

Localizing CLT: A Case Study of a Western-Trained Chinese EFL Teacher at a Chinese University

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Abstract: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a second language teaching method prevalent in most English teacher training programs in the Western world. The majority of teacher trainees in CLT-based programs learn English as a foreign language in order to return to their home countries and become English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. In many cases, students report that the CLT training environment varies greatly from their experiences as an EFL teacher. This paper investigates the perception of one Western-trained EFL teacher of CLT in China and the strategies she developed to balance communicative methods and traditional Chinese teaching. Realizing the obstacles to implementing CLT in her classroom, Laura developed strategies to adjust to the Chinese context. Using both her learning experience of growing up in China and her educational experience in the United States, Laura was able to navigate conflicting pedagogical backgrounds.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language Teaching, Chinese EFL Teacher, Communicative Language Teaching, Case Study, Teacher Development, Education Globalization

Introduction

In order to meet the needs of globalization and stay competitive with other developing countries, the People's Republic of China implemented the Open Door Policy in 1979. It aimed to increase trade with the global community and to reinvigorate the Chinese economy that had been left stagnant by the Cultural Revolution (Hong & Pawan, 2014). English, as the “cornerstone of the global capitalist system” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 10), was promoted by major Western English-speaking countries as equivalent with progress, prosperity and modernity (Phillipson, 1992). Therefore, English was viewed by Chinese people “as a necessary tool which [could] facilitate access to modern scientific and technological advances” (Cowan, Light, Mathews, & Tucker, 1979, p. 466).

With this shift in the perception of the English language came a burst of English as Foreign Language (EFL) education in China in order to facilitate the growing perceived professional need for English proficiency. In today's China, scholars estimate there are between 440 and 650 million people learning or using English regularly, a figure which outnumbers the entire population of The United States (He & Zhang, 2010). English, together with literacy and numeracy, is one of three mandatory subjects taught in Chinese schools from Grade One through secondary school, college, and university.

The present study focuses on the context of college English teaching. Traditionally, Chinese EFL teaching methods combined Audio-Lingual and Grammar-Translation methods, concentrated on intensive reading as a basis for language study, and focused on memorization and rote learning. Communicative skills were largely ignored. Instead, translation was used as both a teaching and a learning strategy (Rao, 1996). Students taught by this method usually develop advanced grammar knowledge and reading skills but lack communication capability—a phenomenon called “dumb English”. Educators found that “Chinese traditional pedagogical methods appear to place severe limitations on the acquisition of the very language skills they desire” (Anderson, 1993, p. 473).

Realizing the shortcomings of existing methods, the State Education Development Commission developed a new syllabus that emphasized the use of English for the purpose of communication (State Education Development Commission, 1992). Introduced in 1992, the new curriculum came 15 years after the Open Door Policy changed the economic landscape of China. This new curriculum was clearly reflected at the college level. In 1999, the Ministry of Education issued the revised National College English Teaching Syllabuses (NCETS). The NCETS required college students to have strong abilities in reading, listening, speaking, writing, and translating English, with an emphasis on communication (National College English Testing Committee, 1999). In 2006, the Ministry of Education once again updated the National College English Teaching Syllabuses, adding a requirement of the College English Test¹, which is a comprehensive measure of the integrated English language competence of college

¹ The College English Test, better known as CET, is a national English as a foreign language test in the People's Republic of China. The purpose of the CET is to examine the English proficiency of undergraduate students and postgraduate students in China and ensure that Chinese undergraduates and postgraduates reach the required English levels specified in the National College English Teaching Syllabuses (NCETS).

students. Communication, especially listening and speaking, was again a focus of the NCETS, purporting to enable effective communication in the work place.

In today's China, the number of learners vastly outstrips the EFL teaching population, thus, many students go abroad seeking English-based degree programs (Hong & Pawan, 2014). Brady and Gulikers (2004) reported that 80 to 90% of students who enrolled in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs in U.S. universities from 1998 to 2001 were non-native speakers from non-Western countries (as cited by Hong & Pawan, 2014). Among non-native TESOL learners, a majority return to their country of origin with the purpose of becoming English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. While the appeal of studying abroad may play a role, many students choose Western programs because of the teaching methods used in the classroom.

