by building teacher-student rapport, cultivating a supportive classroom culture, designing collaborative group work, and allowing students to get ready before speaking English in class. According to the instructors, students in Taiwan still hold the idea of teachers as authorities and believe that teachers should be central in classrooms and dominate the talk, which contradicts the tenets of a learner-centered CLT classroom and creates a gap to be bridged. To facilitate students' willingness to participate in discussions and activities, several participants emphasized that teachers should "lower their status" (T7) to be students' friends, stand in students' shoes (T2), and build rapport with them.

This sense of support can also be provided by students' peers. Group work was recommended by several teachers. T10 let students work with others they were familiar with, which helped them overcome their psychological resistance to talking to the whole class. Also, allowing time for students to get ready for presentations decreased their anxiety about losing face in front of others. T20 commented on the cultural issues involved, especially the Chinese emphasis on conformity rather than uniqueness, which can be better overcome in small groups.

We emphasize group work, not individual work, more. Students abroad focus more on individualism. They think every individual is unique. I think in the education system in Taiwan, unique students are not treated fairly. Don't you think so? If you have some unique behaviors, teachers think you are a weirdo. Classmates think you are a weirdo, too. So students think they had better be the same as others. That is safer. This is the special characteristic in our culture. (T20 Interview)

Along with providing a supportive classroom, adequate degrees of regulation, monitoring, and guidance were recommended by several instructors, who believed that a combination of creating a comfort zone and exerting discipline produced better effects for their students. T18 found that when they got used to the relaxed atmosphere in a CLT classroom, some students became too laid back and lazy to participate. T18's adaptation was to regulate participation by taking roll regularly and calling on students to talk. T10 and T12 purposefully called on passive students who were competent but did not talk voluntarily. Several instructors gave bonus credits to trigger students' instrumental motivation.

To recap the results, the experiences of the Taiwanese college teachers in this study reveal that accommodating learners' English proficiency levels should be the primary concern. For lower level students, CLT should be practiced to a lesser extent with more teacher control and a focus on encouraging fluency, providing structured activities, and building a foundation of English knowledge. As students progress along the

proficiency continuum to higher levels, the emphasis on CLT practices, such as student centeredness, attention to accuracy, free activities, and extensive input, can be gradually increased. Throughout the whole process, adequate encouragement, incentives, guidance, monitoring, and regulation are recommended to motivate students as well as to maintain their accountability.

Discussion

The present study provides evidence that it is quiet unlikely to adopt CLT in Taiwanese classrooms without modification. The fidelity model of appropriation fails for a number of reasons, including its lack of accommodation for students' with low language proficiency in EFL settings and its neglect of cultural mediation. As a form of resistance to these shortcomings, adaptation helps teachers cope with the social and linguistic realities of their classrooms, leading to an enactment model, which brings into focus the importance of student/teacher relationships and the influence of students' values on instruction. Thus, in addition to modification of their teaching approaches, the ways in which teachers address students' traditional ways of thinking and learning are critical. The following is a brief discussion about how local teachers can act as cultural mediators to co-construct a contextually appropriate English classroom with students.

Stubborn Tradition Is Still Stubborn

The findings of this study show that a major obstacle to success in a communicative classroom in Taiwan is students' reluctance to speak up and participate in activities. These local educators' observations and perceptions are in accordance with Liu's (2001) study of 20 Asian students' classroom behaviors in a U.S. university. Liu indicated that this group of students' silence in class was partially related to their concepts of politeness and face-saving. The students refrained from expressing opinions that might be different from those of their teachers and from asking questions to avoid wasting class time and making mistakes. Taiwanese students frame their learning, at least at first, within their Asian "culture of learning" (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006), often categorized as a collectivistic, high-uncertainty-avoidance, and high-power-distance culture in contrast to American culture, identified as an individualistic, low-uncertainty-avoidance, and low-power-distance culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

If English teachers adopt an ESL pedagogical theory without adaptation and situate their students in this cultural paradox, they not only ignore students' cultures, traditions, and past experiences but also indirectly endorse the cultures found in ESL contexts and promote cultural imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999). As Bowers (2005) argues, the colonial nature of modern Western constructivism, with which CLT shares several similarities, imposes a "Western model of a global monoculture" (p. 78) and judges tradition as "backwardness and thus an impediment to progress" (p. 5). Constructivism's assumption that knowledge cannot be transmitted but must be constructed corresponds to the CLT idea that students learn to speak simply by trying to communicate. This promotion of individual autonomy and self-directed learning, albeit in a social context, supports individualism and justifies the teacher's role as facilitator. However, the findings in this study indicate that students, especially lower level students, still consider teachers as authorities central to their learning and upon whose continuous guidance and monitoring they rely to help build a language foundation. Students' cultural orientations should not be ignored, but taken into account and used as a basis for new knowledge. After all, "stubborn tradition" (Sale, 1995) is still stubborn.

