Knowledge in practice:
A grounded theory approach to constructing beginning Mandarin teachers' use of the Communicative Language Teaching approach

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University of Nottingham, 2009

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Honours)

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March, 2011
DECLARATION

I declare that except where due acknowledgement has been made this research thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Jiadong LIAO

23 March, 2010
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the course of undertaking this postgraduate study, I have received a great deal of benefit of expertise, advice, guidance, encouragement, and support from many people. Without their help I would not be able to produce this thesis. It is to them that I wish to express my gratitude.

To my principal supervisor, Dr. Dacheng Zhao, for his significant guidance and encouragement throughout the progressive stages of this work as well as for his great help in my daily life in Australia.

To all supervisors in the Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) research team, Professor Michael Singh, Associate Professor Wayne Sawyer, Associate Professor Allen White, Dr Kevin Watson, Dr Katrina Zammit, Dr Joanne Orlando, and Dr. Jinghe Han, who are always there helping me to resolve problems in the research process.

To all of my peers, who are studying in the ROSETE program at the University of Western Sydney, for their support through the research journey.

To all members involved in the program, staff in Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau, the NSW Department of Education and Training, and the University of Western Sydney. Without their important help I would not be able to study and conduct the research in Australia.

Finally, great gratitude goes to my family members, for their great support and eternal love.
CONTENTS

DECLARATION ........................................................................................................ ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................... iii
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................. viii
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................ ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................................... x
AUTHOR’S PRESENTATIONS ............................................................................. xi
ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................. xii

CHAPTER ONE ........................................................................................................ 1
Introduction to the study of teachers’ perspectives of CLT........................................ 1

  1.1 The background of the study ........................................................................ 1
  1.2 Research questions ....................................................................................... 3
  1.3 Significance of the study .............................................................................. 4
  1.4 The intellectual context of the study ............................................................ 5
  1.5 The implementation of the grounded theory approach ................................ 8
  1.6 Thesis statement .......................................................................................... 9
  1.7 Overview of thesis structure ...................................................................... 9

CHAPTER TWO ..................................................................................................... 11
The conceptualisation of CLT and teacher knowledge ........................................... 11

  2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................ 11
  2.2 The conceptualisation of CLT ................................................................... 12
    2.2.1 The development of various language approaches .............................. 12
    2.2.2 Current debate about the CLT approach ............................................ 13
    2.2.3 Interpreting a framework of CLT ....................................................... 15
    2.2.4 A framework for CLT ........................................................................ 19
      2.2.4.1 Approach of CLT ........................................................................ 19
      2.2.4.2 Design of CLT ............................................................................ 24
      2.2.4.3 Procedure of CLT ..................................................................... 27
  2.3 The conceptualisation of teacher knowledge .............................................. 28
    2.3.1 Issues in beginning teachers’ professional development ..................... 30
  2.4 Summary of the chapter ............................................................................. 31
## CHAPTER THREE

The conceptualisation of grounded theory method

### 3.1 Introduction

### 3.2 The choice of research methodology

### 3.3 Grounded theory principles

#### 3.4 The theoretical background of the contemporary grounded theory

- **3.4.1 Phenomenological enquiry**
- **3.4.2 Symbolic interactionism**
- **3.4.3 Social constructionism**
  - **3.4.3.1 The history of the social constructionist philosophy**
  - **3.4.3.2 The collapse of analytic philosophy**
- **3.4.4 Pragmatist epistemology**
  - **3.4.4.1 Iterative-circular problem-solving process**

### 3.5 Research design

- **3.5.1 Ethic considerations**
- **3.5.2 Research participants**
  - **3.5.2.1 Participant description**
- **3.5.3 Data collection**
  - **3.5.3.1 Semi-structured interviews**
  - **3.5.3.2 Interview questions**
  - **3.5.3.3 Pilot study**
  - **3.5.3.4 Self-reflections**
  - **3.5.3.5 Observation**
- **3.5.4 Data analysis**
  - **3.5.4.1 The analysis of interviews**
  - **3.5.4.2 The analysis of self-reflections**
- **3.5.5 Research validation**

### 3.6 Summary of the chapter

## CHAPTER FOUR

The teacher’s conceptions of CLT

### 4.1 Introduction

### 4.2 Understanding CLT

### 4.3 Perceiving CLT

- **4.3.1 Favouring CLT**
- **4.3.2 Conflicting with teaching objectives**
- **4.3.3 Losing the students**
  - **4.3.3.1 Resisting learning with varying degrees**
  - **4.3.3.2 Mandarin challenges students**
  - **4.3.3.3 CLT challenges students**
- **4.4 Situating CLT**
  - **4.4.1 Promoting learning**
4.4.1.1 Creating a comfortable environment ................................................ 102
4.4.1.2 Reducing learning difficulties .......................................................... 109
  4.4.1.2.1 Simplifying learning content ..................................................... 110
  4.4.1.2.2 Making clear instruction ........................................................... 112
4.4.2 Adapting self ........................................................................................... 114
4.4.3 Maintaining the status quo ...................................................................... 117
4.5 Summary of the chapter .............................................................................. 119

CHAPTER FIVE .................................................................................................... 120
My conceptions about using CLT for Mandarin teaching ................................. 120
  5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 120
  5.2 My understanding of CLT .......................................................................... 120
  5.3 Analysis of three sample lessons ................................................................. 121
    5.3.1 Teaching process and strategies in the first lesson .................................. 122
    5.3.2 Self-reflection of the first lesson ............................................................. 123
    5.3.3 Teaching process and strategies in the second lesson ............................. 125
    5.3.4 Self-reflection of the second lesson ........................................................ 126
    5.3.5 Teaching process and strategies in the third lesson ................................. 128
    5.3.6 Self-reflection of the third lesson ............................................................ 130
  5.4 Identifying the CLT oriented instruction .................................................. 131
    5.4.1 Using the target language as classroom language ................................... 131
    5.4.2 Teaching the target language with CLT ................................................... 132
    5.4.4 Practising the target language in CLT oriented activities ....................... 133
  5.5 Identifying the non-CLT oriented teaching practice ................................ 141
    5.5.1 Using English as classroom language .................................................... 142
    5.5.2 Teaching the target language with the non-CLT approach ...................... 142
    5.5.3 Practising the target language in non-CLT oriented activities ............... 146
    5.5.4 Teaching the cultural knowledge ............................................................. 149
  5.6 Other pragmatic strategies in teaching ...................................................... 152
  5.7 Summary of the chapter .............................................................................. 153

CHAPTER SIX ...................................................................................................... 154
The discussion and conclusion of the research project .................................. 154
  6.1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 154
  6.2 Discussion of the findings ............................................................................ 155
    6.2.1 Incomprehensiveness and misconception in understanding CLT .......... 155
    6.2.2 Identifying conflicts and tensions in perceiving CLT ............................ 156
    6.2.3 Addressing the tension in situating CLT .............................................. 158
    6.2.4 An integral view of the substantive theory ......................................... 161
  6.3 Limitations of the study .............................................................................. 164
  6.4 Implications of the study .............................................................................. 165
6.5 Recommendations for further studies ................................................. 167
6.6 Concluding commentary .................................................................... 167

BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................................................... 169

APPENDICES ............................................................................................ 177

- Appendix 1. Schedule for Language Teacher Training (NSW DET) .......... 177
- Appendix 2. List of criterial and non-criterial attributes of CLT ............. 178
- Appendix 3. University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Approval .... 181
- Appendix 4. Participant Information Sheet (General) ......................... 182
- Appendix 5. Participant Consent Form ............................................... 184
- Appendix 6. Semi-Structured Interview Questions ............................. 185
- Appendix 7. Questions used for the pilot study .................................. 187
- Appendix 8. Sample of interview transcript (Tracy) ........................... 189
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Principles of input processing ......................................................... 23
Table 2.2 Five types of language activities ..................................................... 25
Table 3.1 General profiles of research participants ....................................... 58
Table 3.2 The general information of the reflective journals ....................... 64
Table 3.3 Main codes of the interviews .......................................................... 68
Table 3.4 Key themes generated from codes ............................................... 70
Table 3.5 Categories of the research project ............................................... 72
Table 3.6 Results of my teaching practice ..................................................... 74
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 A framework for CLT ............................................................ 18

Figure 2.2 A four-step process of language acquisition ...................... 21

Figure 2.3 Comparison between communicative and traditional practice .... 27

Figure 3.1 Iterative-cyclical problem-solving ....................................... 51

Figure 4.1 The teacher’s perception about the tension of losing the students .... 92

Figure 6.1 A schematic presentation about the substantive theory .......... 163
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching
DET: Department of Education and Training
ESL: English as second language
GTM: Grammar Translation Method
HREC: Human research ethics committee
KLA: Key Learning Area
L2: Second language
MI: Multiple intelligences
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding
NALSSP: National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program
NSW: New South Wales
NSW DET: New South Wales Department of Education and Training
NMEB: Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau
NEAF: National Ethics Application Form
ROSETE: Research Orientated, School Engaged, Teacher Education
SCT: Sociocultural theory
SLA: Second language acquisition
TEFL: Teaching English as a foreign language
UWS: University of Western Sydney
VTR: Volunteer Teacher Researcher
WSR: Western Sydney Region
AUTHOR’S PRESENTATIONS


ABSTRACT

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, promoted by language education programmes, has become the prevailing language teaching methodology across the world. However, the process about the beginning language teacher’s application of CLT is not yet explored in past research. This research aimed to study the use of CLT through the beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives.

A grounded theory approach is employed as the research methodology. Data was collected from interviews of eight beginning Mandarin teachers and my reflective journals. The teacher interviewed in the study have been teaching Mandarin in primary schools (stage one to three) and junior high schools (stage four) for one or two years.

Major findings suggest a three-dimension explication for the practice of CLT in Mandarin class. The epistemic dimension indicates the beginning Mandarin teacher’s understanding of CLT; the perceptual dimension reveals the teacher’s concerns of CLT as against their preferences, teaching objectives, and surroundings; and the situational dimension explicates the teacher’s adaption of CLT in their particular teaching situations. The integral, emergent process of the three dimensions demonstrates a procedure in the transmission of the CLT theory into practice, and implies the practice of teacher education programmes, language curriculum, and Mandarin teaching to consider issues in the teacher's knowledge-practice process.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the study of teachers’ perspectives of CLT

This chapter will first present the background of the study and then the research enquiries in terms of the main research question and subsidiary research questions. The significance of the research and the potential contribution of the study will be discussed in section three. It is followed by the introduction of the intellectual context of the study including a brief review of previous research about CLT. The rationale for undertaking the study, namely the grounded theory methodology, will be provided as well. General ideas drawn from the research findings will be presented in the thesis statement. Meanwhile, this chapter will also provide an outline of the organisation and structure of the thesis.

1.1 The background of the study

A new Asian literacy strategy, National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP), was commenced in 2009 by the Australian government with a committed funding of $62.4 million over 2008-09 to 2011-12. The project has a clear vision stating that there will be at least 12 per cent of year 12 students graduating with a proficiency in one of the Asian languages (Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean) by 2020 (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). In accord with the national vision of extending Asian literacy, an international cooperation program was incubated in the Western Sydney Region (WSR) in 2008. It was a volunteer Mandarin teaching program based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between three parties: the Western Sydney Region (WSR) of the New South Wales Department of Education and Teaching (NSW DET), Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB), and the University of Western Sydney (UWS). As one of the volunteer teachers in the program, I was required to teach Mandarin in WSR schools on a weekly basis for 18 months. Meanwhile, I enrolled to
undertake a master degree study on education at UWS as a teacher-researcher. For enhancing the volunteer teachers’ work performance, language methodology training is provided by the NSW DET during the first four months in Australia. The training included the introduction of various language teaching approaches, materials as well as school observations in the Sydney region (See Appendix 1). In the training program, a language approach called the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was particularly emphasised. The language educators encouraged the volunteer teacher to adopt the approach in Mandarin class. However, problems about the application of CLT emerged from my teaching practice. Even though I made great effort for making CLT happen in class, using CLT in practice was not like what its theory suggests. This tension, as identified from a beginning language teacher’s practice, has given rise to the enquiry about the beginning teacher’s use of CLT. Specifically, the research project aims to identify the driving force for the gap between the CLT theory and its practice through the investigation about the beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives of CLT.

Regarding the research context, the study investigated Mandarin (or Chinese) teaching in primary and secondary schools in Western Sydney region. Students range from kindergarten to year eight, while most of them are non-Chinese background students. Hence, strictly speaking, Chinese is a foreign language rather than a second language in the context. The research project is aware of the difference between foreign language teaching and second language teaching. However, both the terms ‘foreign language’ and ‘second language (L2)’ might be used interchangeably in the thesis.

Different circumstances may emerge wherever the teachers are in teaching a foreign language. Although there might be generally agreed principles and guidelines in the teaching of a foreign language, there can hardly be a best teaching practice that suits all groups of learners. In foreign language class, the more realistic scene is that one sort of method or activity is effective for one group of students, while inappropriate
or even fails unsatisfactorily with another. Some students in foreign language class may comfortably learn the foreign language without the need to know its equivalent English meanings, while some learners may be struggling in the intention to work out everything in the target language (Pachler & Redondo, 2007). These disparate circumstances in class may result from the unique position that foreign language teaching holds in the school curriculum: “the medium of ‘instruction’, the language in which lessons are conducted, is also the message of the lessons, the goal” (Pachler & Redondo, 2007, p. 4). Regarding the target language, Chinese is a logographic language. That means the characters (or ‘hanzi’) constitute the written forms of Chinese language, while the orthography-phonology connection in the language system is not quite transparent (Yun, 2005). This implicit rule in the Chinese logographic morphology can be challenging for beginning learners. In consequence, various orthographic errors may occur due to homophone interference, structural violation, or graphic/semantic/phonetic similarity effect (Yun, 2005).

1.2 Research questions

The research questions are generated from the purpose of the study, and consist of one major research question with three contributory questions. An initial stimulus for this project was the question “what are the beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives of the CLT approach with its application to the Chinese language teaching?” This gave rise to two associated questions. First, “which factors can affect the teaching practice in Chinese language classrooms?” Second, “how do these influences relate to each other for the creation of an immediate and justifiable teaching practice?”

However, after analysing the collected data and reviewing the relevant research, this thesis attempts to address the following major research question:
• How do beginning teachers apply the theory of CLT to teach Mandarin in practice?

Likewise the contributory research questions addressed in this thesis are:

• What is the teachers’ understanding of CLT?
• How do the teachers perceive CLT?
• And how do the teachers apply CLT to their particular situations?

By uncovering the teacher’s perspectives of CLT corresponding to each contributory question, the research project depicts the process about the teacher’s application of the CLT approach. As a result, the study provides one possible explanation to account for the transformative process from theory to practice.