Chinese EFL teachers, especially those who receive TESOL training in Western countries, are at the frontier of this "global" vs. "local" conflict (Rao, 2002). When a Western-orientated teaching method, such as Communicative Language Teaching, is imported to China, it may need adjustment to fit in the local context. Sometimes it can generate conflict during the implementation process. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Laura, a Western-trained EFL teacher working in China, thinks CLT influences her teaching. My research questions are:

- How does Laura intend to apply her CLT training?
- Does she find conflict between communication-based teaching and traditional Chinese pedagogy in her teaching activity?
 - If so, where?
- How does she adjust her teaching practices/ approach to teaching practices in the face of the tensions between her Western training and the local context of her Chinese classroom?
- What strategies has she developed to teach her students that seemed effective to her?

Literature Review

As an imported teaching method, CLT generated debates and also encountered resistance within the Chinese English teaching context. It challenged the traditional Chinese culture on teaching and learning practice. In this section, I present a brief summary of features of Communicative Language Teaching and the scholarly work that discusses the situation of CLT in China.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a method of language instruction prevalent in most North American TESOL programs. CLT was developed by Canale and Swain (1980), who argued that it targets not only learners' linguistic competence, but also sociolinguistic, discursive, strategic, and grammatical competence. In other words, CLT also focuses on the communicative competence of learners.

According to Hong and Pawan (2014), CLT "originated from dissatisfaction with the audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods in foreign language teaching and learning" (p. 27). CLT attaches importance to the communicative function of language. It features small group activities, and learner-centered, experience-based teaching as well as learning using authentic materials (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Learners are not knowledge receptacles; they are at the center of the teaching and learning process, managing their own learning. CLT requires teachers to be flexible in their role in order to produce purposeful, scaffolded activities for communicative engagement (Hong & Pawan, 2014). CLT theorists contend that language teachers should employ activities designed to promote communication and participation of learners since they acquire language with the help of their social surroundings.

There also have been some criticisms of CLT. For instance, some say CLT focuses on the communication competence of learners and that the learning of grammar is, therefore, insufficient and unsystematic. In other words, learners' fluency is gained at the expense of accuracy (Ju, 2013).

Resistance

As an imported pedagogy, rooted and developed in Western culture, CLT was met with resistance in the Chinese education system and generated debate on the appropriate implementation of this teaching method in the Chinese

context. Some asserted that CLT meets the requirements and trends of the new English teaching syllabus, which emphasizes cultivating students' communicative competency. In addition, introducing CLT can help teachers stay competitive with the English teaching methods outside China and have a global horizon (Liao, 2004).

In the meantime, some scholars have argued that CLT is not a universally effective teaching method. They contend that diversity of English language teaching contexts should not be ignored, the needs of learners should be emphasized, and the classroom reality is far more complex than what appears in scholarly papers (Ju, 2013). The scarcity of authentic teaching material, the lack of qualified teachers and financial support of innovations, the strong influence of traditional Chinese learning philosophy, and examination pressure are all factors that make CLT "impossible" or "inappropriate" to implement in Chinese context (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Hu, 2003, 2005, 2010; Ju, 2013; Littlewood, 2014; Lu & Ares, 2015; Rao, 1996, 2002). In one example, students in an EFL class refused to sit in a circle to participate in the activities designed by the instructor. With respect to this scenario, one researcher concluded that "the students may be perplexed by the communicative approach since they are not accustomed to it" (Anderson, 1993, p. 473).

In fact, Rao (2002) found that Chinese students favored non-communicative activities over communicative activities. In an earlier study, Rao predicted that this could be because "the traditional relationship between Chinese teachers and students makes it difficult for them to suspend their beliefs about the teacher's role and take part in simulated interaction" (Rao, 1996, p. 467). Chinese culture and society have been deeply influenced by Confucianism. The philosophy of Confucius laid the educational foundation in China. For Confucius, teachers are supposed to "propagate doctrine, impart professional knowledge and resolve doubts" (Han, 1993, p. 56). A teacher is someone who passes knowledge to students by being the absolute authority in the classroom. In the same vein, students should respect teachers and not challenge them.

