

Application of CLT in Chinese Out-School English Tutoring Classes-Taking Skyedu as an Example

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Abstract. This study is mainly discussing the significance of using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the reason for applying CLT in the out-school English tutoring classes in China, and the analysis of its effectiveness. Teacher-centered is still the mainstream of English teaching in China nowadays, which may decrease students' language learning autonomy, willingness, and motivation. In this case, turning from teacher-centered to student-centered is necessary and unavoidable. From some important previous research, CLT might be more suitable for Chinese students acquiring a second language effectively. Though it may not work in public schools, it could be useful in certain educational organizations. Therefore, this study also illustrates the possibility and feasibility to apply CLT in *Skyedu*, an educational organization. The result of the study demonstrated that it would be possible and practical to invite students joining in a CLT classroom in *Skyedu*.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English Teaching Method, After-School English Tutoring Classes.

1. Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a crucial teaching approach in the West [1]. Compared with the traditional grammar translation method (GTM) that focuses on reading and writing, CLT stresses communication in an authentic context [2]. It cultivates students' ability to learn a second language in a target language environment. In China, students may get high scores in reading and grammar structures, but they are weak at speaking and listening. In this case, it is necessary for teachers to apply CLT in their English teaching classrooms to enhance students' communicative competence [2]. However, some public schools had tried this teaching approach before with the end of fail for large-scale classrooms, low willingness from students, and insufficient professional knowledge of teachers. Nonetheless, some educational organizations may have opportunities to apply CLT properly with small-scale classrooms, high-level students, and well-trained teachers. Taking the educational organization *Skyedu* as an example, the merits and demerits of applying CLT will be elaborated.

2. Literature review

Communicative Language Teaching is a significant teaching approach that emphasizes promoting learners' communication competence [3]. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), it is turning traditional teacher-centered into student-centered classrooms and boosting students' language learning motivation and autonomy [4]. There are some CLT principles, such as, firstly, acquiring a second language through using it. Secondly, communication needs to be authentic and meaningful in classroom activities. Thirdly, fluency should be stressed during communication. Fourthly, communication will involve different language strategies. Lastly, mistakes and creativity will be allowed during the learning process [3]. Moreover, there are five characteristics of CLT, except for learning through interaction, teachers need to consider both language format and students' learning process, encourage students to accumulate their own personal language learning experience, and connect language learning in classrooms and real-life outdoor activities [5].

However, there are some barriers to applying CLT in authentic classrooms [6]. First of all, teachers might not have sufficient pedagogical knowledge or high language proficiency to support their CLT teaching in classrooms. Then, they may lack instructional resources. What's more, large-size classrooms, poor classroom management, unpractical classroom activities or shyness may influence applying CLT in language learning classrooms. These back sides should be considered and tackled carefully if teachers plan to utilize CLT in classrooms [7].

In China, the traditional English teaching method is the grammar-translation method [8]. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), it focused on reading and writing instead of listening and speaking. Memorizing priorities and communicating for a long time [8]. After absorbing the audio-lingual and direct method from the West, CLT had been introduced by Li Xiaojun in 1979 [9]. Traditional English teaching methods had been changed since then, students had more opportunities to have authentic input and have a real speaking environment. They were more confident to demonstrate their thoughts and to use the target language. Nonetheless, some illustrated that CLT was beneficial for those who planned to go abroad while the grammar-translation method might be more useful and practical to enhance domestic students' language fluency to acquire high scores in examinations.

Nevertheless, compared with receiving language passively, inspired students learning language autonomy and joining communication activities will be a better way to acquire a second language.

3. Case analysis

Skyedu is a well-known educational organization in Shenzhen and one of its aims is to promote primary school students' English proficiency and competence by utilizing Longman textbooks and teaching materials which are more difficult and demanding than those in public schools. There are many students from primary schools to high schools joining different subjects and curricula. Students then would be divided into around four different types of classes in English and Maths according to their level because advanced students are expected to meet the higher requirement of significant entrance examinations. Therefore, it is more likely to be exam-oriented than merely focusing on foreign language development.