1.3 Significance of the study

The research project focuses on the perspectives of CLT from the beginning language teachers who have just started their teaching career and taught Chinese in Australian schools for no more than two years. Johnson (2006) suggests the beginning teacher may confront four major challenges in their professional development. These challenges refer to: theory/practice versus praxis, the legitimacy of teachers’ ways of knowing, redrawing the boundaries of professional development, and located L2 teacher education. The theory-practice gap in L2 teacher’s understanding and use of the disciplinary knowledge is yet to be known, and the boundaries of professional development are becoming less clear because more teachers are using their personal practical knowledge in teaching. This gives rise to further challenges in which more located teacher education is needed (Johnson, 2006).
The study of beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives about CLT involves the investigation of their cognition in teaching. Teacher cognition addresses the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts throughout their careers (Johnson, 2006). Likewise, the study investigates the teacher cognition about the CLT theory and practice, which ultimately may provide implications for language teachers and teacher education. Specifically, by investigating the teacher’s personal practical knowledge of CLT, teachers could better understand their language teaching practice in relation to their concerns from the settings. In other words, the teacher’s tacit knowledge in terms of their prior experience, interpretations in teaching activities, and certain contexts that they work with may significantly affect their teaching practice. Most importantly, since the research outcome was generated from the teacher’s interactions with CLT in the Australian school context, it may well inform teacher education towards more located and teacher-centred practice (Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, as the study is focusing on the Mandarin teacher’s perspectives of CLT, it may provide insights for those teachers to improve their teaching practice and ultimately benefit the Mandarin learners in the long run.

1.4 The intellectual context of the study

CLT has always been the mainstream language approach in language classrooms. To be brief, the approach attempts to situate language learning in an authentic target language environment. This can be achieved by employing lifelike communicative activities such as role plays, problem-solving tasks, and information-gap activities. Teachers are required to instruct the target language without specifically explaining the strategies, maxims, and organisational principles used for communicative activities while the learners themselves are expected to work these out through the activities (Celce-Murcia et al., 1997).
However, previous research suggests that there are some issues about the use of CLT in practical teaching contexts. One of the major issues in teaching is the teacher’s misconceptions about CLT (Harmer, 2003; Liao, 2003; Mangubhai et al., 2007). CLT cannot be regarded as a single language method. Rather, it consists of a set of communicative principles to guide the teaching activities. Nonetheless, the diverse versions of CLT with varied focuses produced from academia give rise to diverse and inaccurate interpretations of CLT from the teacher (Whitley, 1993; Thompson, 1996).

Meanwhile, factors constraining the use of CLT are identified from previous research. The use of CLT for teaching a foreign language might be highly dependent on the learner’s abilities in terms of their willingness to learn and level of proficiency (Wilson, 1995). Besides the learner’s influence, other influences that may impair the implementation of CLT are identified (Sun & Cheng, 2002; Littlewood, 2006; Cook, 2010). Littlewood (2006) summarises the constraining factors in the English teaching context in East Asia, and Sun and Cheng (2002) indicate the use of CLT in teaching Chinese students English cannot serve the diverse purposes in learning a foreign language.

The previous studies about CLT have generated significant contributions to understanding the implementation of CLT in practice. However, most of the studies focus on the context of teaching English rather than Chinese as a foreign language. Moreover, the previous research centres on the identification of factors affecting the use of CLT, while there is a lack of holistic investigation about the process of the CLT application from the teacher’s concerns. Hence, this study attempts to elicit the teacher’s voice to understand the process of applying CLT.

Further, as mentioned previously, the investigation of the teacher’s voice about CLT requires not only reviewing the relevant CLT research but also looking at the sociocultural concepts towards the teacher’s knowledge of CLT and its practice.
Johnson (2006) argues that human learning in the light of the sociocultural turn is epistemologically viewed as a dynamic social activity which is contingently mediated across persons, tools, and activities in physical and social contexts. This assumption on human learning is supported by several theoretical origins.

Theories of situated cognition contend that the knowledge and knowing not only derive from accumulated information but also through experiences formulated from particular social activities. Lave and Wenger (1991) term the kind of social activities as a community of practice that requires normative ways of reasoning and using tasks and other resources. Sociocultural theories also acknowledge the significance of specific social activities on the development of human consciousness. Scholars in this realm regard that the historical and cultural meaning borne in social activities is realised, regulated and structured by the language adopted. Individuals therefore, with their internal meditational control, develop their cognition in the community of practice by engaging in the socially mediated activities. Critical social theorists further argue that knowledge gained from, and learning processes acquired among, individuals depend on their social positioning by which people are constructed in particular social and physical contexts. This argument is largely derived from the analysis on the role of language that plays in the social progression. In short, language with the form of ideological discourses has shaped the power and inequity that exists in the social process of exchanges such as social class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and linguistic identity.

By and large, despite different perspectives that have addressed the dynamic relationships between the social and cultural contexts, human cognition, and language, they all have identified the changing sociocultural aspect as a significant context that cannot be ignored for understanding human practice in particular cultural communities. When this notion is applied in this research project, the L2 teacher learning and practice of CLT are described as a socially negotiated product in which various sources of knowledge from the teacher self, students, subject matter,
curricular as well as setting is being at play. Thus, a stark contrast is drawn between the socially constructed view towards the L2 teacher knowledge and the traditionally positivistic view that assumes teachers are pedagogical experts whose knowledge and necessary skills can be exclusively gained from the teacher education course.

1.5 The implementation of the grounded theory approach

This study employs the grounded theory approach as the research methodology. Grounded theory is an interpretative research methodology, which emphasises the generation of theory from empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A set of principles in grounded theory guides the procedure of data collection and analysis. Unlike most qualitative approaches where analysis takes place after collecting large amounts of data, the data collection and analysis processes inform each other in a cyclical spiral. Meanwhile, the process of the constant comparative method is employed for generating analytical codes, themes, and categories identified from the empirical evidence. The emergent theory finally ‘saturates’ when no new analytical category emerges from further data collection and analysis.

There are some reasons for undertaking a grounded theory research. Grounded theory research parallels with the sociocultural understanding of the teacher cognition. Since the changing mentality of epistemology in human learning transforms from behaviourism to social constructivism, the positivist research methods which perceive teachers as knowledge transmitters might be insufficient to illuminate the effects of the teacher’s mental lives on their teaching practice. Instead, an interpretative or situated paradigm, largely stemming from sociological and cultural research, might be suitable for investigating the changed or ever changing understanding of the teacher’s work. Further, the teacher’s perspectives of CLT are highly personal that the uniqueness and divisiveness cannot be simply grasped by predefined conceptual frameworks. Hence, applying grounded theory may particularly fit with the research enquiry.
Regarding the research process, the data collection process involves interviews and reflective journals. I interviewed eight beginning Mandarin teachers who are teaching Mandarin in the Western Sydney schools. As a volunteer Mandarin teacher, I also kept writing my teaching reflections as the complementary data for the study.

1.6 Thesis statement

This thesis argues that the use of CLT involves the teacher’s perspectives in a process of understanding, perceiving, and situating CLT. In other words, from theory to practice, the beginning Mandarin teacher’s interpretations about the use of CLT emerge in these three dimensions. ‘Understanding CLT’ reflects the teacher’s perspectives of CLT in the epistemic dimension; ‘perceiving CLT’ indicates their perspectives in the perceptual dimension; ‘situating CLT’ reveals their perspectives in the situational dimension. These three dimensions are not separately functioning in shaping the teacher’s use of CLT. Rather, they are working dynamically to shape the teacher’s CLT practice. Hence, the study proposes to utilise the framework to understand the beginning Mandarin teacher’s use of CLT, and suggests employing the framework in a wider context where the theory-practice gap of a particular field could be understood.

1.7 Overview of thesis structure

The thesis is comprised of six chapters. This chapter has provided an introduction to the study of teachers’ perspectives of CLT. Chapter Two includes a review of previous research on CLT. A framework of CLT is presented as a guideline for analysing the teacher’s work. The rationale of teacher cognition along with their tensions and strategies in teaching is also examined as it is particularly relevant to the research findings on the teacher’s interpretations of CLT.
Chapter Three first positions the research project in the qualitative paradigm, and then explains the reasons for using the grounded theory. The historic development and rationale of contemporary grounded theory are presented. The philosophical foundation underpinning the research methodology is also examined. In terms of the research design, the data collection and analysis process, and research validation are all illustrated in this chapter.

Chapter Four presents the findings from interviews about the teacher’s understanding, perception, and practice of CLT. Hence, three sections are created for answering the three contributory research questions accordingly. Chapter Five demonstrates the findings from my teaching practice as a source of data triangulation. Both CLT and non-CLT oriented teaching practices are identified with the exploration of my concerns in teaching.

The last chapter, Chapter Six, discusses the major research findings and concludes the research project. The limitations of the study are included. The implications from the study and the recommendations for further research are indicated. This thesis ends with a final concluding commentary.
CHAPTER TWO

The conceptualisation of CLT and teacher knowledge

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature that is relevant to the research questions. For understanding the teacher’s application of the CLT approach, reviewing the CLT related literature is necessary. Hence, the research begins by conceptualising CLT through reviewing the development of various language approaches; identifying the current debate about CLT; and critically evaluating previous studies for interpreting a CLT framework. As a result, a CLT framework consisting of approach, design, and procedure is proposed as a research instrument for analysing the teacher’s practice of CLT in the research project. The framework specifies the communicative features in the theory of language and learning, teaching objectives, syllabus models, types of the teaching and learning activities, and roles of teachers, students and instructional materials. Following the conceptualisation of the CLT approach, the research also explores relevant concepts about teacher knowledge in which the teacher’s cognitive thinking about their teaching practice can be illuminated. As the research project aims to understand the practice of CLT through the beginning teacher’s perspectives, the study also explores literature about knowledge and knowing. In other words, the acquisition of knowledge about CLT and its practical use by the teacher is the central meaning of knowledge in the research context. The sociocultural perspective is explored briefly with the beginning teacher’s concerns in teaching as identified by previous studies. However, these concepts in teacher knowledge are not applied as the conceptual framework for the research project. The grounded theory method suggests the grounded theorist to generate analytical codes and categories from the empirical evidence rather than adopting the preconceived concepts. Hence, relevant study about CLT and teacher knowledge is merely treated as guidance that is open to disputation.
2.2 The conceptualisation of CLT

2.2.1 The development of various language approaches

At the end of 20th century, a number of reviews (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) explored the language pedagogical trends in terms of various approaches and methods. These language approaches include the Audiolingual Approach, Cognitive Approaches, the Direct Method, Grammar Translation Method (GTM), and communicative pedagogy. Concerning the changing rational for language study, two main language approaches, namely the Grammar Translation Method and the Communicative Language Teaching, are widely adopted today (Hinkel, 2005). As the representative of ‘traditional language approaches’, GTM has survived for hundreds of years as a pedagogical tool that is still remarkably important to examination syllabuses and the translation of professionalism (Hinkel, 2005). A brief description of the characteristics of contemporary GTM is given by Richards and Rodgers (2001):

The goal of foreign language study is to learn a language in order to read the literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study. Grammar Translation is a way of studying a language … first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. It hence views language learning as consisting of little more than memorising rules and facts … (p. 5)

As GTM teaches language in terms of accuracy and error-free grammar rules, the learning content designed for the purpose is largely predetermined and systematically programmed. Hence, teaching and learning activities in GTM are relatively independent of context (Sun & Cheng, 2002). In contrast, CLT might be ‘closer’ to daily life communications since it sees language as a tool for the maintenance of social relations. As a result, the CLT instruction is highly dependent on the target
language context by situating the teaching and learning process in authentic language exchanges. The interactive view on the nature of language fits with the learners’ communicative needs, and the approach gradually becomes the dominant model in the major shift of language teaching methodologies (Celce-Murcia et al., 1997). Hence, CLT is advocated as the major teaching approach in language classrooms. For example, educators and governments actively increase the number of English speakers in East Asia by promoting CLT in language policies and syllabuses (Littlewood, 2006). Yet, even though L2 teachers are encouraged to use CLT in their language classrooms, the majority of them seem to have failed to deliver the genuinely communicative instruction as reported all over the world (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Li, 1998; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). The outcome in the foreign language teaching context is also not promising. Taking the English subject for example, the efficacy of using CLT in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) remains a controversial topic (Sampson, 1984; Maley, 1984; Harvey, 1985; Cooke, 1986; Anderson, 1993; Penner, 1995; Li, 1998). Therefore, this research study attempts to explore the debate about the CLT methodology in previous literature.

2.2.2 Current debate about the CLT approach

Many studies ascribe the inadequate use of CLT to two major aspects: the misconceptions about CLT and some constraining factors in practice. In a study of the Chinese EFL teacher’s attitudes and practice about CLT, its use is seriously confined by the teacher’s misconceptions of CLT and situational constraints such as the grammar-based textbooks they were required to use and students’ insufficient fluency of English (Liao, 2003). Specifically, four major misconceptions of CLT are proposed (Thompson, 1996). First, the assumption that CLT means not teaching grammar is the most persistent misconception. Second, CLT is regarded as an approach merely for teaching the spoken language, while ignoring the written language instructions. Third, CLT means using role play as the language activity and
fourth, CLT has a higher pedagogical requirement on teachers. The interpretation of ambiguous constructs in the CLT approach was regarded as the main reason accounting for the misconceptions (Nattinger, 1984; Harmer, 2003; Mangubhai et al., 2007). Written texts with diverse interpretations of CLT by different authors are usually counter-productive and confusing for language teachers (Whitley, 1993). Constructs for conceptualising CLT are either too broad or limited to a set of CLT features such as ‘guidelines’, ‘communicative goals’, ‘classroom environment’, and ‘teacher roles’ (Mangubhai et al., 2007).

Besides the misconceptions, the limited use of CLT is due to a series of constraining factors. In other words, applying the CLT approach cannot be achieved without concerns about the circumstances in the teaching and learning context. Regarding the Australian school context, using CLT for teaching and learning might be difficult since it originally aims to achieve a high level of proficiency among highly motivated, intelligent, and well educated adult Europeans (Wilson, 1995).

Further, other research identifies more constraining factors. For instance, in a study of Japanese teachers of English in adopting CLT, constraints were found as follows: examination pressures, resistance from students, parents, and colleagues, ministry-mandated textbooks containing ‘unnatural’ or ‘unauthentic’ sentences’, institutional culture and beliefs, community and local pressures, large class sizes, cultural differences in educational environments, and uncertainty about how to implement CLT practices (Cook, 2010). These kinds of constraints are summarised by Littlewood (2006) in his study about the implementation of CLT in East Asian TEFL classrooms. Five types of conflicts are identified including classroom management, avoidance of English, minimal demands on language competence, incompatibility with public assessment demands, and conflict with educational values and traditions.
Moreover, in the foreign language teaching context, the potential of the CLT instruction is also confined by teaching objectives (Sun & Cheng, 2002). As most students will not live, study, or work in an English-speaking country, the objectives of foreign language teaching have wide ranging ramifications that emphasise not only on developing language competence, but also on providing foreign cultural experiences to broaden learners’ thinking. Thus, teaching everything about the target language content is not a realistic idea, while preparing students with the necessary skills might be a more viable purpose that foreign language teaching can start with (Sun & Cheng, 2002).

Even though there are many constraints in the teaching and learning process, they could be resolved to a certain extent. By providing comprehensive CLT principles along with feasible teaching procedures, researchers believe the CLT practice may happen in language classrooms (Liao, 2003; Cook, 2009). However, other findings suggest that the teacher’s conceptions of CLT are largely derived from their personal L2 learning and teaching experience rather than from academic literature pertaining to CLT or their language teaching education (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). This contrasting reality induces the research project to investigate how the beginning language teachers apply their interpretations of CLT in their teaching field.