In communication-based teaching, the role of teachers is decentralized and their authority is weakened, which some see as placing risks on Chinese EFL teachers. They are non-native speakers of English and most have only adequate proficiency. When conducting teaching in English, they often confront the risk of losing authority by showing their low level of English proficiency.

Furthermore, CLT as a product of the Western world is viewed as having symbolic power. Phillipson called this phenomenon "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992). The dominant status of English as a language is "asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other language" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). And English pedagogies, such as CLT, "[are] often considered to be scientific and authoritative and are implemented in non-English speaking countries, such as China, without critical consideration of the differences in social, cultural, and economic contexts" (Lu & Ares, 2015, p. 118). The unidirectional flow in pedagogy from English-speaking countries, especially the United States, to non-English speaking countries, forces an unfamiliar pedagogical and social culture on to its learners, which contributes to the devaluation of local knowledge and cultures (Guo & Beckett, 2007).

The majority of the literature discussing CLT in China focuses on the analysis of the history of CLT, looks at reasons why CLT has encountered obstacles, and the ways that students react to this communication-based method; however, the voices of EFL teachers have been overlooked. "Every teacher is the best expert in his or her own situation" (Littlewood, 2014, p. 356); thus, teachers' voices and teaching practices are important in linking together theory, research, and practice. This paper examines the implementation of CLT in China from an educator's perspective in order to better understand the struggles and adjustments involved in introducing CLT to a learning culture largely in opposition to its methods.

Theoretical Framework

In this section I outline the two theories guiding my study: Freeman and Johnson's *Knowledge-Base of Language Teacher Education* (Freeman and Johnson, 1998) and the notion of *glocalization*. Freeman and Johnson's *Knowledge-Base of Language Teacher Education* framework allowed me to examine teachers and teaching activities within their social settings. The notion of *glocalization* provided a new perspective with which to view how CLT, a Western-rooted product being localized in the Chinese context, is seen in the Chinese educational landscape. I discuss these two frameworks respectively in this section.

Teacher Knowledge-base

When it comes to the relationship between teachers' own knowledge and their teaching behavior, scholars are of differing opinions. Shulman (1986), for example, in his *Pedagogical Content Knowledge* framework argued that teacher-training programs were separating the what (content) from the how (pedagogy) when preparing teachers for the field. Teachers should be able to move beyond simply knowing their subject matter, and knowing how to teach; they should transform the subject matter through teaching—transforming content through pedagogy (Shulman, 1986). In terms of language teaching, Vygotsky (1978) argued that knowledge depends on context and is mediated through social and cultural medium. The cognitive competence of humans is learned by participating in social activities and interactions in cultural settings. Johnson and Golombek (2003) applied Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to teachers' training and suggested that teachers could advance their teaching through collaboration with other more capable teachers, for example by making lesson plans and talking with other teachers. Among the theories, Freeman and Johnson's *Knowledge-Base of Language Teacher Education* framework guides the present study. This framework targets language teaching and language teacher education. It allows me to make connections between teachers' previous experiences as learners and their teaching beliefs, and it takes teachers' social settings into consideration.

According to Freeman and Johnson (1998) teachers' beliefs and experiences influence their teaching: "How teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work" (p. 400). Furthermore, they argued that:

Teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills; they are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and share what they do in their classrooms. (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 401)

Teachers learn how to teach not only in teacher education programs, but also by participating in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching. It is "a long-term, complex, developmental process" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 402) that informs the teaching behavior of teachers. Freeman and Johnson (1998) proposed their framework called *Knowledge-Base of Language Teacher Education* to explain this complex terrain of how teachers' thoughts, judgments, and decisions have shaped their teaching practice. According to them, language teachers practice their profession within three domains: the teacher-learner, the social context, and the pedagogical process.