Teachers Can Act as Cultural Mediators

Instead of being considered conservative and retrogressive, tradition can be used as a source of empowerment. Toward this goal, local teachers with academic experience in ESL contexts act as cultural mediators, who understand what Bowers (2005) describes as "the inter-play of the social context of learning, the students' interest and level of background knowledge, what represents the most appropriate approach to learning, and the cultural patterns that the teachers need to make explicit" (p. 110). Ideally situated to fulfill the mediating role, the

participants in this study demonstrated their awareness of sociocultural differences between the Taiwanese EFL and ESL contexts and constantly compared the two cultures to explain the necessity of adaptation. They are aware that TESOL theories developed in ESL contexts should not be the only legitimate way of learning.

To mediate between different cultures, these teachers determined what differences should be made explicit in the process of primary socialization (Bowers, 2005). At the beginning of the semester, they explained to their students that absorbing knowledge from lectures was not the only way of learning. Students were encouraged to express their opinions and assured that making mistakes was acceptable in English class. They were also informed that the purpose of interactive activities was not just playing but another way to learn. In this way, the teachers expanded students' concepts of learning while honoring their cultural value of learning as a serious process.

By taking students' traditions into account when making pedagogical decisions, cultural mediators determine what should be conserved and what should be changed (Bowers, 2005). While this degree of teacher-control might seem to challenge the idea of a teacher's role as facilitator in a communicative classroom, these teachers understood that, having long viewed their role as that of knowledge recipient rather than creator, students could not abruptly change their orientation. If the teacher's role as authority is discarded all at once, students are unlikely to be able to regulate their learning autonomously. Therefore, these teachers still play authoritative roles to guide and monitor student learning as well as use grades, which are regarded as the primary measurement of academic achievement in Taiwanese classrooms, as incentives to motivate students.

At the same time, face-saving needs to be carefully protected to provide students a comfort zone in which they are willing to express themselves and participate in class. For instance, these teachers suggested such strategies as allowing students to practice in small groups, giving them sufficient time to prepare for presentations, and not asking students to respond unexpectedly, which might make them anxious about losing face and discourage them from taking risks. These measures gradually bring students into the role of knowledge-makers without disturbing their sense of security in a teacher-directed classroom.

Authority Can Be Used to Minimize Authority

While suggesting that CLT practice should begin at the learners' end of the cultural continuum, this study also proposes a deliberate process of implementation that gradually moves toward the other end of the continuum to emphasize learner-centeredness and the learner's role as communicator. This movement does not mean undermining learners' home culture and romanticizing the culture of the target language (Bowers, 2005), but rather, developing learners' ability to adapt to another culture while maintaining their traditional values and ways of thinking (Liu, 2001). Littlewood (2000) compared perceptions and attitudes of a group of Asian and European learners of English and concluded that "the stereotype of Asian students as 'obedient listeners'…does not reflect the role they would like to adopt in class" (p. 33) even though they might behave so. In Littlewood's study, some students expressed appreciation that their instructors called on them and gave them a chance to speak in class. Learners' passivity and reticence to speak might be a result of too much teacher control and the absence of opportunities for interaction (Xie, 2009). If language teachers continue to accept these student behaviors, they are co-constructing students' silence (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009).

To overcome students' reticence, teachers can use their central position to expand students' ideas about appropriate ways of learning, ensure that activities are seen as purposeful, encourage expression of opinions, and assure students it is all right to make mistakes. After all, in other courses students are still experiencing traditional one-way communication in which teachers impart knowledge to receptive students (Su, 2002). Paradoxically, to make English class a space where students can feel free to talk, instructors first need to negotiate their own authority (Chowdhury, 2003) as scaffolding for building teacher-student relationships that support communicative activities. In other words, by using authority to minimize authority, instructors are more likely to help learners go through the process of adaptive cultural transformation, in which, as Liu (2001) described, "one constantly adjusts one's cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors to those of the target culture and gradually develops multiple identities" (p. 221).

Conclusion

The findings here demonstrate that these local practitioners, except in some extreme situations, have adapted and enacted many of the principles of CLT in ways that respond to local realities. They have accommodated theory and practice in a socioculturally appropriate way that echoes Lin and Luk's (2002) statement that "progressive liberalism and cultural relativism have their essentializing and absolutizing tendencies, and both share a lack of attention to concrete, local, socio-historical contexts where classroom participants are situated" (p. 15). The study suggests that to successfully practice a TESOL approach in a local EFL context, teachers of English have to adapt this approach based on Taiwanese college students' proficiency levels, readiness of acceptance to the approach, and traditional ideas about learning.

This study has several limitations. First, although random sampling was done to recruit the participants in this study, the total number of participants (N=71) was limited compared to the total university EFL instructor population. To better represent the current implementation of CLT in Taiwan, a larger scale study could be done. Second, to get a detailed picture of classroom practices, a more complete collection of course-related documents, such as activity sheets and evaluation sheets, could be compiled, and these could be supplemented with classroom observations. Third, the findings drawn in this study were based upon teachers' points of view. Students' perceptions could be included to compare with those of teachers and add another dimension to extend our understanding of this issue. Policymakers' and school administrators' opinions could also be explored and compared with those of other stakeholders, including teachers and students. Furthermore, the perceptions of teachers who have attended teacher preparation programs in ESL contexts could be compared with those of teachers trained locally. Such findings would help teacher preparation programs in both settings better prepare teachers to teach in their local contexts.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire

I. Background information

1. Name: _____
2. Age: ____
3. Gender: ___male   ___female
4. Years of Experience Teaching English After Obtaining Your Highest Degree_____
5. Level of Education: Bachelors' degree ____ Master's degree ____ Doctorate ____
6. Which group of students are you teaching? English major____ English non-major__
   (If you are teaching both, please select one that your answers will be based on.)
7. What courses are you currently teaching?

II. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching places a high value actually using oral and written language for authentic communication and purposes as a means for students to learn. This approach has been advocated by Western Foreign Language teaching programs for many years and is now also being advocated by several Asian countries. Please indicate experiences you have had in learning about and/or using aspects of CLT in your English teaching.

8. Did you learn about CLT in your teacher education program in Western countries?
   ___yes
   ___no
9. Have you tried CLT?
   ___Yes, and I am still using it now.
   ___Yes, but I am not using it now.
   ___No, never (Skip to item 11 if you answered "No")
10. On the scale of 1 to 5, where would you place your current implementation of each principle of CLT?
    (fully practice 5   4   3   2   1   rarely practice)
    ___The objective is to develop students' communicative competence. Activities have communicative

    intent and involve social interaction.
    (Students use English appropriate in relation to a context or a listener. Example activities include games,

    role play, problem-solving tasks, information gap, and paired or group activities.)
    ___The role of the student is a communicator.
    (Students engage in negotiating meanings and try to make them understood and understand others.)
    ___Four skills are integrated. Both form and meaning are emphasized. Language functions are over

    forms. Fluency might be over accuracy.
    (Students focus on expressing themselves clearly than focusing on grammar analysis or punctuation.

    However, it is encouraged to teach grammar in context.)
    ___Instructional materials may include thematic development materials, task-based materials, and

authentic, real life materials.
___Students are evaluated both fluency and accuracy by being asked to perform a real communicative

function.
(i.e., To assess students' writing skill, they are asked to write a letter to a friend.)
11. The following are some difficulties that other EFL teachers had in adopting CLT. Did you come across these difficulties or do you think they might be difficulties for you in adopting CLT in Taiwan? MP = Major Problem, PP = Potential Problem, and NP = Not a Problem

Teacher Insufficient Communicative Competence/Teacher Preparation

1) Teachers' limited proficiency in spoken English   MP___   PP___   NP___

2) Teachers' limited sociolinguistic/cultural competence   MP___   PP___   NP___

3) Teachers' lack of training in CLT   MP___   PP___   NP___

4) Teachers' having few opportunities for in-service training in CLT   MP___   PP___   NP___

Time, Resources, Support and Class Size Concerns

5) Teachers' having little time for developing materials for CLT classes   MP___   PP___   NP___

6) Lack of authentic teaching materials   MP___   PP___   NP___

7) Large classes   MP___   PP___   NP___

8) Fixed curriculum/schedule   MP___   PP___   NP___

9) Insufficient funding, school facilities   MP___   PP___   NP___

10) Lack of support from colleagues and administrators   MP___   PP___   NP___

Testing and Teaching Philosophy Concerns

11) Grammar-based examinations   MP___   PP___   NP___

12) Lack of assessing instruments   MP___   PP___   NP___

Student Resistance

13) Students' low English proficiency   MP___   PP___   NP___

14) Students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence   MP___   PP___   NP___

15) Students' resistance to class participation   MP___   PP___   NP___

16) Students' resistance because of the concept of Chinese culture about teacher as central and knowledge transmitter   MP___   PP___   NP___

17) Students' resistance because of the traditional concept that learning should be serious, not playing games.   MP___   PP___   NP___

Classroom Practice Concerns

18) The conflict of using textbooks or not   MP___   PP___   NP___

19) The conflict of using English to teach English   MP___   PP___   NP___

20) The conflict of emphasizing process or product   MP___   PP___   NP___

21) The conflict of doing grammar explanation and error correction   MP___   PP___   NP___

22) The conflict of focusing on rote memorization and repetition   MP___   PP___   NP___

23) Concerns about heterogeneous grouping and students' needs   MP___   PP___   NP___

Other concerns _____ (Please specify)

Appendix B
Interview Protocol

1. Could you walk me through the process how you learned CLT, your initial practice, and current practice? When you practiced CLT at the beginning stage, was it different from what you are practicing now? Do you make any adjustment when you implement CLT in your classroom? If so, how do you adapt CLT in your classroom? Why do you make this adaptation?

2. Could you explain your syllabus? Please describe how you practice CLT in your class. Could you give some examples?

3. What problems have you encountered? How do they influence your practice of CLT? How do you address the problems? Which problem do you find most difficult to address? Are there any other factors that influence your practice of CLT?

4. What makes CLT successful in your classrooms? What components do you consider essential in your CLT classrooms? Why is that?

5. Could we do the last part of interview in English? How do you think your previous training experiences in Western countries help you practice CLT? What kind of professional development will be helpful to your current practice of CLT?

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