2.2.3 Interpreting a framework of CLT

A framework of CLT is needed for analysing the data. While rather than exploring whether Mandarin teachers are using CLT or not, the CLT framework is used mainly for understanding an emergent phenomenon about the extent to which teachers use the approach in practice, and ultimately the research attempts to provide a possible explanation of how teachers apply the theory of CLT into practice - why or why not.

However, an extant framework for CLT is not available. There is a lack of common fundamental interpretations both at the theoretical and applied levels of CLT
(Celce-Murcia et al., 1997). The CLT practice merely shares a general objective that is “to prepare learners for real-life communication rather than emphasising structural accuracy” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1997, p.143), while the coherent and explicit linguistic guidelines are absent. As a result, diverse interpretations of the communicative language teaching approach are produced “as with the tale about the five blind men who touched separate parts of an elephant and so each described something else, the word ‘communicative’ has been applied so broadly that it has come to have different meanings for different people” (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 69).

Nevertheless, the effort for developing a CLT framework to improve the teacher’s understanding of CLT and enhance its applicability has never diminished. A recent study has attempted to construct such a framework by identifying and clarifying the criterial attributes of CLT under the Joyce and Weil’s teaching framework (Mangubhai et al., 2004, 2005, 2007). The Joyce and Weil’s framework (1994) is widely adopted in conceptualising teaching approaches. It consists of the following constructs: goal focus, theoretical assumptions, social system (including teacher role, student role, teacher-student relationships and normal student behaviours), support system (including teacher skills, teacher attributes and special resources), principles of teacher reaction, and instructional and nurturant effects (Mangubhai et al., 2005).

Placing criterial attributes of CLT in the corresponding constructs of Joyce and Weil’s (1994) framework could provide the teacher with comprehensive knowledge of CLT and subsequently guide their teaching practice (see Appendix 2). However, the constructs in the framework look so discursive that they may make it difficult for the application of data analysis. For this reason, the research project is advised of a classical framework that is usually applied for analysing and conceptualising various language approaches.
The framework for analysing language methods is first developed by the American applied linguists Edward Anthony. His framework consisted of three terms, namely ‘approach’, ‘method’, and ‘technique’ being organised in a hierarchical manner (Anthony, 1963, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The relationship between the three terms was interpreted as “techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach” (Anthony, 1963, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 31). ‘Approach’ refers to specified assumptions and beliefs about language and language teaching; ‘method’ is the practice of an approach including particular skills, content as well as sequence of teaching; ‘technique’ refers to teaching process practised in class. Based on his work, Richards and Rodgers (2001) have renamed the three terms and added more properties into the framework such as the role of teachers, students, and instructional materials (see Figure 2.1).
Figure 2.1 A framework for CLT

Method

Approach

- A theory of the nature of language
  - an account of the nature of language proficiency
  - an account of the basic units of language structure

- A theory of the nature of language learning
  - an account of the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning
  - an account of the conditions that allow for successful use of these processes

Design

- The general and specific objectives of the method
- A syllabus model
  - criteria for the selection and organization of linguistic and/or subject-matter content

- Types of learning and teaching activities
  - kinds of tasks and practice activities to be employed in the classroom and in materials

Procedure

- Learner roles
  - types of learning tasks set for learners
  - degree of control learners have over the content of learning
  - patterns of learner groupings that are recommended or implied
  - degree to which learners influence the learning of others
  - the view of the learner as a processor, performer, initiator, problem solver, etc.

- Teacher roles
  - types of functions teachers fulfill
  - degree of teacher influence over learning
  - degree to which the teacher determines the content of learning
  - types of interaction between teachers and learners

- The role of instructional materials
  - primary function of materials
  - the form materials take (e.g., textbook, audiovisual)
  - relation of materials to other input
  - assumptions made about teachers and learners

- Classroom techniques, practices, and behaviors observed when the method is used
  - resources in terms of time, space, and equipment used by the teacher
  - interactional patterns observed in lessons
  - tactics and strategies used by teachers and learners when the method is being used

Source: adapted from Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 33)
2.2.4 A framework for CLT

This thesis will present the framework for CIT in terms of its three dimensions of ‘approach’, ‘design’, and ‘procedure’. The features in each dimension will be discussed with specificity.

2.2.4.1 Approach of CLT

There are two aspects in the approach of CLT, namely the theory of language and theory of learning. Concerning the theory of language, CLT regards language as a communication tool. Hence, CLT aims to develop what Hymes (1972, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) terms as ‘communicative competence’. That is, “an ability when to speak, when not, and ... what to talk about, with whom, when, where, and in what manner” (cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 227). Hymes demonstrates the ability of using appropriate language by consideration of

1) whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible
2) whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available
3) whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated
4) whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails
   (Hymes, 1972, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 159)

This theoretical understanding of language is consistent with Halliday’s (1970, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) functional theory of language in which seven basic functions of language are identified including instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and representational functions. Even though this theory is not exclusively generated for the CLT approach, writers about CLT propose a wider application of the theory in the second language teaching and learning context (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) consolidate the theoretical fundamentals of CLT by introducing a more pedagogically influential analysis in which four dimensions of communicative competence are specified. They are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. The holistic view about the communicative rationale offers two main insights. First, as mentioned above, developing language within a socially meaningful context is the key feature to distinguish CLT from other ‘traditional’ approaches or methods. Second, the emphasis on social interactional function in CLT does not necessarily downplay the grammatical aspect but rather research finds that the incorporation of phonological, grammatical, and lexical items of learning with meaning-focused interaction is an effective way to develop communicative competence (Savignon, 1972).

The revival of teaching grammatical and linguistic forms in CLT has actually been acknowledged in the past two decades (Celce-Murcia et al., 1997). Regarding the principles of cognitive psychology, to effectively learn a language “the learner must pay attention to the learning objective and must then practise the objective so that it changes from part of a controlled process to part of an automatic process” (Schmidt, 1991, cited in Celce-Murcia et al., 1997, p. 145). Hence, CLT is an integrative language instruction that combines the traditional form-focused instruction with the meaning-focused teaching. The integration in language teaching, nevertheless, is problematic in practice. The practical use of CLT may need to consider such factors as learner age, nature and length of instructional sequence, opportunities for language contact outside the classroom, and teacher preparation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The theory of learning is the second aspect in the approach of CLT. Regarding the learning theory in the CLT context, first, it addresses the conditions the success of communicative teaching process may need (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). For instance, four assumptions on the conditions of using CLT are drawn by Balet (1985, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Firstly, it assumes that learning a second language as the
mother tongue can be effective due to the real-life situations being employed in learning. The second assumption is based on the first one. It contends that classroom activities are in need of being ‘empirical’ in nature and creative in processes. Thirdly, the instruction of grammatical structure of the language should be reduced extensively with only one exception: when the introduction of grammar is for the sake of making communicative intent explicit. The fourth assumption includes the maintenance of realism in classroom settings, which can be reflected in the use of instructional materials such as realia.

Secondly, learning theory also accounts for the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This involves theories of second language acquisition (SLA). One of the SLA theories proposes a four-step process in language acquisition (see Figure 2.2). In general, acquisition involves the creation of utterances (output) through an implicit linguistic system (developing system), while the mechanism requires input processing in which learners derive intake from input (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). The input processing consists of two important concepts, input and intake. Input is the raw material helping learners build the ‘form-meaning’ connections in the developing system. Learners are usually exposed to target language input in terms of the listening and reading process. Yet, the original input data can be reduced or altered during the process. Linguists then term the language that learners actually attend to and process in working memory as intake.

**Figure 2.2 A four-step process of language acquisition**

![Four-step process of language acquisition](image)

Source: adapted from Lee & VanPatten (2003)

Researchers believe that comprehensible and meaning-bearing input can be more effectively transferred into language intake by learners, and progressively achieve the
success of language acquisition (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In other words, simplified and meaningful input could allow learners easy access to the target language. The characteristics of simplified input include five main aspects. They are ‘the rate of speech’, ‘vocabulary’, ‘syntax’, ‘discourse’, and ‘speech setting’ (Hatch, 1983, cited in Lee & VanPatten, 2003). For instance, the rate of speech means that the teacher need to slow the rate in language instruction. Teachers may use fewer contractions, longer pauses, and extra stress on nouns to make the focused content explicit. In general, the procedure of input processing is against mechanical drills in traditional instruction and fit with the CLT conceptions. Table 2.1 demonstrates the principles of input processing derived from linguistic research. The set of principles provides a concrete guidance for the use of CLT in practice.
Table 2.1 Principles of input processing

**Principle 1 (P1). The Primacy of Meaning Principle. Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form.**

- **P1a.** The Primacy of Content Words Principle. Learners process content words in the input before anything else.

- **P1b.** The Lexical Preference Principle. Learners will tend to rely on lexical items as opposed to grammatical form to get meaning when both encode the same semantic information.

- **P1c.** The Preference for Nonredundancy Principle. Learners are more likely to process nonredundant meaningful grammatical form before they process redundant meaningful forms.

- **P1d.** The Meaning-before-Nonmeaning Principle. Learners are more likely to process meaningful grammatical forms before nonmeaningful forms irrespective of redundancy.

- **P1e.** The Availability of Resources Principle. For learners to process either redundant meaningful grammatical forms or nonmeaningful forms, the processing of overall sentential meaning must not drain available processing resources.

- **P1f.** The Sentence Location Principle. Learners tend to process items in sentence initial position before those in final position and those in medial position.

**Principle 2 (P2). The First Noun Principle. Learners tend to process the first noun or pronoun they encounter in a sentence as the subject or agent.**

- **P2a.** The Lexical Semantics Principle. Learners may rely on lexical semantics, where possible, instead of word order to interpret sentences.

- **P2b.** The Event Probabilities Principle. Learners may rely on event probabilities, where possible, instead of word order to interpret sentences.

- **P2c.** The Contextual Constraint Principle. Learners may rely less on the First Noun Principle if preceding context constrains the possible interpretation of a clause or sentence.

Source: adapted from Lee & VanPatten (2003, p. 139)
2.2.4.2 Design of CLT

In the dimension of CLT design, six aspects in terms of objectives, syllabus models, types of learning and teaching activities, learner roles, teacher roles, and the role of instructional materials are included. Objectives define the general and specific goals for language learning. Learning a language other than the mother tongue, as contextualised in the CLT approach, is for personal communicative needs, learning the semiotic system of a language, and the requirement of school curriculum (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Secondly, syllabus models select and organise linguistic and subject matter content for language learners. Syllabus models vary across countries and regions according to diverse social, cultural, and political circumstances. Regarding the Chinese syllabus in NSW, the learning content is organised in terms of three parts: using language, making linguistic connections, and moving between cultures. Hence, the syllabus does not exclusively focus on developing communicative competence, while it also concerns knowledge and understanding of the language and the culture of Chinese-speaking communities (Board of Studies, NSW, 2003).

The third aspect, types of learning and teaching activities, specifies the kinds of tasks and practice activities employed in class. Activities develop the communicative competence by engaging learners in meaningful communicative processes such as information sharing, meaning negotiation, and interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Meanwhile, Littlewood (1981) classifies the communicative activities into two main types, ‘functional communication activities’ and ‘social interaction activities’. Functional communication activities involve meaningful communication in tasks such as problem solving activities, while social interaction activities focus on conversational practice such as role plays. The classification may still be too general in deciding a CLT oriented activity. Thus, in Littlewood’s (2006) later work, she further categorises five types of language activities along a continuum which range
from non-communicative learning to the authentic communication activities (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2 Five types of language activities**

1. At the most form-focused end of the continuum is NON-COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING, which includes, for example, grammar exercises, substitution drills and pronunciation drills.

2. We then move to PRE-COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE PRACTICE, in which the focus is still primarily on language but also oriented towards meaning. An example of this is the familiar ‘question-and-answer’ practice, in which the teacher asks questions to which everyone knows the answer.

3. With the third category, COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE PRACTICE, we come to activities in which learners still work with a predictable range of language but use it to convey information. These include, for example, activities in which learners use recently taught language as a basis for information exchange or to conduct a survey amongst their classmates.

4. In the fourth category, STRUCTURED COMMUNICATION, the main focus moves to the communication of meanings, but the teacher structures the situation to ensure that learners can cope with it with their existing language resources, including perhaps what they have recently used in more form-focused work. This category includes more complex information-exchange activities or structured role-playing tasks.

5. Finally, at the most meaning-oriented end of the continuum, AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION comprises activities in which there is the strongest focus on the communication of messages and the language forms are correspondingly unpredictable. Examples are discussion, problem-solving, content-based tasks and larger-scale projects.

Source: adapted from Littlewood (2006, p. 247)

Fourthly, CLT proposes a learner-centred style of teaching and learning process. Rather than the teacher transmitting information to the learners in the traditional classroom, learners are expected to control their own learning (Song, 2009). Moreover, learner-centeredness emphasises on the cooperative approach to learning.
There might be less instruction on grammar rules and correction of errors, while the interdependence between students in communicative activities is emphasised (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Learner-centeredness also means acknowledging learners’ diverse learning styles and preferences. This involves the concept of multiple intelligences (MI) (Gardner, 1993, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The idea of multiple intelligences suggests human beings possess eight dimensions of intelligence, which include ‘linguistic’, ‘logical/mathematical’, ‘spatial’, ‘musical’, ‘bodily/kinaesthetic’, interpersonal’, ‘intrapersonal’, and ‘naturalist’. Each person may possess all of the dimensions, while the strengths of intelligences vary. The difference in intelligences gives rise to various learning styles and preferences. In terms of language teaching, pedagogy can be most effective when learners’ differences are acknowledged and accommodated in teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Fifthly, in accord with the concept of learner-centeredness, the teacher have three main roles in language instruction, which are to be facilitator, participant, and observer (Sung, 2010). Details of each role are specified as follows:

The teacher has two main roles: the first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. The latter role is closely related to the objectives of the first role and arises from it. These roles imply a set of secondary roles for the teacher; first, as an organiser of resources and as a resource himself, second as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities. … A third role for the teacher is that of researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and organisational capacities. (Breen & Candlin, 1980, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 167).

The last aspect in the design of CLT is the wide range of instructional materials being applied in the CLT approach. Instructional materials in the form of text-based and
task-based realia promote authenticity in communicative activities such as role plays and games (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As a result, the authentic materials manifest the rationale of CLT by contextualising the language learning in real-life target language situations.