The teacher-learner domain emphasizes teachers as learners of language teaching. Four foci impacting the teacher-learner domain are: the role of prior knowledge and beliefs, the development of teaching knowledge over time, context, and teacher education as a form of intervention. The second domain, social context, reflects the argument that "an understanding of schools and schooling as the social and cultural contexts for teacher learning is critical to establishing an effective knowledge-base" (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p. 408). Schools and classrooms are places where teacher-learners accomplish their work and also the focus is on physical and sociocultural aspects of teaching and learning. Within this conception, schooling is a diachronic process that emphasizes value and meaning through time. Thus, learning how to negotiate the dynamic of the classroom, in which "some actions and ways of being are valued and encouraged whereas others are downplayed, ignored, and even silenced," is crucial for teachers (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p. 409). The third domain, teaching itself, underlines the interrelationship between teacher-learners and schools with the activity of teaching. Teacher-learners participate in teaching and learning activities and schools create communities of practice for teacher-learners.

Freeman and Johnson's (1998) framework helps in understanding that teachers' teaching practice is socially constructed and interactive within certain contexts, especially when the context in which a teacher receives teaching training is different from the actual teaching context. Their prior experiences can impact teaching beliefs and their teaching beliefs influence teaching practice. It is, however, evident that teachers' stated beliefs do not always correspond with their actual teaching practices. What teachers say they do is not the same as what they actually do; differences exist between teachers' beliefs and their actual teaching practice (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis 2004; Li, 2013; Orafi & Borg 2009). Therefore, this study is only exploring a teacher's (Laura) beliefs about her own teaching practices, how her prior experiences influenced her, and some of the tensions she experienced as a Western-trained EFL teacher in a Chinese context.

Glocalization

Glocalization is a word, originally from Japan, used to describe the agricultural principle of adapting one's farming techniques to local conditions (Robertson, 1995). The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009) defines it as:

‘global localization’...the process through which global processes, such as the activities of a transnational enterprise, result in the provision of locally specific goods and services and communicates locally specific information back to the global system.

This phenomenon is present not only in commercial and business environments, but also has an “impact upon various intellectual fields” (Robertson, 1995, p. 25). Robertson further argued that the phenomenon of “globalization” neglects locality, whereas glocalization is the co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies (Robertson, 1995).

Glocalization involves the reconstruction of conceptions of “home”, “community”, and “locality.” Locality, in particular, is a concept that globalization has largely neglected. It has become a challenge for countries and individuals to survive in this global era and to find a balance between maintaining a sense of identity, home, and community while also evolving in the process of globalization. Ross and Lou (2005) stated that, “glocalization implies a search beyond the contributions and the downsides of globalization in order to conceptualize a world of greater balance between the potentially empowering trends of global communication and the concrete challenges faced by local communities” (p. 229).

Canagarajah (2005) argued that the codes, discourses, and practices derived from the West are accepted as the standard under the name of “globalization.” In education, the Western values, ideologies, and thinking are embedded in the teaching process as hidden curriculum, which can mold alternate identities among students (Canagarajah, 1999). Globalization has largely ignored the power of local knowledge in global processes. According to Canagarajah (1999), from the macro-level, the local social, economic, governmental, and cultural contexts influence learning in a subtly pervasive manner; from the micro-level, the lived culture and everyday experiences of local communities also need to be taken into consideration. The power of globalization can also stimulate the growth of local identity. Localities are empowered by reacting to the globalization from both macro-level such as economic, governmental and cultural and micro-level such as local people's lived experiences. Therefore, Canagarajah calls for the consideration of local knowledge, including local language and culture because “local knowledge is context-bound, community-specific, and nonsystematic [and] generated ground-up through social practice in everyday life” (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 4). Thus, by deconstructing dominant knowledge, localization encourages “reconstructing local knowledge for contemporary needs” (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 14).

Methodology

A case study methodology was adopted as the research method for the present study. In this section, I present the features of case study and its applicability for this study and give a brief introduction of my participant—Laura—which includes her current position as an EFL teacher and a summary of her previous educational experiences. The interview and data analysis process are presented in this section as well.