During the teaching program, most teachers present their reading, grammar, and writing lessons by acquiring the Present, Practice, Produce (PPP) teaching method. It is easier for learners to comprehend challenging knowledge while neglecting their communication competence. In other words, though students possibly get high scores in exams, they have insufficient communicative ability since less target language communicating environment. However, communication (oral English) plays an important part in language learning. In this case, promoting students' speaking competence through communicative language teaching is practical and unavoidable for some reasons. Firstly, instead of being exam-oriented, CLT focuses on using language in an authentic context and encouraging students to communicate in classrooms [10]. Moreover, boosting their four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) through Communicative Language Teaching is one of the significant parts in CLT [6]. What's more, CLT allows students to acquire English more effectively than merely GTM or PPP.

However, there are some difficulties to apply the Communicative Language Teaching method in the educational organization. First of all, advanced students could be able to learn English through the CLT method while teachers might not have sufficient and relevant knowledge or experience to apply CLT method in an English class. Secondly, students might have less willingness to speak in the target language in the classrooms because they are less confident in their oral English. Thirdly, they may feel difficult to deliver a complete and correct sentence during communication. Sometimes they will be interrupted by grammatical errors or spelling mistakes. In this circumstance, teachers might be better to provide scaffolding or more instructions to let them feel comfortable to make mistakes in speaking. Fourthly, students' parents expect them to have obvious progress in some vital examinations. They might concern that students enhance speaking skills but decline other strategies

like grammar, reading and writing. In this circumstance, these challenges need to be settled before integrating CLT in a real classroom.

To mention students' confidence to speak fluently in the classroom, the activities could lead to some comprehensible examples and some easy-followed sentences. When students understand the structure, they may be eager to speak more and practice more. Meanwhile, teachers could provide some supports if necessary to let them have a sense of security to communicate instead of concerned about having grammatical mistakes in their words. To avoid too much unnecessary interruption to think about grammar and vocabulary in their communication, students need to accumulate new words and increase their sentence accuracy through CLT classrooms. Moreover, CLT classrooms aim to promote communicative competence while other language skills should be stressed at the same time. So as to meet parents' expectations.

Compared with public schools in Shenzhen, the educational organization would be more suitable to apply CLT. First, compared with large-scale classrooms (approximately 60 students in a classroom) in public schools, there are around 16 students in an English class in *Skyedu* which would be easier to complete CLT activities in a classroom. Secondly, students will be divided into different level classes which indicates students in a classroom will be basically at the same level. It is possible for teachers to keep students at the same pace during the CLT classes. Thirdly, students in *Skyedu* may have a stronger willingness to promote their language proficiency and communicative skills because many of them plan to pass Key English Test and Preliminary English Test. They are from Cambridge English Language Assessment which give students priority to apply to renowned middle schools. The requirements of these tests include communicative ability. Thus, students need to speak fluently and precisely to get high scores. Fourthly, those teaching materials and textbooks are more engaging and meaningful with various topics and authentic scenes that are more suitable to be used in CLT classrooms.

To sum up, much previous research discussed merging the CLT method in a real classroom in Chinese public schools. However, fewer of them succeed. Therefore, this project tries to discuss the possibility of integrating the CLT method into an educational organization. From the analysis above, it may deserve a chance to try.

4. Conclusion

This project mainly discussed the situation of English learning in Chinese schools, the significance of CLT and the meaning of applying CLT in Chinese context, an introduction of an educational organization and the advantages and challenges of applying CLT in an educational organization - *Skyedu*. Though some students learned English for ten years from primary school to high school, they could hardly communicate fluently in English. If people could not speak a language concisely or use a target language to express their idea correctly, that means they still did not master the target language successfully. Therefore, many educators tried hard to find some proper teaching approaches to change this embarrassing dilemma. From some research before, many of them preferred the CLT because it emphasized communication while it still did not widespread in Chinese public schools yet. Then, it might work in certain educational organizations. Nonetheless, it merely considered the possibility and analysis without some authentic data which is also the limitation of this project. Whether or not the CLT method could be used in the educational organization successfully, a further experiment would be required to prove that. In the coming future, some students will be selected in a CLT method classroom to certify if the CLT could be used smoothly and effectively.

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