2.2.4.3 Procedure of CLT

The procedure of CLT depicts how the teacher utilise CLT in terms of a set of techniques, practices and strategies used in class. Normally, a CLT oriented lesson consists of two main steps, pre-communicative activities and communicative activities (Littlewood, 1981). Pre-communicative activities include structural activities and quasi-communicative activities. This kind of activity instructs content such as vocabularies and fixed dialogical interactions in traditional procedures. This teaching process prepares the basic linguistic and conversational knowledge for the following communicative practice. In communicative activities, students practise the learned language knowledge either through functional communication activities or social interaction activities. This prescribed process of the CLT instruction, however, is at odds with what other scholars suggest. Savignon (1972) rejects the idea of obtaining basic language skills before entering communicative practice. In opposition, she suggests the communicative instruction can be applied throughout the procedure of language teaching. Although the CLT procedure remains controversial, the comparison between the CLT instruction and traditional language methods is made explicit from a SLA perspective (see Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3 Comparison between communicative and traditional practice**

![Comparison between communicative and traditional practice](image)

Source: adapted from Lee & VanPatten (2003)
In the language acquisition process, the traditional language practice focuses on the instruction of language output through mechanical drills. However, this focused practice cannot help to foster the developing system which is the key aspect for effective language acquisition. In contrast, the communicative drills are meaning focused activities such as surveys, ordering, supplying information, and selecting alternatives. The kind of communicative focused practice begins with the input processing that can help learners inform the developing system (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

2.3 The conceptualisation of teacher knowledge

Besides the review of past literature about CLT, this study also briefly explores the conceptions of teacher knowledge. Teacher knowledge in the research context refers to the knowledge about CLT and its utilisation in teaching. Factors influencing the kind of knowledge are diverse, whilst the teacher’s experiential knowledge about teaching is perhaps the significant construct in their professional development. This is implied from Dewey’s (1938) notion of the continuity of experience which refers to knowledge as derived from experiences. The teacher’s knowledge about teaching practice is no longer believed as being transmitted merely from the teacher education course. Rather, teachers obtain practical knowledge through the interaction with their surroundings (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987). Many studies attempted to conceptualise the teacher’s acquisition of practical knowledge in past decades. For example, the teacher’s practical knowledge includes five categories: knowledge of subject matter, curriculum, instruction, self, and the milieu of schooling (Elbaz, 1981). Meanwhile, each part is oriented by five dimensions: situational, theoretical, personal, social, and experiential. In detail, Elbaz (1981) characterises the five dimensions as:

The situational orientation reflects, in part, the intuition of the early ‘practical’ category: it is because teachers’ knowledge is practical that it is directed toward making sense of, and responding to, the various situations of teaching. The personal orientation again reflects my
original assumptions that teachers use their knowledge to enable them to work in personally meaningful ways. The social orientation is meant to encompass both the shaping of teachers’ knowledge by social conditions and constraints, and the active role of their knowledge in structuring the social setting of teaching. … [The experiential orientation reflects] the notion that teachers’ knowledge is structured by and directed to their own experiences. … Finally, the notion of a theoretical orientation emerged from confrontation with the data: the teacher of the study had certain views of her subject matter (English literature); when similar views appeared with respect to other areas of knowledge, it was found that these similarities could be explained in terms of a general orientation to theory which pervaded her knowledge and conditioned its use. (p. 49)

More recently, from a study of the L2 teacher’s personal practical knowledge, Golombek (1998) suggests that L2 teachers inform their practice by articulating their experiences through reflection and dialogue. The kind of personal knowledge is recounted and organised within the teacher’s interpretive frameworks which consist of professional knowledge, personal values, and experiences as teachers and learners. The process of informing practice follows two main steps. Firstly, the teacher sensitise knowledge from their lived experiences. They reconstruct the experiential knowing as references prepared for responding to a particular teaching context. Secondly, they utilise the understandings of teaching and learning to act in their particular context and manage their tensions.

A sociocultural theoretical perspective perhaps underpins the various studies in conceptualising the teacher’s practical knowledge. Sociocultural theory (SCT) defines “human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts, and is distributed across persons, tools, and activities” (Johnson, 2009, p. 9). The cognitive learning process, from the sociocultural perspective, is called internalisation (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Johnson, 2009) that “the process through which a person’s activity is initially mediated by other people or cultural artefacts but later comes to be controlled by himself/herself as he or she appropriates and reconstructs resources to regulate his or her own activities” (Johnson, 2009, p.
Hence, human organisation of social and mental activity is mediated through interactions with the external world rather than being produced within the internal cognitive processes (Richards, 2010; Lantolf, 2000). In the teacher education context, this denotes that the novice teacher’s learning about the teaching practice does not simply reproduce the practice of the experts, but transforms the repertoire at the novice’s own discretion. The process of internalisation entails dialogic processes which may include transformation, the zone of proximal development, strategic mediation, scaffolding and concept development (Richards, 2010). To put it simply, the teacher accumulate their teaching knowledge both from external and internal resources. The teacher engage the external resources through activities such as mentorship with supervisors and collaborative learning process with peer teachers. Meanwhile, they develop their teaching practice through internal activities such as self inquiry and writing reflective journals (Johnson & Golombek, 2003). As seen from the above, the SCT can be used to explicitly render the complexity of the teacher learning process. However, the present research does not utilise SCT as the conceptual framework because it attempts to generate a theory grounded from the empirical data.

2.3.1 Issues in beginning teachers’ professional development

As the study focuses on the beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives towards CLT, reviewing the concerns and issues in the beginning teacher’s professional development is necessary. The beginning teacher learning is consistent with the accounts in the sociocultural theory. That is, the teacher development is not merely the learning of professional knowledge from teacher education courses. Rather, it is a dynamic and complex process in which their conceptions of practice could be shaped by both the professional knowledge and the experiences in practice. For example, the teacher may confront tensions in class. Tensions in the form of discomfort or confusion are “divergences among different forces or elements in the teacher’s understanding of the school context, the subject matter, or the students” (Freeman,
1993, p. 488). In a study about the beginning teacher’s struggles in teaching (Romano, 2008), four major areas are identified that the beginning teachers concern most. The major sources of struggles include classroom management, external policy, personal issues, and content and pedagogy. Classroom management refers to the issues of student behaviour and the tensions of applying appropriate techniques to motivate students’ learning and gain their participation in the teaching-learning process. External policy means external factors such as the content of syllabus that the teacher feel the incapability to control. Personal issues indicate the teacher’s concerns and emotions such as the feeling of being secure in surroundings. Content and pedagogy refer to the tensions emerging from the mastery of a particular content area and teaching strategies. These sources of struggles from the beginning teachers may have some relevance to the research focus. For example, the teacher’s concerns in classroom management, language syllabus, personal issues and learning content can be factors affecting their practice of the CLT approach. Details of the analysis using categories from the empirical data will be reported in evidentiary chapters.

2.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has specified the literature that is relevant to the research project. The conceptualisations of the CLT approach and teacher knowledge have been covered. Regarding the CLT approach, discussion has started about the development of the various language approaches along with the current debate about CLT and frameworks for conceptualising CLT. Meanwhile, it has also introduced some concepts relating to the conceptualisation of teacher knowledge. The sociocultural perspectives for illuminating the teacher’s concerns in teaching have been included. In the following chapter, the research methodology employed in the study is presented.
CHAPTER THREE
The conceptualisation of grounded theory method

3.1 Introduction

Four components constitute this methodology chapter. The first section ‘the choice of research methodology’ explains the rationale for using the grounded theory method to investigate the beginning teacher’s perspectives of CLT. Then the definition and features of the grounded theory methodology are discussed. The third section ‘theoretical background of the contemporary grounded theory’ specifically explores the theoretical foundation of grounded theory which involves the rationale of phenomenological enquiry, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and the pragmatist epistemology. The last section ‘research design’ explains the research process that includes ethical considerations, recruitment of research participants, data collection, data analysis, and research validation.

3.2 The choice of research methodology

There are two research paradigms in general, namely the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. In human society, quantitative research has undergone a long history and is still popular in the twenty-first century. Quantitative research aims to produce generalised findings that can be applied in cross contextual situations. Thus, guiding principles in terms of quantitative and standardised research methods were formulated. Research should be conducted, as far as possible, in the frame of objectivity. This requires the researcher to randomly select samples as representative populations, statistically record the frequency and distribution of observed phenomena, explicitly control contexts or conditions under study as manipulated variables, and substantially discard subjective views of the researcher and researched to enhance validity (Flick, 2009). However, the social science research reveals that
there is a low degree of applicability of quantitative findings to societal developments (Flick, 2009). The disconnection between the quantitative results and the empirical world also manifests in enquiries that are often distanced from everyday concerns. Meanwhile, the quantitative research procedure where objectivity is accentuated can be problematic as social and cultural influence in the subjective world cannot be neglected. Furthermore, there is much debate between the two research paradigms. Oevermann et al. (1979) and Kleining (1982) suggest the two research paradigms separate camps as their theoretical positions are different (cited in Flick, 2009). Quantitative research emphasises positivism, while qualitative research embraces the constructionist perspective. In contrast, Jick (1983) and Miles and Huberman (1994) view these two as complementary that both of the two paradigms can be integrated in the design of one study (cited in Flick, 2009).

Regarding the present research project, the qualitative paradigmatic enquiry is chosen due to the very nature of the research questions. Unlike previous studies that have explored the issues of implementing CLT with quantitative instruments such as surveys and questionnaires, this research project attempts to understand the micro sociological rationale in the teacher’s interpretations of CLT. Hence, the research proposes to use the explanatory power of the qualitative enquiry.

The appropriateness of using qualitative method to study the social phenomena is based on the development in human society. The social world is developing towards the pluralisation of life worlds in which there is a growing individualisation process taking place in the living world. As a result, the general development requires enquiry to approach the social contexts with a new sensitivity as postmodernism advocates (Flick, 2009). Postmodernism argues that the theoretical oriented enquiries through hypotheses to study the world are insufficient as the pluralisation of lifestyles in modern and post modern society is manifest at more nuanced, locally, temporally, and situational levels. With regard to the study of Mandarin teacher’s teaching practice, the group of research objects reflects this rationale. Mandarin
teachers are located in NSW whose particular thoughts and acts cannot be considered without the specific context and teaching culture. Such a situation requires the researcher to engage in the field and make use of inductive qualitative strategies. Toulmin (1990) outlines the key tendencies for conducting qualitative research: the return to the oral traditions, the return to the particular, the return to the local, and the return to the timely. Hence, the analysis of the beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives about CLT is made plausible as their perspectives are situated in a particular social context with specific features in locality and temporality.

The essential features of doing a qualitative study are four fold: appropriateness of methods and theories, perspectives of the participants and their diversity, reflexivity of the researcher and the research, variety of approaches and methods in qualitative research (Flick, 2009). In short, qualitative research involves the researcher, informed by suitable theories, to study the perspectives of the research participants by engaging the empirical world with appropriate research methods. The study of the teacher’s perspectives of CLT, therefore, can fit with the qualitative research process. Yet, applying a predefined conceptual framework for understanding the teacher’s perspectives is not recommended. The teacher’s perspectives of CLT are socially constructed through their interactions with the surroundings. Thus, their perspectives of CLT are highly personal based on particular circumstances they confront. Regarding this, applying a predefined conceptual framework cannot fully grasp the uniqueness and diversity in the teacher’s perspectives. On the contrary, a conceptual framework may force the empirical data against the predefined concepts. Hence, the grounded theory method is suggested as an appropriate research methodology for the study.

3.3 Grounded theory principles

Grounded theory is a systematic research methodology that emphasises the generation of theory from empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Yet, In Glaser
and Strauss’ first book ‘The discovery of grounded theory (1967)’ as well as following books of other grounded theorists, there seems no fixed definition defining the grounded theory approach. Rather, grounded theorists proposed a set of principles to depict the grounded theory process.

1) A spiral of cycles of data collection, coding, analysis, writing, design, theoretical categorisation, and data collection.
2) The constant comparative analysis of cases with each other and to theoretical categories throughout each cycle.
3) A theoretical sampling process based upon categories developed from ongoing data analysis.
4) The size of sample is determined by the ‘theoretical saturation’ of categories rather than by the need for demographic ‘representativeness,’ or simply lack of ‘additional information’ from new cases.
5) The resulting theory is developed inductively from data rather than tested by data, although the developing theory is continuously refined and checked by data.
6) Codes ‘emerge’ from data and are not imposed a priori upon it.
7) The substantive and/or formal theory outlined in the final report takes into account all the variations in the data and conditions associated with these variations. The report is an analytical product rather than a purely descriptive account. Theory development is the goal.


The classical grounded theory with these defining features was borne from two contrasting and competing traditions in sociology: Columbia University positivism and Chicago school pragmatism and field research (Charmaz, 2006). Glaser and Strauss aimed to develop a systematic qualitative research practice to justify their findings as having equal significance as those produced by the statistical-quantitative ways of enquiry. The quantitative research method was predominant at that time. As a result, their interpretation of the grounded theory method held a positivist and objectivist stance in which knowledge as well as reality was unitary, knowable, and waiting to be discovered (Charmaz, 2006). The positivist oriented grounded theory was subject to major epistemological shifts in the 1960s. On the one hand, this kind of qualitative research was regarded as lacking a scientific basis that most
quantitative practices have. The critiques of quantification put the grounded theory method in a peripheral position in academia. Then, research in social sciences has to fit with the same procedures as the research in natural sciences. On the other hand, the early version of grounded theory method which embraced positivist enquiry was problematic as it cannot well address the tension between the objectivism of an external reality and the constructionism in theory development (Charmaz, 2006). The contrasting disparity also emerged between the two founding fathers of the grounded theory. Glaser with the positivist view promoted the research objectivity and regarded reality as already there waiting to be discovered by the researcher. Yet, Strauss’ Chicago school heritage differed from this idea. He viewed human beings as active agents rather than as passive recipients of social forces. Human beings create structures through engagement in social interactions. Specifically, they interpret subjective and social meanings through action and use of language (Charmaz, 2006). In that sense, Strauss stated: “classifications are not in the object; an object gets classified from some perspective” (cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 48).

Although the early version of grounded theory confronted controversy in its epistemological stance, the strength of grounded theory as offering visible, comprehensible, and replicable procedures of qualitative investigation is still fundamental to social research. The later social constructionist version of grounded theory also inherits the strength even when it interprets analytical processes as dialectical and active.

The constructivist grounded theory (or termed contemporary grounded theory) employs a way of constructing sociological reality by means of eliciting and organising analytical and theoretical categories from the data (Charmaz, 2006). First, constructivist grounded theory shares the analytical process of the classical grounded theory. Grounded theory, in general, offers a flexible research method in which the analysis and data collection processes proceed simultaneously. Unlike most qualitative approaches in which analysis takes place after collecting large amounts of
data, the grounded theory approach uses emergent categories to shape subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 1990).

Secondly, the most distinguishing feature of contemporary grounded theory is its emphasis on ‘sensitising concepts’ in the theory generation. Sensitising concepts first involves the generation of research questions. Rather than start with preconceived hypotheses, the researcher needs to have broad research questions to enter the studied field. Since the most of grounded theory enquiries investigate data from the empirical world, following the leads identified from the empirical data helps to revise and narrow down research questions. Subsequently, constructivist sensibilities enable the researcher to study their data beyond face value. When the researcher is aware of the interpretive and emergent nature of collected evidence, they can interpret nuances of meaning and action in the research field. The ability of sensitising concepts may stem from the researcher’s prior knowledge or preconceived sociological concepts. However, the researcher also needs to remain open towards the studied field allowing for the generation of analytical codes, themes, and categories beyond preconceived concepts. Thus, researcher needs to sensitise concepts from the data rather than adopt well established concepts in the discipline to depict their observed world.