Method

Yin (1994), defines case study in terms of the research process: “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). The qualitative method of case study allows me to investigate the beliefs and perceptions of one Western-trained EFL teacher about CLT within her real-life context. My intent in investigating Laura's experience is not to look at teaching outcomes, but rather her teaching process and teaching context. My research is meant to act as a discovery tool to find out how teaching activity is shaped by various factors and forces rather than a confirmation of the effectiveness of certain teaching methods.

Merriam (1998) articulates three key features of case study analysis: particularism, description, and heurism. The present study focuses on a particular case, aiming to yield a rich and complete description of the entire situation, intending to re-define or provide new perspectives for understanding.

The current study is based on a semi-structured interview during which Laura shared her experience of study in the United States and her teaching reality in China. Laura spoke to me at length about her training and her career. Before and after the interview, we also discussed her experiences working as an EFL teacher at a Chinese university in several personal conversations. The discussions provided more background information for me to conceptualize her teaching reality and gave more contour to her teaching life. In order to allow Laura to better and fully express herself, the interview and discussions were conducted in Chinese. The interview was first transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English. Data were coded manually for two rounds. After the first cycle of initial coding and a second cycle of axial coding, themes started to emerge. To ensure that I had made no major changes in the content, the transcript was sent to Laura to verify the authenticity and to give consent for me to use it going forward.

Participant

Laura is the only participant in this study. She holds a Bachelor's degree in English Language and English Literature from a Chinese university. After graduation, she studied in a TESOL program at an American university. She spent two years in the U.S., after which she returned to China to become an EFL teacher at a university. The university offers a degree in English but also provides EFL courses for students pursuing other degrees. As such, the majority of Laura's students are enrolled in non-English degree programs but wish to increase their proficiency. Non-English major students are required to take a placement test before the course begins and are divided into advanced, intermediate, and base levels according to their test scores. Laura teaches two courses, totaling approximately 80 advanced level students. According to the university's requirement, each non-English major has to pass the College English Test before graduation in order to receive their degree.

Findings

After coding and analyzing, four themes emerged from the data: (a) empowerment through Western TESOL training; (b) adjustment to obstacles; (c) some freedom within the university; (d) and teaching is not training but rather facilitating. In this section, I present each theme respectively with some original utterance that Laura expressed in Chinese.

Empowerment through Western TESOL Training

Laura affirmed that her Western TESOL training experience empowered her teaching. Although she held a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature, she had limited knowledge of teaching English prior to completing TESOL training. The TESOL program taught the theoretical background of second language acquisition, as well as the basics of teaching and classroom management, and provided her opportunities to practice teaching English in a classroom. Other teachers in her department consist of other Western-trained TESOL EFL teachers, as well as locally trained EFL teachers, and teachers who have overseas experience in other areas. From her observations, Laura found that locally trained EFL teachers have a strong foundation in English grammar, are skilled in examination methods, and excel at translation. Teachers who have experience abroad but are not trained in TESOL have a relatively high English proficiency level and are able to incorporate knowledge from other fields, such as business and leadership management, into language teaching. In comparison, Laura felt that TESOL provided strong training in theoretical knowledge that she is able to use in her teaching activities. During her interview, Laura highlighted a competition carried out in her department to demonstrate teaching skills. Each teacher was asked to demonstrate a teaching activity and explain the activity design. She believed that her training enabled her to competently explain her activity and the theoretical reasons for its design.

Laura felt that the TESOL program provided her with more than just a theoretical background. She was also taught to create lessons in a way that addresses the interests and learning preferences of students, which helped to increase classroom engagement. Because she studied abroad, she had encountered English learners from all over the world, an experience that again taught her about different learning preferences. Her own English language acquisition process provided her with valuable experience, helping her to make sense of the struggles and difficulties faced by her students. Her peer group became a valuable resource for her teaching career. She talked about reference books and materials recommended by peers and instructors from the TESOL program as being extremely useful in her own teaching. Through TESOL learning, she became familiar with how to access English materials for use in her career.