The study attempts to adopt the features of the constructivist grounded theory to develop a social constructionist analysis about the beginning teacher’s perspectives of CLT in teaching Mandarin as a foreign language. Thus, a discussion about the constructionist foundation of the contemporary grounded theory is quite necessary before presenting the research process. Through the discussion, the theoretical position of the research methodology can be clearly stated.

3.4 The theoretical background of the contemporary grounded theory

This section discusses the major theoretical perspectives underpinning the contemporary grounded theory. I first focus on the phenomenological epistemology
as it is the most common theoretical position in qualitative research. Then, a particular type of phenomenological framework, symbolic interactionism is explored. The constructionist perspective in symbolic interactionism induces me to further examine the social constructionist philosophy through a historical view. The section ends by investigating another underpinning perspective in the contemporary grounded theory – pragmatist epistemology.

3.4.1 Phenomenological enquiry

Most qualitative research reflects some sort of phenomenological epistemology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2009). Phenomenological enquiry attempts to understand the meaning people construct through interactions in particular situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2009). By interrogating the conceptual world of the subjects (Geertz, 1973), the phenomenologist interprets understanding of what and how people construct meaning in their daily lives. The phenomenological researcher holds a constructivist ontological stance towards truth and reality since they regard that it is the meaning within daily experiences and interactions constitutes reality. Likewise, Charmaz (2009) argues that “the grounded theorist constructs an image of a reality, not the reality – that is, objective, true, and external” (p. 197). Reality, therefore, is socially constructed and multiple interpretations are available and inevitable as people are involved in biological, mental, social, cultural, historical, and structural conditions.

Regarding qualitative research, as it involves interactions between the researcher and the researched, the interpretation of participant perspectives, without exception, is a kind of constructed reality. That means the term ‘participant perspectives’ is a research construct rather than an expression told by informants (Bogdan and Biklen, 2009). In that case, to what extent qualitative research reflects participant voices can be questionable. Bogdan and Biklen (2009) argue this point as “looking at subjects in terms of this idea [participant perspectives] may, consequently, force informants’ experiences of the world into a mode that is foreign to them” (p. 33). However, the
researcher’s intrusion to the participants’ world is inevitable since the researcher is the interpreter of the subjects. Approaching people to understand their perspectives on events, in actuality, can echo the experience of the researched. Yet, the conflict of interpreting the participant perspectives remains in qualitative research, and the degree to which researchers are aware of the theoretical and methodological problem varies (Bogdan and Biklen, 2009).

Paradoxically, interpretation in qualitative study emphasises on the researcher’s subjective thinking. On the one hand, the researcher’s interpretation needs to be representative of the researched. On the other hand, qualitative research requires the researcher to render reality at their discretion. This conflict may not necessarily result in a sharp contradiction as “most qualitative researchers believe there are people out there in the world who say and do things which the qualitative researcher can record” (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 34). However, at times, participant perspectives per se are subjective constructs that may imaginatively stand over and against human beings. In other words, this kind of perspective challenges the researcher’s subjective thinking. In this situation, the researcher may not simply deny the ‘imagined reality’ since they justify the multiple ways of recording the empirical world, but they do evaluate the accuracy of their renderings to make sure the interpretive ‘truth’ is not transcendent beyond the given data. In conclusion, the legitimacy that qualitative researchers pursue is to produce an interpretation of the empirical world that may be useful for understanding the human condition (Bogdan and Biklen, 2009).

3.4.2 Symbolic interactionism

The term symbolic interaction was first present in the Chicago School approach to research, and it is most cited early in Mead’s Mind, Self, and Society (1934). As a particular type of phenomenological framework, symbolic interactionism bases its theoretical underpinning on the assumption that human experience is mediated by interpretation (Blumer, 1969). It suggests that meanings of objects, people,
situations, and events are given rather than inherently reside in the iterations per se. In short, it is the individual who interprets meanings of their experiences. Therefore, research for understanding social process needs to understand what and how people define their world views.

This theoretical perspective is seeing people as dynamic other than static social acts who react against external stimuli with predetermined responses. Yet, neither the meaning is created autonomously by the individual nor is it enforced by particular external power, human or otherwise (Bogdan and Biklen, 2009). Rather, people interpret meaning through interaction in a given surrounding and develop shared perspectives upon reality. Shared views on reality, however, are subject to negotiation and change. People interpret meaning differently and may construct the one that can address their own concern.

The shared perspectives as manifested in actions and social process are due to the general constructs such as internal drives, personality traits, unconscious motives, needs, socioeconomic status, role obligations, cultural prescriptions, social-control mechanisms, or the physical environment (Bogdan and Biklen, 2009). This way for understanding and predicting behaviour can be true, and symbolic interactionists do not deny the kind of factors in constructing reality. However, as a conceptual paradigm symbolic interaction sees interpretation as essential. Rather than adopt the general constructs to the subjects’ world, the symbolic interactionist begins enquiry about subjects by looking at the extent to which individual takes these factors into account and come to define them in their personal situations. In the educational context, Bogdan and Biklen (2009) provide an example of how the symbolic interactionist interprets the acts of students in a high school which consists of such components as a grading system, an organisational chart, a class schedule, a curriculum, and an official motto:
People act, however, not according to how they see it. For some students, high school is primarily a place to meet friends, or even a place to get high; for most, it is a place to get grades and amass credits so they can graduate – tasks they define as leading to college or a job. The way students define school and its components determines their actions, although the rules and the credit system may set certain limits and impose certain costs and thus affect their behaviour. Organisations vary in the extent to which they provide fixed meanings and the extent that alternative meanings are available and created. (Bogdan and Biklen, 2009, p. 36)

Besides used for understanding the social phenomenon, symbolic interactionism can also be applied to understand the construct of the ‘self’ (Bogdan and Biklen, 2009). The symbolic interactionist perspective defines the self as a result of one’s interaction with others other than a predetermined agency that consists of an organised body of needs, motives, and internalised norms or values. People may interpret particular actions or act in the role of others as they are in an interactive process. In short, people recognise and develop themselves in part as others see them. The process of conceptualising the self then, is a social construction which can be studied with the qualitative approach of symbolic interactionism. Since symbolic interactionism is borne from the social constructionist perspective (Charmaz, 2006), the following section explores further about this theoretical position.

3.4.3 Social constructionism

Social constructionism is “a theoretical perspective that assumes that people create social reality(ies) through individual and collective actions” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 189). In specificity, social constructionists assume:

1) Reality is multiple, processual, and constructed – but constructed under particular conditions; 2) the research process emerges from interaction; 3) it takes into account the researcher’s positionality, as well as that of the research participants; 4) the researcher and researched coconstruct the data – data are a product of the research process, not simply observed objects of it. (Charmaz, 2008, p. 402)
The contemporary grounded theory holds this epistemological perspective. However, it has been challenged by the traditional grounded theory approach. Glaser (2002) rejects the constructivist perspective approach to grounded theory. As far as he is concerned, the aim of grounded theory is to discover latent patterns in the material rather than to invent them as Charmaz promotes. This critique from Glaser may misunderstand the constructivist perspective of grounded theory and the critique per se might be problematic as it is “less a constructive critical view of Charmaz’s proposal for furthering grounded theory than an attempt to segregate the genuine from the false representatives of a grounded theory perspective” (Bryant, 2003, p. 24).

As for the constructionist researcher, they seek partially to replace “fixed, universalistic, and sociohistorically invariant conceptions of things with more fluid, particularistic, and sociohistorically embedded conceptions of them” (Weinberg, 2008, p. 14). Furthermore, research of social constructionism examines “the relativity of the researcher’s perspectives, positions, practices, and research situation; the researcher’s reflexivity; and depictions of social constructions in the studied world” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 398).

Hence, unlike positivist research, the social constructionist research does not deny the role of the researcher as affecting the research process and consequence. Since researchers themselves are living in the social world, they are not immune to informing their interpretation of knowledge, perspectives, and positions through social interactions. Their ‘world views’ may shape the interpretation of the researched field through the process of data collection and analysis, and vice versa.

Since there is such an interplay between the researcher and the researched, the researcher may need to use their reflexivity not only for scrutinising how the reality is constructed but also for making both the participants’ and researcher’s vantage
points and implications explicit (Charmaz, 2006). In order to explore the social constructionism further, a review of the social constructionist history is presented as follows.

3.4.3.1 The history of the social constructionist philosophy

The discussion about the history of social constructionism will primarily draw on Weinberg’s (2008) work. The theoretical perspective, social constructionism, is enlightened from the major philosophical development starting from the idea of philosophical foundationalism. The origins of philosophical foundationalism can be traced far back to at least Plato. Yet, the research only outlines the main arguments in the foundationalist philosophical tradition started with philosophers such as René Descartes, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant. The tradition of social constructionism was predicated on what Jean-François Lyotard (1984) called ‘incredulity toward metanarratives’ (Weinberg, 2008). As a foundational figure in this tradition, Descartes argued about the segregation between the mind and the tradition and evidence of human senses. He considered that the tradition and evidence from human senses ever had the capabilities to deceive people. Thus, people needed to withdraw from the source of information and pursue the pure critical reflection in the mind to acquire genuine knowledge.

Following Descartes, Locke shared a common view on human beings as unique creatures who possess consciousness. However, Locke disagreed with Descartes’ claim of the existence of genuine knowledge that resided in the mind and was separate from the external world. In contrast, as Locke argued, the human mind was at birth a tabula rasa, but possessed unique ability that empowered people to judiciously arbitrate knowledge and otherwise in human life. The Lockean premise shed some light on social constructionism as he justified the active role of people’s minds in social interactions. Nonetheless, Locke has left unresolved matters to be reified for later philosophers.
One of the most prominent philosophers, Immanuel Kant, has made the most significant contributions on human enquiries. Kant’s distinction between the transcendental domain of human freedom and the mechanistic domain of nature as the basic philosophical foundations has informed the descendant theoretical traditions including social constructionism. As such, meaning, interpretation, human agency, or social practices in social constructionist research are generally irreducible as explained by causal mechanism or natural laws (Weinberg, 2008).

However, logic positivists have also held Kant’s idea on the distinction between analytic and synthetic epistemology. The distinction was drawn from Kant’s logical understanding on truths. He separated truths as provisional truths (synthetic) that were contingent to empirical experiences and logical truths (analytic) derived from people’s pure mind on interrogating the evidence of our senses. As Kant suggested, the pure reason in the mind was transcendental to empirical experiences, and it was the only pathway to find genuine truth that rationality was universal and unsurpassable in time. It was only this rationality in analytic philosophy that can be set as valid and foundational guidance to empirical research. Thus, for acquiring genuine knowledge, research should be positivist and rely only on analytic truths with observable evidence of the senses. By holding the analytic philosophy, logical positivism has dominated academia in the 20th century.

3.4.3.2 The collapse of analytic philosophy

Although they remain faithful to philosophical foundationalism, many philosophers doubted the ‘dogma’ of analytic philosophy in verifying truths (see Karl Popper, 1992; Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1922; Willard van Orman Quine, 1951, cited in Weinberg, 2008). For Wittgenstein, he argued that meanings were not created or verified in a purely analytic and universally valid system of propositions but were contingent on empirical facts in the social world. Thus, he encouraged philosophers
to enter the empirical world to identify different logical structures for resolving philosophical problems rather than merely relying on the singular logic structure as analytic philosophy suggested. Wittgenstein’s notion of situating meaning and logic in specific sociocultural contexts has much implicated social constructionist research.

The rise of critical theory further undermined the philosophical foundation of analytic logic and in turn underpinned social constructionist epistemology. This research study traces the critical theory tradition from the work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He insisted that philosophy and human consciousness were not transcendental to history or nature but were dialectical with the empirical world. Yet, although Hegel justified the mutual influence between philosophical reason and the world, he still prioritised the reason in human mind as the driving force of the social and historical development. In opposition to Hegel, Karl Marx claimed the materiality of the human condition as the determinant factor in shaping the world as well as consciousness itself. As the most influential inheritor of Hegelianism, Marx agreed with Hegel’s dialectic philosophy but his concept of ideology stood in sharp contrast with his predecessor. He suggested that the mass production of material life as reflecting the interests of the dominant economic class has actually controlled the mode of intellectual production such as politics, art, and culture. Further, that domination on the intellectual production has provided the working class with a false consciousness. The critical Marxist interrogation has been influential on social constructionism as it encouraged the researcher to be critical and reflexive on both the epistemological ground of knowledge and the constructionist enquiry process per se.

The theoretical perspective of social constructionism also can be found in the hermeneutic tradition. The research study will highlight some ideas from two important intellectual figures in the 20th century – Max Weber and Martin Heidegger. Weber applied Dilthey’s notion of the Verstehen approach, or interpretive understanding, as the methodological foundation for empirical research. Weber held
Dilthey’s view that social life cannot be anchored either by natural science or a grand philosophical cosmology but rather can be grasped only through the interpretation of complex ‘lived experience’. Dilthey termed the meaning of people’s thoughts, feelings, and intentions as ‘expressions’ which were situated in various sociocultural contexts.

Further, he recommended using the hermeneutic circle to understand elements in social life. By rhetorically rendering these expressions to discover the causal explanations of social events, Dilthey attempted to lay a universal philosophical foundation for the human sciences. However, as opposed to Dilthey’s adoption of this approach, Weber made it for doing selective comparisons between particular historical events to generate senses of the world as guidance for social life. The heuristic axes of empirical comparison, called ideal types, have been beneficial for the sake of social constructionists in the explication of certain sociohistorical values and practices.

Heidegger also used Dilthey’s work of interpretive understanding to critique of scientific philosophy as inexplicable to phenomenological enquiries. As Heidegger suggested, the ontological distinction between theory and world in scientific philosophy has inherently failed to explain how the distinction itself can meaningfully emerge in human life. In contrast, for a better understanding of the human world, researchers with phenomenological ontology proposed to understand the kind of distinction between theory and world, mind and body, subject and object. Heidegger’s work has inspired phenomenologists to pay attention to ‘tacit knowledge’ (Polanyi, 1967, cited in Weinberg, 2008) and to put coping prior to theory formations. Coping entails various engagement with or immersion in the social phenomenon to depict dynamic aspects of the phenomenal world. This hermeneutic tradition to enquiry, as a result, draws a stark contrast with the hypothetic-deductive conception of theory testing.
Regarding the grounded theory, the emphasis on theory generation has made this methodological style distinctive when compared with both the two approaches (Strübing, 2007). However, by concerning its very nature\(^1\), the grounded theory could be accommodated along a continuum of the two distinctive research styles. Then, how the researcher interprets reality and to what extent their research reflects the social constructionist perspective depend on the researcher’s epistemological stance. For addressing these concerns in the research process, I suggest to have a look at the pragmatist root of the grounded theory.

### 3.4.4 Pragmatist epistemology

Because of operations, negotiations, decisions that take place in collecting data, a construction process is inevitably being taken prior to obtaining what is seen as pure empirical material (Strübing, 2007). The idea touches the heart of pragmatist epistemology. For pragmatism, reality is not ‘out there’ but still ‘in the making’. Shalin (1986) at this point, suggested that the fact is in the making and cannot come to its final completion at some future point:

> The state of indeterminacy endemic to reality cannot be terminated once and for all. It can be alleviated only partially, in concrete situations, and with the help of a thinking agent. The latter has the power to carve out an object, to convert an indeterminate situation into a determinate one, because he is an active being. The familiar world of colour, sound and structure is his practical accomplishment. … When his attention wavers, interest ceases, and action stops – the world around him sinks back into the state of indeterminacy (Shalin, 1986, cited in Strübing, 2007, p. 583).

The pragmatist epistemology regards data as a potential representation of parts of reality, while the meaning of reality can be derived only through human activity. Pragmatists highlight this point by arguing that things are meaningless and lose their existence if there is absence of interaction (Strübing, 2007).

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\(^1\) As stated, the grounded theory has diverse versions ranging from Glaser’s objectivist grounded theory to Charmaz’ constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; 2008).
George Herbert Mead is one key pragmatist whose concept ‘objective reality of perspectives’ has been an influential idea in pragmatism literature. This notion basically consisted of two fold. First, the dialectical concept, namely the mutual interaction between actor and object, comes into play in construction of reality; Secondly, Mead suggests there is a “processual integration of the ‘generalised other’ into one’s own actions” (cited in Strübing, p. 584). Reality in this sense derives from an individual perspective that people select certain elements from shared meaningful objects for solving their own practical problems. Concerning the data in grounded theory, it can be regarded as the representational material of a reality that is under construction. Data can be seen as the ‘relation’ between the field and the research issues. By the same token, code establishes the relationship with data (Star, 2007). As code is generated by the researcher’s analysis of data, it is inevitably manifesting the researcher’s perspective through how they select data as evidence and subsequently interpret a reality.

From this point of view, the generation of theory is a process rather than a product. The need to understand theory as processual lies in the presumption of the fluid and interactive features of reality. Strübing (2007) explains this premise as follows:

> When the theoretical subject matter lies in selected aspects of the process of reality (as it is constantly shaped by human activity), the respective theories seeking to capture this reality need to convey not just a state of being, but the process of its evolution as well. (p. 585)

The grounded theory complies with this idea from its emergence in the 1960s. In regard to the nature of theory, Glaser and Strauss suggested in The Discovery of Grounded Theory that “the published word is not the final one, but only a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 40). Furthermore, Strübing (2007) suggests the processual character of the contemporary
grounded theory lies in its empirically grounded concepts and the reciprocal means-ends relationship between research methods and generated theory.

Another disputed issue in the grounded theory is how the researcher utilises previous theoretical knowledge for the analysis of data. Here, ‘theoretical agnosticism’ is proposed to replace classic grounded theorists’ suggestions that the researcher should not start the literature review until they have finished their analysis (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003, cited in Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical agnosticism implies the researcher to take a critical stance toward earlier theories. In other words, the researcher could be equipped with extant concepts as they study their subjects. However, they need to treat these preconceived concepts as problematic and evaluate the extent to which their characteristics are lived and understood (Charmaz, 2006). In actuality, the disputed issue was also a controversial topic in The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Glaser and Strauss suggest that the researcher should treat themselves as tabula rasa when they enter research field. Nonetheless, they reject this view as well when they depict the researcher as one who “must have a perspective that will help him see relevant data and abstract significant categories from his scrutiny of the data” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 3). From a pragmatist view, discussions about the proper use of previous knowledge can be more meaningful than arguing whether previous knowledge can be used in data analysis. Thus, this thesis advocates Blumer’s notion of ‘sensitising concepts’2 to critically scrutinise the use of preconceived concepts.

Since both the contemporary grounded theory and pragmatism regard theory as processual and perspective, the traditional mode of theory testing in analytic philosophy seems inappropriate to be the criterion for testing of a theory’s proposition. Strauss and Corbin (1994, cited in Charmaz, 2006) suggested that theory could be fallible as it is an interpretation made from given perspectives of researchers, however, its potential usefulness cannot be denied. Thus, the

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2 See section 3.3: Grounded theory principles
interrogation of the logical plausibility of a theory is not the only tenet to validate grounded theory research but rather, most importantly, the grounded theory is credited for its usefulness in practical consequences. However, what sort of procedure can a researcher follow to generate a sound grounded theory? Here, I draw on John Dewey’s iterative-circular understanding of problem-solving process as it parallels the general research process in the contemporary grounded theory.

3.4.4.1 Iterative-circular problem-solving process

Dewey expressed his pragmatist thinking of inquiry in Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (1938). As far as he is concerned, inquiry is driven by general doubt as a process for seeking possible ideas or solutions to reconcile a tension in an empirical world (Strübing, 2007). Specifically, he defines inquiry “as the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the element of the original situation into a unified whole” (Dewey, 1938, p. 104). In Dewey’s model, he distinguishes an inquiry process as consisting of five steps (see Figure 3.1).
The model begins with the ‘indeterminate situation’, which denotes a state of unsettledness in a specific situation. Indeterminate situation can be exemplified when a researcher enters an unknown field where lots of uncertainties surround and inhibit the researcher’s actions. Dewey indicates that the indeterminacy stage does not involve any cognitive thinking, but some ‘existential causes’ come into play. As contextualising the situation in this research project, I sensed that the teacher might have some tensions in the application of CLT. However, specific problems in the field have not been identified at this stage.
Then, it is in the second phase, ‘institution of a problem’, that forms a problematic indeterminate situation for further investigation. The process of qualifying a situation as problematic parallels the defining of a research question in empirical research. A well defined research question has to fit the situation in which a state of uncertainty is experienced, while ill-structured question will not contribute to settling the situation (Strübing, 2007). In practice, the research project departs from imprecise questions. I started the project with the research question “what are the beginning Mandarin teachers’ perspectives on communicative language teaching?” The predefined question helped me structure the research process in terms of reviewing relevant literatures, devising interview questions, and targeting research participants. As the initial empirical data being collected from interviews as well as my reflective diaries, a significant problematic situation about the beginning teacher’s use of CLT in practical teaching contexts was identified. From preliminary evidence, I identified that the understanding about CLT in Mandarin teachers varied. Some had limited understanding, while others had more comprehensive interpretation of CLT. Bearing on the disparity, however, the Mandarin teachers had similar language practice and strategies. Neither the teacher with comprehensive understanding of CLT can produce fully communicative oriented lessons nor do the teacher with limited understanding of CLT significantly use traditional approaches in teaching. The research question then had to be amended to make sure it was appropriate to the identified situation in the field. Hence, the new research question has been changed into:

- How do beginning teachers apply the theory of CLT to teach Mandarin in practice?

Along with three subsidiary questions corresponding to three aspects that may contribute to the explanation of the identified situation:
• What is the teachers’ understanding of CLT?
• How do the teachers perceive CLT?
• And how do the teachers apply CLT to their particular situations?

The third phase in Dewey’s inquiry model is the ‘determination of the problem-solution’. It involves the initial interplay between data and conceptual thinking to identify ‘the facts of the case’, or ‘the constituents of a given situation’ (Strübing, 2007). In parallel with the grounded theory, I suggest the initial coding and the subsequent focused coding processes can be taken at this stage. By concentrating on the identified aspects of a social problem, research generates ‘possible solutions’ regarded as ideas for problem-solving. However, ideas generated at this stage are far from being ‘mature’. Dewey calls these tentative ideas ‘suggestions’ which require further refinement and logical grounding to reach formal ideas.

The fourth step in Dewey’s model is the ‘reasoning’ phase where the researcher informs ideas by constantly checking the feasibility of emergent ‘suggestions’ in empirical materials. The interplay between ‘suggestions’ and data is an iterative process. Here, Dewey agrees with Peirce’s notion of abduction (1878, cited in Strübing, 2007) that ideas are not derived either from induction of facts or deduction of conceptual knowledge but rather, they are generated through an abductive process. This nature in ideas requires a research process pendulously moving between data-collection, data-analysis, and theory-building (Strübing, 2007). Likewise, in the grounded theory process, the researcher needs to follow a ‘theoretical sampling’ process to decide upon suitable categories as a part of a theory. Further evidence from the empirical world stabilises the emergent theory, and also credits the theory with validation and soundness.

The final phase in Dewey’s inquiry model is ‘experiment’. It simply means a generated theory is applied and tested in reality. However, for pragmatist
epistemology, the finalised theory as possible solutions is not an end. Rather, the
theory is still open and under scrutiny. Newly observed facts may either contribute to
the theory as new propositions or rule out pre-existing categories within it. Through
the process, further research is probably invoked in continuously iterative inquiries.
These features also apply to the grounded theory. The generated theory through the
grounded theory approach is usually called the substantive theory. The substantive
theory can be still open for further enquires, and most importantly it can be
developed into a formal theory when similar constituents of the theory have been
identified in multiple disciplines (Charmaz, 2006).

3.5 Research design

This section I start to present the research process of the study. Issues about ethic
considerations, research participants, data collection, data analysis, and research
validation are presented accordingly.

3.5.1 Ethic considerations

Permission to conduct the study was granted from the University's Human Research
Ethics Committee (HREC) (see Appendix 3-5). Participants were informed by a
Participant Information Sheet which states the aims of the study, details of the
research process, the participants’ rights, and the measures to maintain anonymity
and confidentiality of the research data. The information sheet particularly highlights
that the participation of the study is entirely voluntary. Participants are not obliged to
continue with the study and once they decide not to participate in the study, they can
withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequence.
Further, for achieving the least intrusion to class, the research project used interviews
and reflective journals as the data collection methods to minimise risk. Details of the
research methods will be discussed in following sections.
3.5.2 Research participants

Nine beginning Chinese language teachers including myself have taken part in the study. Two are qualified teachers and seven are volunteer teachers. All of the teacher have been teaching Mandarin as a foreign language in the Western Sydney region for less than two years. In the research project, all research participants use pseudonyms. Regarding their education background, the qualified teachers hold the Master of Teaching degrees as the completion of teacher education course in Australia. The course contains the content of modern language teaching methodologies in which the CLT approach is included. As for the volunteer teachers, all of them have attended the language methodology training provided by the Department of Education and Training of the New South Wales. The weekly-based, three-month training program included training topics such as the background of various language approaches, the Communicative Language Teaching approach, practical classroom management strategies, Mandarin language teaching, the NSW quality teaching framework, and the school observations. The participant description outlines the general information about the nine participants and their teaching contexts.

3.5.2.1 Participant description

Jonny, as a Chinese descendant living in Australia, has taught Mandarin in a Western Sydney high school for one and a half year. He teaches students in stage four. Most of the students are non-Chinese background speakers, and they usually have Mandarin lessons two hours a week.

Michelle is a Chinese speaker who has taught Mandarin for nearly two years in Sydney. She used to teach students with Chinese background, but at the moment she is mainly teaching non-Chinese background students in stage four at a Western Sydney high school. On average, every student has a total of five hours of Mandarin
lessons fortnightly.

Mike is a native Chinese speaker who has teaching experience for more than one year as a volunteer teacher in Western Sydney region public schools. He teaches students Mandarin in stage one, stage three, and stage four. Most of his students were non-Chinese background speakers. Different from other school students who learn Mandarin as a compulsory subject, his students in stage four choose Mandarin as the language subject. For the teaching period, Mike teaches primary school students for 30 minutes each week and high school students two hours fortnightly.

Cindy is a native Chinese speaker who has taught Mandarin in Western Sydney for more than one year. Her students are in stage four without the Chinese background. Her students have around one hour each week to learn Chinese.

Jess has taught Mandarin in Western Sydney schools for more than one year. She teaches students from kindergarten to year eight with teaching periods from 30 minutes to 50 minutes each week.

Kristy has taught Mandarin in Western Sydney schools for more than one year. She teaches students from kindergarten to year eight with teaching periods from 30 minutes to 70 minutes each week.

Catherine has taught Mandarin for more than one year in a Western Sydney public school. Her students are in stage one and stage two, and most of them are non-Chinese background speakers. Catherine’s lesson usually lasts for 40 minutes on a weekly base.

Tracy has taught Mandarin in Western Sydney schools for more than one year. She teaches non-Chinese background students in stage one to stage four. The students in stage one to stage three have 40 to 60 minutes of Mandarin class each week, while
students in stage four have 30 minutes fortnightly.

Regarding my teaching setting, I have been teaching Mandarin for more than one year in Western Sydney public schools. I teach Mandarin in a primary school for one hour a week and in a secondary school for around 30 minutes a week. Students are in stage one, stage three and stage four, and most of them are non-Chinese background learners. To conclude, the general profile of each participant is illustrated in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1 General profiles of research participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>First language of participants</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teaching period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jonny</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>English with Chinese heritage</td>
<td>Qualified Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 4, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>1 hour a lesson; 2 hours a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Qualified Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 4, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>5 hours fortnightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Volunteer Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 1, 3, 4, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>30 minutes a week in stage 1 and 3; 2 hours fortnightly in stage 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Volunteer Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 4, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>1 hour a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jess</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Volunteer Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 1 to 4, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>30-50 minutes a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Volunteer Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 1 to 4, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>30 minutes a week in stage 1-3; 70 minutes a week in stage 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Volunteer Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 1 to 2, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>40 minutes a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Volunteer Mandarin Teacher</td>
<td>Stage 1 to 4, Non-Chinese background students</td>
<td>40-60 minutes a week in stage 1-3; 30 minutes fortnightly in stage 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.3 Data collection

The study used two data collection methods to investigate the beginning teacher’s perspectives about the CLT approach. These include eight semi-structured interviews (each around 40 minutes in length) conducted from May to August, 2010 and my teaching reflections undertaken in two terms from March to June, 2010.

3.5.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interview is the key method to collect data for the study. An interview is a directed conversation (Lofland & Lofland, 1995), and allows an in-depth exploration of a particular topic from people who have relevant experiences (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, by preparing rich data for the explanatory power of the grounded theory, interview well fits this research methodology. However, since the grounded theory method is open-ended, shaped by emergent conceptual categories from data, it may not work well with predefined or preconceived structured questions.

For this reason, I proposed to conduct semi-structured interviews for data collection. Semi-structured interviews with well-planned and open-ended questions, on the first hand, can increase the novice researcher’s confidence in interviewing processes. While, most importantly, open-ended and non-judgmental questions in semi-structured interviews can encourage unanticipated statements and stories to emerge which are essential to the theory generation (Charmaz, 2006). Nonetheless, some caveats need to be noticed when doing a semi-structured interview. These
include such aspects as non-direction, specificity, range, the depth and personal context shown by the interviewee and the constructionist perspective towards interviews (Flick, 2009; Ljungberg, 2008).

The first caveat, non-direction, advises the researcher to avoid imposing planned interviewing scheme on the participant’s viewpoints. Being rigid with the interview schedule may force the data for the researcher’s sake and lose important stories from the interviewees. Hence, the researcher needs to perform a flexible style of conversation so that important information can be elicited from the participants.

Secondly, the researcher needs to encourage the participant to express ideas with specificity. The principle of specificity prevents the interview from remaining on the level of general statements. Specificity can be increased by encouraging interviewees to retrospect their experiences. For example, a series of supplementary questions about a certain topic may enable me to collect more data about the teacher’s perspectives in that area.

Thirdly, the range of interview questions could make the researcher ascertain that all aspects and topics relevant to the research questions are covered in the interview. In semi-structured interviews, participants may sometimes discuss new topics when they answer the researcher’s questions. This is helpful for generating emergent leads that may inform further data collection, but the researcher also needs to have the skill of initiating changes in topics. In particular, when interviewees are leading the conversation to further irrelevant topics, reversing back to the research topic is necessary. A successful interview depends on how well the researcher achieves a balance between making the interview open-ended and focusing on significant topics (Charmaz, 2006).