Laura did see one limiting factor from her TESOL training. Her program failed to cultivate her research ability, impeding her career at a research university. At the time of the interview, Laura felt she had limited knowledge on conducting academic research, which had hindered her promotion.

Overall, she concluded that the TESOL program provided her with confidence as an EFL teacher. She described her experience as a treasure:

总得来说学到很多东西，尤其很多教学方法现在经常用得到。而且出国学习的经历也为我现在的教学增加了一些信心。[Overall I learned a lot, especially the teaching methods, which I frequently use right now in my actual teaching. Besides that, the whole studying abroad experience also makes me feel confident when I'm teaching English].

Adjustment to Obstacles

Laura spoke at length about the obstacles faced by teachers using CLT methods in China. Her teaching load was comprised of six hours of instruction per class each week. Each of her two classes had approximately 40 students. When discussing CLT, Laura said:

我没法全部照搬外国模式到我的课堂里啊。你知道国内这个桌子椅子都是固定的，讲台在前面，四十个学生，没法挪。像之前在美国那种上课方式，坐成一个圈什么的，根本没时间，也没地方，很难弄的！而且学生都有考试压力，不过四级没法毕业，所以他们也就对考试培训更感兴趣。所以对于他们来说，第一目标就是过四级，第二目标也许才是提高英语水平。[I cannot copy the Western style completely in my classroom. In Chinese classrooms, the desks and chairs are fixed, and there is a platform in front of the classroom. I have 40 students, it is hard to get them to move. Sitting in a circle like in the U.S.? No time, no space. It is hard! Beside this, students have examination pressure, they have to pass an English test in order to graduate, and students themselves are more interested in test training than improving English proficiency. They are test-orientated. Their first goal is passing the test, second might be communication in English].

When Laura tried organizing her class according to CLT methods, she found that the format was not a good fit in her classroom:

效果不是很理想。我试过就文章提问，然后小组讨论，之后跟全班分享这种模式。但是学生太多了，小组也太多了。一两个小组汇报完之后其他学生都听烦了，走神去了。但如果少分几个组，每个组的人就很多，人一多就有学生偷懒依靠别人了。[The effect is not ideal. I tried to ask questions on their reading assignment, and have them do group discussion and report to the class after discussion. But there were so many students, so many groups. Students were getting tired of listening after two or three groups. They were not concentrating. But if I assign less groups, that means more students in one group. The problem with large groups is that some of them depend on others within one group and do nothing themselves].

However, realizing these problems, Laura still incorporated CLT in her daily teaching, with adaptations to better fit her environment. For instance, she might randomly choose students to do a role-play activity, but limit the presentation to one or two groups. She designed warm-up questions each class, in order to provide students opportunities to practice speaking. As part of one such activity, she asked students to re-order and describe pictures and use them as a guide to analyze reading passages. Students needed to tell her why they re-ordered the pictures in that way. After analyzing reading passages and reviewing new vocabulary, Laura sometimes would interview students (asking "if you were the main character in that story, what would you do in that situation?") in order to have them practice communication skills while reinforcing the new knowledge learned from the reading. Another strategy she used with her class was turning translation drills to paraphrasing. Since translation skill is tested in both CET and other school-based examinations, students have the expectation to practice it in class so that they can get help from the teacher. Laura asked students to paraphrase each original English sentence after guiding students to finish the "English to Chinese translation drill". Realizing students' strengths lay in reading, Laura spent energy on listening and speaking during class time, and assigned readings and writing essays as homework for students to complete after class. In these ways, she integrated CLT into her teaching in a way that was suitable for her class. During two years of teaching, she developed her own strategies that both cater to students' expectations and fulfill her own self-requirements. She said: "It is all about adjustment."