Fourthly, the researcher needs to reach depth and establish a personal context in the interview process so that the explanatory power of qualitative studies can be revealed.
Regarding this research project, the teacher’s simple response like ‘favouring’ or ‘disfavouring’ would not be sufficient to fully understand the teacher’s perspectives of CLT. Rather, the researcher needs to elicit more tacit meanings by asking in-depth questions.

Fifthly, the researcher needs to notice that the data generated through interviews are socially constructed. This is consistent with the epistemology of constructivist grounded theory that views reality as socially constructed. As a social interaction between knowing subjects (participant and researcher), an interview cannot be regarded as the interviewee explicitly expressing their ideas or experience about a specific topic, but is a site where both the interviewer and interviewee construct the ideas or experience (Ljungberg, 2008). Thus, the researcher needs to acknowledge the socially constructed character of interviews rather than taking the participant’s response for granted. To sum, by being aware of these caveats, I may produce delicate interview questions and facilitate the interview process.

3.5.3.2 Interview questions

Based on the caveats discussed above, the semi-structured interview started with a loosely guided exploration of topics followed by a set of semi-structured focused questions (Charmaz, 2006). In detail, the design of interview questions were advised by Scheele and Groeben’s (1988, cited in Flick, 2009) elaboration of interview questions along with the relevant literature about the CLT approach. Three types of questions are proposed by Scheele and Groeben, they are open questions, theory-driven, hypotheses-directed questions, and confrontational questions. Each type of question serves a different purpose. The open questions bring out things like teaching objectives, the basis of CLT knowledge, and the perception of CLT that the beginning teachers may have immediately at hand. These questions include such as “What is your general goal and personal belief in teaching Mandarin?”; “What is your understanding about this teaching methodology (CLT)?”; and “How do you
think of the Communicative Language Teaching approach or teaching foreign language in a communicative way?”. The theory-driven or hypotheses-directed questions are largely based on the literature of CLT practice and my assumptions from emergent evidence. Questions such as “What activities do you usually do with your students?”; “How do you think of the teaching methodology that can be used in Mandarin class?”; and “How do you think of the Communicative Language Teaching approach that can facilitate or constrain your engagement with students?” are in this category. The third type, confrontational questions, enables me to check and reconfirm previous statements the participants have made. These questions are usually unstructured and ad-hoc and may emerge when the participants made unclear points or I need more specific information. Moreover, as most beginning teachers and I are living together as a group studying and teaching in Australia, I may have more opportunities to communicate with these teachers after the interviews. By and large, the interview questions for doing a grounded theory research can emerge throughout the research process. Nonetheless, I have prepared a list of questions as a guide that covers the main topics I would like to investigate. The list of interview questions is illustrated in Appendix 6.

3.5.3.3 Pilot study

Before conducting formal interviews, I made a small pilot study to test the appropriateness of the research questions and get familiar with the pace of the interview process. The pilot study was conducted by interviewing one of the beginning teachers, Mike. The feedback from the pilot study suggested some interview questions be changed. Interview questions in the pilot study primarily investigated the teacher’s teaching practice in relation to the attributes of CLT. Yet, the term ‘CLT’ was not directly used in these questions. I aimed to elicit the authentic teaching practice while the use of the term ‘CLT’ in questions may affect the teacher’s recall of their real teaching practice. In other words, the teacher may think of some CLT practice, but in reality their real teaching practice does not
actually apply them. However, after the pilot study I realised that the act of ‘hiding’
the term is not necessary. Rather, some direct questions asking the teacher’s
perspectives about the CLT practice can help me collect more useful information.
Furthermore, I devised open ended questions to encourage the teacher to reflect
comprehensively on their teaching, while specific questions relating to the attributes
of CLT were made as complementary ones. The question list used for the pilot study
is illustrated in Appendix 7.

3.5.3.4 Self-reflections

I utilised my self-reflection journals as a way to triangulate the data. The virtues of
reflection in teaching and teacher education have been widely acknowledged in
academia (Drevdahl et al., 2002). Writing reflective journals is one technique in
reflective practice that could deepen the teacher’s knowledge and understanding of
pedagogy and ultimately improve their teaching practice. My reflective journals
mainly recorded the teaching process in my Mandarin lessons, while some
observations, thoughts, feelings, and concerns of the teaching practice were also
expressed in the diary entries. Table 3.2 illustrates the basic information of the
reflective journals.
Table 3.2 The general information of the reflective journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Number of classes</th>
<th>Teaching length in each class</th>
<th>Primary learning content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/03</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Daily activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/03</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Numbers and time;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/03</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Numbers and time;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/03</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Numbers practice in timetable;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/03</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Numbers practice in timetable;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/03</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>The days of the week;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/03</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>The days of the weeks;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/03</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Watching a Chinese documentary;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/04</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Emotional words;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/04</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Practising numbers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/04</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Meals of a day;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/04</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Meals of a day;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/05</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Ordering meals;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/05</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Expressing meals of a day;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/05</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Asking meals of a day;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/05</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Daily routines;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/05</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Communicating daily routines;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/06</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Practising daily routines;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/06</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Practising daily routines;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/06</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>Practising daily routines;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I started writing the diary in the middle of Term one in 2010 and stopped writing in the first week of Term three in 2010 when sufficient data about my teaching practice has been collected. Both the teaching experience in high school and primary school was recorded, but more entries were related to my experience in primary school as I have more class in the primary school. The relatively fewer reflective diaries in high school were due to the situation that I had to share teaching with a Mandarin teacher in that school. The teaching period and the learning content were largely determined by the Mandarin teacher there. However, I have attempted to use CLT to teach lessons even though there were few opportunities for me to teach.

Further, I am aware of the limitation of the data collection method. The elicited texts, namely my reflective journals, cannot be regarded as objective facts (Prior, 2003), but rather are constructed by my interaction with the social, cultural, and situational contexts (Charmaz, 2006). In other words, the reflective journals are reflecting my perspectives about the theory of CLT. As holding my perspectives of CLT, I may either explicitly or implicitly shape the interpretation of the interview data for my own sake. Therefore, the bias of reflective journals should be noted, even though the reflective journal help validate the study through the process of data triangulation.

3.5.3.5 Observation

Observation “is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry” (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p. 99). I was planning to use the data collection technique before conducting the study. However, some concerns at the last minute made me decide not to use observation. First, the time to do the study is quite limited. Using this data collection method means I need to observe some of the participants’ lessons, while arranging these observations is difficult. I am unable to visit and observe the teacher’s class since I have Mandarin lessons as well during that time. Secondly, the normal teaching and learning process in class can be influenced by the intrusion of observation. Observation more easily applies to a field
where it is more public and unstructured, while it is more difficult to participate in a field where it is easier to overlook (Flick, 2009). As the class observation may result in an intrusion of the normal teaching and learning process, it can highly give rise to ethical issues. However, discarding the observation method may affect the research gathering a wider range of data, and consequently leading to a less convincing research outcome. This concern can be alleviated to a certain extent when the self-reflection method has been employed. Although reflective journals may have some bias, their utilisation complements the data source and they do not have the ethical issues that observation may generate. The important thing is to be aware of the bias that reflective journals may produce.

3.5.4 Data analysis

3.5.4.1 The analysis of interviews

Grounded theory applies the constant comparative method in data analysis. The comparative method allows the researcher “1) to compare data with data from the beginning of the research, not after all the data are collected, 2) to compare data with emerging categories, and 3) to demonstrate relationships between concepts and categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 23). The constant comparative process was used throughout the analysis of the interview data.

Analysing interviews started with the coding process, which involves fracturing and conceptualising data into analytical codes. A code is usually in the form of a word or short phrase that summarises, captures, and at times evocates salient attribute or essence of a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldaña, 2009). There consist two main types of coding, substantive coding and theoretical coding. Substantive coding is the very primitive step in data analysis that comprises open and selective coding processes. Open coding sticks closely to the data. It may invoke the researcher’s thinking and allow new ideas to emerge (Charmaz, 2006). The open
coding process was first employed to analyse the interview transcripts. The interviews were all transcribed verbatim, and if the interview was conducted in Chinese I translated it into English before analysing them. I attempted to code the data as actions. It means that I used gerunds in coding. Gerunds helped me construct theory through identifying the procedural steps in the CLT application and by making connections between them (Charmaz, 2006). At first, the coding process of a single interview was a quite awkward task and I explored the data line-by-line with uncertain directions. However, as more data were cumulated after two or three interviews, similar codes began to emerge through comparisons. Table 3.3 outlines the main codes generated from the interviews.
Table 3.3 Main codes of the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regarding CLT as colloquial instructions;</td>
<td>All interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLT means creating target language environment;</td>
<td>All interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLT means using fun activities;</td>
<td>Michelle, Jess, Kristy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of CLT strategies;</td>
<td>Cindy, Jess, Tracy, Kristy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past learning experience;</td>
<td>Mike, Kristy, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting syllabus requirement;</td>
<td>Jonny, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising the importance of target language environment;</td>
<td>Kristy, Tracy, Jess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiming for teaching grammar;</td>
<td>Jess, Michelle, Jonny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiming for teaching culture;</td>
<td>Mike, Jess, Kristy, Catherine, Jonny, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiming for teaching Chinese characters;</td>
<td>Mike, Jess, Jonny, Kristy, Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiming for developing student interests;</td>
<td>Jess, Kristy, Mike, Catherine, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing student resistance;</td>
<td>Michelle, Catherine, Jonny, Kristy, Cindy, Jess, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceiving Chinese is challenging;</td>
<td>Jonny, Tracy, Michelle, Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceiving CLT challenges students;</td>
<td>Tracy, Catherine, Cindy, Jess, Mike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving for instructional opportunities;</td>
<td>Jonny, Michelle, Mike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing interesting language activities; teaching cultural activities;</td>
<td>Michelle, Mike, Jess, Catherine, Kristy, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerning learning habits;</td>
<td>Mike, Cindy, Jonny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplifying learning content;</td>
<td>Michelle, Mike, Jess, Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making clear instruction;</td>
<td>Tracy, Cindy, Kristy, Jess, Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing teaching objectives;</td>
<td>Catherine, Mike, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering expectations;</td>
<td>Jonny, Michelle, Mike, Jess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing problems in promoting learning;</td>
<td>Jonny, Michelle, Jess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using traditional teaching methods;</td>
<td>Tracy, Jonny, Kristy, Cindy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The similar codes induced me to label them with a tentative theme denoting the common features in these codes. This step of the coding process is selective coding or focused coding in which I selected the most salient code from those initial codes or created one that could best summarise those codes as a theme (Charmaz, 2006). A theme is more conceptual than codes as it “brings meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations; captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (cited in Saldaña, 2009, p.139). Both the frequency of an initial code or its significance may generate a theme. Because this study had a relatively small sample, I suggest that generating themes primarily based on significance might be more viable. Table 3.4 illustrates the key themes of the study which were generated either at a manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at a latent level (underlying the phenomenon) (Saldaña, 2009). The process of generating codes, themes and the final conceptual categories was actually not a linear-based procedure as the above text describes. Rather, it involves constantly comparing the data back and forth, and searching more data for saturating emergent concepts. In other words, theory emerged through the constant interplay between data collection and analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Themes</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding CLT as colloquial instructions</td>
<td>CLT means communicating in Chinese;</td>
<td>All interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLT means creating target language environment;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLT means using fun activities;</td>
<td>Michelle, Jess, Kristy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient knowledge in CLT practice</td>
<td>Lack of CLT strategies;</td>
<td>Cindy, Jess, Tracy, Kristy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favouring CLT</td>
<td>Past learning experience;</td>
<td>Mike, Kristy, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting syllabus requirement;</td>
<td>Kristy, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognising the importance of target language environment;</td>
<td>Jess, Tracy, Jess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting with teaching objectives</td>
<td>Aiming for teaching grammar;</td>
<td>Jess, Michelle, Jonny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aiming for teaching culture;</td>
<td>Mike, Jess, Kristy, Catherine, Jonny, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aiming for teaching Chinese characters;</td>
<td>Mike, Jess, Jonny, Kristy, Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aiming for developing student interests;</td>
<td>Jess, Kristy, Mike, Catherine, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing the students</td>
<td>Noticing student resistance;</td>
<td>Michelle, Catherine, Jonny, Kristy, Cindy, Jess, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceiving Chinese is challenging;</td>
<td>Jonny, Tracy, Michelle, Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceiving CLT challenges students;</td>
<td>Tracy, Catherine, Cindy, Jess, Mike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting learning; Sub-theme: Creating</td>
<td>Striving for instructional opportunities;</td>
<td>Jonny, Michelle, Mike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfortable environment</td>
<td>Developing interesting language activities;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teaching cultural activities;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerning of learning habits;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting self</td>
<td>Changing teaching objectives;</td>
<td>Catherine, Mike, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowering expectations;</td>
<td>Jonny, Michelle, Mike, Jess, Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining the status quo</td>
<td>Noticing problems in promoting learning;</td>
<td>Jonny, Michelle, Jess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using traditional methods;</td>
<td>Tracy, Jonny, Kristy, Cindy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most importantly, the process for final theory formation cannot be successfully achieved without analytical memos. Writing memos is the key analytical strategy in grounded theory methodology and prompts me to clarify emergent concepts and discover the connections between them (Charmaz, 1990). Through writing and rewriting, I moved the analysis to a theoretical level where three major conceptual categories were emerging. The categories in terms of understanding CLT, perceiving CLT, and situating CLT serve as three dimensions for explicating the process of applying CLT from theory to practice. Table 3.5 demonstrates the generation of the key categories from the empirical data.
Table 3.5 Categories of the research project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key categories</th>
<th>Key themes</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding CLT</td>
<td>Understanding CLT as colloquial instructions</td>
<td>CLT means communicating in Chinese; CLT means creating target language environment; CLT means using fun activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient knowledge in CLT practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of CLT strategies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceiving CLT</td>
<td>Favouring CLT</td>
<td>Past learning experience; Meeting syllabus requirement; Recognising the importance of target language environment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicts in teaching objectives</td>
<td>Aiming for teaching grammar; Aiming for teaching culture; Aiming for teaching Chinese characters; Aiming for developing student interests;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicts in losing the students</td>
<td>Noticing student resistance; Perceiving Chinese is challenging; Perceiving CLT challenges students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situating CLT</td>
<td>Promoting learning;</td>
<td>Striving for instructional opportunities; Developing interesting language activities; Teaching cultural activities; Concerning of learning habits;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme: Creating comfortable environment</td>
<td>Simplifying learning content; Making clear instruction;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoting learning;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme: Reducing learning difficulties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adapting self</td>
<td>Changing teaching objectives; Lowering expectations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining the status quo</td>
<td>Noticing problems in promoting learning; Using traditional teaching methods;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One thing that needs to be noted in developing the analytical codes, themes and categories is that there might be no clear boundary between them. They are actually fluid in practice, functioning together in a dynamic way. The items classified above do share a common set of features, but the classification merely depends on different degrees of belonging (Dey, 1999). The details of the analysis in terms of the properties of each category will be discussed in Chapter 4. I use the interviewees’ quotes to organise the analysis. I attempt to maintain the original meaning by presenting the verbatim record of interview transcripts. However, for reading convenience, I have translated the Chinese transcripts and corrected some grammatical errors in some transcripts.