Some Freedom within the University

The university where Laura taught offered her the freedom to incorporate the teaching methods she felt were most effective by encouraging teachers to develop diverse teaching methods. All classes were assessed by university administration throughout the semester. Laura received positive feedback during her assessments for her combination of traditional teaching methods and CLT. Students were given the opportunity to assess their teachers' performance only at the end of the course, ensuring that the department received the feedback of students, while at the same time avoiding unnecessary interruptions to teachers while they were developing their own teaching methods. The assessment system also drew no linkage between a teacher's performance and students' test scores. This differs from other Chinese teaching contexts, especially at the high school level, where students' test scores impact teachers' performance scores and even influence promotion and salary. Laura appreciated the fact that her university leadership allowed her the space to implement her own teaching strategies and did not assess her by strict rubrics or standards.

Laura was interviewed at a time when college-level English was undergoing reform. The new National College English Teaching Syllabuses (NCETS) issued in 2013 placed greater importance on students' communication skills and increased the proportion of practical English. According to the new Syllabus, every unit consists of four hours of class time. This was consistent with Laura's existing lesson planning, which consisted of one hour of reading, writing, and translating for every three hours of instruction in speaking and listening. Recent policies and trends benefit Western trained teachers by emphasizing the communicative function of English that corresponds with the philosophy of the CLT method.

Facilitation Rather Than Training

Laura also shared her struggle of professional self-definition during the interview. Her own learning experience as a student in China made her conceptualize teachers as trainers. They are the ones who pass knowledge to students and have definite authority in the classroom. However, after studying in the U.S., her view had changed. She thought that the traditional Chinese perception of teachers places too much pressure on educators, especially as a second language-learner herself. Instead, Laura thought of herself as a facilitator. Further, Laura explained:

我想成为的老师是帮助学生拓展自己的那种老师。我很想引导他们学会终身学习。毕竟他们在我课堂上的时间是很有限的，所以我很希望他们能学到一些之后用得着的，不会忘的技能，比如对英语的兴趣和学习方法什么的。[I want to be the teacher that helps students to explore. I want to guide them and assist them in gaining skills for life-long learning. They only stay in my classroom for a limited time, so I hope they can learn something that they will never forget, and will be useful for the future, such as an interest in English and language learning skills].

Though she rejects the Chinese standard of a good teacher, Laura refashioned a definition of what it meant to be an educator:

我自己备课，设计教案，找原汁原味的英语材料什么的，这个事情系里不给我什么额外奖励的，都是自愿干的额外工作，没人要求你这么。你可以什么都不干，弄弄自己的科研，上课用系里发的材料就行了。但是我觉得如果我不用心备课学生就很容易走神，觉得无聊。培养学生对英语的兴趣比语法重要很多，所以我有我自己的标准，我得对得起自己。[You know there is no reward for teachers who design their own syllabus and find extra authentic learning materials. Those are all extra work. Nobody asks you to do that. You can just relax and do your own research stuff and use the materials they provided to teach students. But I don't want to. Students get bored easily if I don't prepare class carefully. Interest is always more important than grammar. I set a standard for myself, and I have to serve myself well].

Laura did not want to be treated as an absolute authority but felt a responsibility to be a facilitator for her students.

Discussion

These emergent themes indicate that Laura constructed her knowledge of language teaching from her previous experience as a student in China, as a trainee in the TESOL program in the U.S., and from her current status as an

EFL teacher in a Chinese university. As Freeman and Johnson (1998) have contended, teachers' prior knowledge and experience shape teaching, as does their contemporary social and cultural context.

In Laura's case, her teaching practice was shaped by two layers of experience. The first layer is her experience as a student in China. Her own English learning experience in a Chinese context shaped her beliefs that teachers are trainers and students listen to them in order to access to knowledge. Teachers pass knowledge on to students using textbooks, and knowledge is practiced through written exercises and drills. In traditional Chinese classrooms, the power relationship is obvious between teachers and students: teachers are dominant while students are subordinate. The class is organized in a teacher-centered way. Students learn to listen to the teacher and raise their hand to answer a teacher's question but do not have many opportunities to participate in activities.

The second layer of Laura's experience was as a student in an American TESOL program. The theories she learned and the practice she conducted were entirely different from her Chinese experience. The classroom does not have strict rules and students participate in a variety of teaching activities. Teachers are facilitators in a student-centered classroom where teachers and students jointly construct the learning process. These two layers of experience overlay and impact Laura's teaching, meaning that she uses both traditional and CLT methods in her classroom, using judgment to determine which method is more productive at any given time.

By contextualizing Laura's teaching methods within her background, we can better understand her choice of teaching methods. Contrary to the literature that states the teaching content and teaching methodology is centrally controlled by the government and classroom teachers lack autonomy in China (Liao, 2004), Laura's university setting allowed her the freedom to build a dynamic teaching environment, where the assessment of her teaching was not linked to College English Test scores. Her use of communicative methods should also be seen in light of new National College English Teaching Syllabuses (NCETS) that place more emphasis on cultivating students' communicative competence. The reform of the College English Test provided Laura with an environment to develop her own method and teaching strategies, which can both address students' needs to pass the examination and her own teaching purpose in the cultivation of learning interests. Laura's teaching corresponded with what Canagarajah (1999) said: "empowerment is contingent upon contextual factors and does not inhere in a method" (p. 107).

We must keep in mind that the relationship between teachers and their settings is not fixed but continually evolving. When Laura began teaching English as an EFL teacher, she faced low-engagement from her Chinese students, but after two years of negotiating this context, she gradually resolved conflicts and reached a balance between traditional Chinese conceptions of learning and communication-based teaching methods.

The methods associated with CLT encounter resistance in Chinese classrooms because communication-based teaching challenges Chinese traditional ideas about learning. For the effective implementation of this method, communication-focused activities need to undergo a localization process to adapt to Chinese culture.

As a product of globalization, CLT was introduced to Chinese classrooms only thirty years ago. To some, it represents neocolonialism and Western culture (Phillipson, 1992; Canagarajah, 1999). By applying the concept of glocalization, we can see that countries like China can find a balance between preserving their identity and adapting to an increasingly globalized world. In contrast to much of the literature which concludes that CLT has hardly been adopted in China, I found that the balance of CLT and traditional methods can be reached by individual teachers involved in a localizing process. Lu and Ares (2015) stated that, "instead of imposing another Western pedagogy on Chinese educators, we should base our understanding on the local context and work hand in hand with local educators toward a more just educational system" (p. 124). In the present case study, Laura was able to reconcile the conflicts between CLT and existing learning environments by developing her own strategies to incorporate communication-based learning into traditional Chinese classrooms. She effectively localized CLT. From her story, we can see that her working environment and social settings play a role in this localizing process.

Educational Significance

Current Western TESOL programs tend to lack consideration for the cultural conflicts considered in this article. This should be a key issue in the administration of TESOL programs given that between 80% and 90% of TESOL trainees speak languages other than English as a first language (Brady & Gulikers, 2004). On the other hand, for countries such as China, where language learning environments are distinct from Western classrooms, the space for

the implementation of communication-based methods needs to be expanded and further localized. Localization remains key to this process, as any implementation of new methods or products without localization is likely to meet resistance (Anderson, 1993; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Hu, 2003, 2005, 2010; Ju, 2013; Littlewood, 2014; Lu & Ares, 2015; Rao, 1996, 2002). This study does not intend to draw universal conclusions, but rather to describe and emphasize the issues confronted by Western trained non-native EFL teachers in China, and encourage teachers and related practitioners to reflect on EFL teaching practice.

This study contributes to the field in two aspects: first of all, this study reinforces the necessity to pay attention to the local context while discussing teaching and learning from a global perspective. Resistances might be encountered by any imported teaching methods; thus, an examination on the local context is crucial for the better implementation. Future research could also examine the implementation of CLT in other countries and cultural contexts. Secondly, this study also reveals how a Western-trained EFL teacher developed her own strategies to balance an imported teaching method and the local need. Her teaching practice not only could inspire other EFL teachers in the similar situation, but also could inform the educational institution that providing teachers with certain degree of freedom is important for a more flexible and creative teaching method.

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