3.5.4.2 The analysis of self-reflections

The analysis of my reflections started from analysis of the teaching practice which was explicitly recorded in my self-reflective journals. The teaching practice, either CLT oriented or non-CLT oriented, is the result of my negotiation with the teaching settings. Regarding this, by explicitly analysing my teaching practice, its connections with my concerns about the use of CLT can be revealed. In the chapter (Chapter 5) of analysing my teaching reflection, I initially presented three sample lessons of analysis for demonstrating the full picture of my teaching process. The three sample lessons are typical examples in my teaching that both CLT and non-CLT teaching practice were featured in the topic “daily routines”. “Daily routines” manifests my temptation in teaching lifelike Chinese language. Although non-CLT teaching practice was unavoidable in the teaching procedure, I attempted to gradually foster students’ communicative competence through the series of lessons. The analysis then generalises the CLT and non-CLT features throughout my teaching experience. Table 3.6 outlines the main aspects of the practice.
Table 3.6 Results of my teaching practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Main aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The CLT oriented instruction</td>
<td>Using the target language as classroom language;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teach the target language with CLT;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practising the target language in CLT oriented activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The non-CLT oriented instruction</td>
<td>Using English as classroom language;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching the target language with the non-CLT approach;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practising the target language in non-CLT oriented activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching the cultural knowledge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand others</td>
<td>Pragmatic strategies;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, analysing the directly observable actions helps me avoid making conceptual leaps or adopting extant conceptions (Charmaz, 2006). However, the mutual influence between the analysis of the interviews and self-reflections may still need to be noted. As both sets of the data source were analysed in nearly the same period of time, the complete separation of analysing the two data sets can not be possible. Hence, I propose to continuously recheck my data to ensure the consistency in the generation of concepts.

3.5.5 Research validation

The validity of the research was achieved firstly through the data triangulation by applying two complementary data collection methods; semi-structured interviews and self-reflections. Secondly, it was achieved through the analytical power of the grounded theory methodology. Qualitative study does not require a full specification
of properties in the tradition of analytic philosophy (Charmaz, 2006). Rather, it achieves credibility through the constant comparison process with a pragmatic perspective. Hence, I do not implausibly claim the credibility from convincing numbers while, in contrast, significance as identified in data matters for its contribution to research validity. Thirdly, using the data of my teaching reflection suggests I am actively engaging in the field. The active engagement in the field enables me to be capable of eliciting the tacit meaning in research participants (Charmaz, 2006). Tacit meaning transcends the data beyond face value, thus it is important in the facilitation of generating grounded theory. However, as mentioned in the analysis of self-reflections, there can be bias due to the mutual influence between the two sources of data. Therefore, the fourth point for research validation is to closely scrutinise the research process in terms of the self-critique on memoing and to recheck the emergent analytical concepts.

3.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented and justified the research methodology used in the study. Reasons for conducting a grounded theory study have been explained. Features as well as the theoretical background of the grounded theory methodology have been specifically discussed. Meanwhile, this chapter has demonstrated the process of research design including the ethical considerations, the recruitment of research participants, the design of semi-structured interviews, my reflections, the procedures of data collection and analysis, and the issue of research validation. In the following chapter, the major elements in the generated theory are explained by using the data of interviews.
CHAPTER FOUR  
The teacher’s conceptions of CLT

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four is the first evidentiary chapter that analyses the result of interviews. The analysis of interviews and argument generated from the evidence show how the beginning Mandarin teacher apply CLT from theory to practice. Hence, this chapter addresses the research questions in terms of three dimensions, namely understanding CLT, perceiving CLT, and situating CLT. This chapter analyses each dimension by specifying its properties with evidence from interview quotations.

4.2 Understanding CLT

Understanding CLT demonstrates the teacher’s interpretations of the language methodology in the epistemic dimension. The teacher’s understanding of CLT is primarily elicited from the question: “what is your understanding of the Communicative Language Teaching approach?” Meanwhile, the teacher’s description of their teaching practice is another important source to understand their knowledge of CLT. Questions include “could you describe one or two of your lessons”, and “how do you think the teaching strategy (CLT) can be used in K-10 classes in Australia”. In general, the teacher obtain the knowledge of CLT from the language methodology training or the teacher education course, but they can also learn more from other sources on their own. For example, my understanding of CLT exemplifies the latter case that I investigated the literature relating to CLT. Nonetheless, for most of the teacher, the language course is the only source for their understanding of CLT.
Actually, I didn’t specifically study that approach [CLT]. My understanding of CLT largely derives from Mary [Pseudonym, she is the language methodology instructor]. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Actually, I’m not quite sure what it [CLT] is about. I got the impression [of CLT] from a teacher’s lesson. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)

Data from interviews reveals that the teacher’s understanding of CLT consists of features including incomprehensiveness and misconception. The teacher, in general, have a rather limited understanding about the language. They regard CLT as an approach merely for teaching the listening and speaking skills of a target language. In that sense, the teacher often regard the oral language instruction as the CLT practice.

I think it’s [CLT] necessary in teaching, because language is a living thing, and language is not only about a written form such as literature, it’s also about oral form for people to speak and communicate. (Jess, 09/08/2010)

... the name [of the approach] is communication, so it must focus on communication. [CLT] might focus on the audio-lingual aspects for practical use in real life. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Even though the CLT practice is exclusively connected to the teaching of listening and speaking abilities, some teachers have diverse opinions about CLT. This is identified from their perspectives about the term ‘communication’. Communication is dynamic that involves not only the audio-lingual form of interaction but also the written form in meaning exchange. This understanding towards communication suggests teachers may have diverse views about the CLT practice.
There are many types of communication, there are oral communication and written communication as well. So they do include all I have to think about like that. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

The dynamic view on communication, however, merely stays in the teacher’s mind and is rarely being practised in teaching. With the dynamic view, the teacher have created ideas about using CLT to instruct reading and writing activities, but they also express the difficulty of applying the strategy in practice (I have made an effort to make that happen, which will be discussed in next chapter).

How can we combine the Chinese writing system with CLT practice? I suggest that, maybe we can [make] some adaptations in CLT. Usually, we use CLT in oral communication because we make the oral language as the medium, and we can make the Chinese characters as the medium language for communication as well. This is also communicative language teaching, but I think it’s very hard in practice to combine Chinese characters with CLT. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

Therefore, in practice, listening and speaking instructions predominantly represent the CLT practice. Talking in Chinese is believed as the major form of the CLT practice for listening and speaking instructions. The teacher try to use Chinese frequently when they communicate with the students, teach language content, and practise the target language. Simply speaking, to conduct a CLT oriented lesson the target language needs to be used throughout the process of a lesson.

All parts of Chinese can be taught in a communicative way as long as the teacher there to talk through what he or she is doing with the students. Talking and explaining and making students understand and asking some questions to confirm if students understood what the teacher is teaching, that is all communication. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)
Talking in Chinese helps the teacher create a target language environment in class which they think is the key feature of a CLT lesson. This understanding derives from the teacher’s experience in the training course where language is taught through the immersion of the target language.

My understanding of CLT largely derives from Mary [Pseudonym, she is the language methodology instructor]. I think the impression of CLT that she gave us in that lesson seems that the whole [lesson] needs to be taught in Chinese. ... [The model lesson] was in the pure [target language] environment, I felt like I was immersed in that language. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Communicative Language Teaching approach provides a target language environment, which I think could nourish a good sense of Mandarin among students. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)

... to bring out the communicative strength of those students and particular in learning Mandarin. So they are constantly bombarded or immersed in this language with the teacher. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

For creating the target language environment, the teacher attempt to use Chinese when they greet the students and give them commands. They exemplify these teaching procedures as their understanding of CLT. Thus, these examples suggest the teacher’s understanding of CLT is rather limited.

I use CLT most at the beginning of the class like giving them instruction to let them settle down. I will not say stand properly or other in English, I will say it in Chinese like say “把你的包放下 (put away your bag)”; “两只手放在旁边 (put your hands aside)”; “站好 (stand properly)”;
“同学们好 (hello, students)” and let them greet back and say “老师好 (hello, teacher)”. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

I try to use as much Chinese, Mandarin as I can. Gradually through time I will try to start use more Chinese. For example, “请坐 (please sit down)”, “举手 (raise your hand)”. I will gradually change of from using English commands, change of English to Mandarin. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

However, comprehensive knowledge about CLT is not completely absent. Some teachers demonstrate their competency in understanding the theory of CLT. They depict it as consisting of two stages. First is the language input phase in which a group of language items is taught. The language items include vocabularies and sentence patterns prepared for communicative practice. The second phase is the interactive stage where the teacher create a communicative learning environment for practising the learnt language items.

The first thing is language input, that is the content you want to teach the students. As they learned the language content, I make them practice the learnt language by providing them with a communicative environment. The interaction in that environment could be the teacher and the students, the students themselves. The teaching objective can be achieved as long as the students are willing to speak in Mandarin under that environment. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

This understanding of the CLT process is consistent with the CLT procedure in which the pre-communicative activities and communicative activities are included (Littlewood, 1981). However, this understanding of the CLT process is still in a general sense that cannot significantly inform the teacher to apply CLT in practice. In other words, there are few strategies the teacher have for the effective use of CLT
in practice. Consequently, the ineffective use of CLT often results in an unpromising learning outcome.

I think the purpose [of CLT] is to get students to say something and to react in a communicative purpose. ... They [students] all know “你好 (hello)”, and they all know like “你叫什么名字? (What’s your name?)”. Because I said I tried out communicative language teaching mainly on the first several lessons, so they learn “你叫什么名字? (What’s your name?)” as a sentence not as language blocks [separating language items]. ... When I conduct this approach [CLT] with very young kids, they don’t get it. They just guess but they just don’t understand what I am talking about. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

Besides the limited understanding of CLT, the teacher also reveal some misconceptions about CLT. Some teachers regard CLT is about using fun activities to teach the audio-lingual aspects of a language. This finding is parallel to past research. In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), Some English teachers in China understand the communicative teaching as merely an emphasis on listening and speaking instructions and language games (Li, 1997). In this sense, fun activities become the key feature in the CLT practice. Then, the listening and speaking instructions need to be situated in fun activities.

Before [when I was] learning studying in a Master’s degree, I’ve heard of this [approach], which the teachers have told [us] some methods. And there are teachers emphasising on the audio-lingual method and having fun in the game. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

I have put a variety of pictures of food on the board, and I make the students ask me: “你喜欢吃什么? (what do you like to eat?)”, and I will say: “我喜欢吃，春卷。 (I like to eat, spring roll.)” So they have
to choose the picture and hit it on the board, and repeat my words: “我喜欢吃春卷。 (I like to eat spring roll.)” So they can implicitly associate that sentence, and practice the sentence pattern in games. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

Nonetheless, this understanding is not agreed by other teachers. Some teachers believe that using Chinese as the classroom language is the CLT practice, while reject the idea of regarding fun activities as the CLT instruction.

Well, obviously I did not use that [the CLT practice] in the writing section and not the activity (language games) after writing section. I use CLT most at the beginning of the class like giving them instruction to let them settle down. I will not say stand properly or other in English, I will say it in Chinese like say “把你的包放下 (put away your bag)”; “两只手放在旁边 (put your hands aside)” ; “站好 (stand properly)”; “同学们好 (hello, students)” and let them greet back and say “老师好 (hello, teacher)”. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

Both interpretations produce the misconceptions about CLT. In actuality, language activities can be the CLT practice as long as authentic meaning is exchanged through the medium of the target language. The misconceptions about CLT reflect the teacher’s insufficient knowledge about the principles and procedures in CLT.

4.3 Perceiving CLT

The perceptual dimension, namely ‘perceiving CLT’, deals with the teacher’s attitudes towards CLT. The teacher perceptually make decisions on whether they can use CLT and how they apply it in class. These decisions indicate the interactions between teacher’s personalities, understanding of CLT, teaching objectives and the student needs and dispositions. Specifically, the initial interview questions focus on
investigating the teacher’s teaching objectives, attitudes towards CLT and its use in Chinese language teaching. Progressively, more data collected on these aspects shed some light on other areas such as the students’ attributes. Hence, for investigating the emerging aspect in detail, I made additional questions including “how do you engage your students in class” and “how do you think the Communicative language teaching approach can facilitate or constrain your engagement with students”.

4.3.1 Favouring CLT

The first characteristic in perceiving CLT is ‘favouring CLT’. This characteristic suggests that the teacher are perceptually favouring this language approach. Many reasons account for the preference of CLT. For example, the teacher may prefer to use CLT due to their past foreign language learning experience. Likewise, they may assume that teaching basic communicative skills rather than the grammatical items is a major and appropriate objective in the context of primary and secondary language education.

The teacher, who learned English as a foreign language, to large extent relied on traditional language methodologies such as the grammar-translation method. This kind of traditional language approach helps them to succeed in language examinations. However, as the teacher regard, the method emphasises mechanical learning, while do not foster learner’s communicative competence.

We learnt English generally with the grammar translation method in high school, which has made learning rather painful and boring. ... I knew many of my classmates who were very good at exams, but they cannot speak English very well. They even did not have courage to speak English. This made me think about the reason for us to learn a foreign language. When I was studying in the university, the idea that learning a language was for communication has impressed me. Thus I
strongly agreed with the communicative language teaching approach at that time. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

The mechanical memorisation and repetitive drill in predetermined language content brought the teacher with struggling learning experience, and consequently motivate the teacher to use CLT in their teaching. Even though the language methodology is new to these beginning teachers, they believe that it can emancipate students from painful learning and is a more suitable approach for language learning.

*I think it’s a new but good teaching approach. From my English learning experience, the method to teach English was rather mechanical. I learned English through constant repetition. But CLT is different, it makes students immerse in that language like living in a foreign environment. I think it’s very important to language learning, but there was no the kind of environment when I was learning English. I repeated the learning content after the teacher, that’s how I learned English. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)*

The reason for favouring CLT is also due to the learning objective the NSW language syllabus suggests. The syllabus defines the purpose for language teaching and learning at the primary and secondary educational stage is for developing the student’s communicative ability (Board of Studies, NSW, 2003). Hence, the teacher need a kind of language approach that could serve that purpose. As the theory and practice of CLT are primarily for developing communicative competence, the teacher believe the compatibility of CLT with the teaching purpose.

I believed it’s [communicative language] one aspect of language learning, it may be the main aspect of language learning. Colloquial, when you speak them about colloquial. Of course, you’ve got more academic styles of teaching learning Chinese. But I think they are
reserved for more higher. For a higher level like university or research. But at this stage, stage 4, 5, 6, maybe the component of what they are learning is, maybe the component of the course and syllabus is based on communication. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

One of the significant features in CLT is providing learners with the communicative environment. As the teacher believe in the importance of a communicative environment in language learning, they have a high expectation of CLT to provide learners with opportunities to practise the target language.

Firstly I think it’s a very good approach because when I was a language learner [of English] I don’t have a lot of opportunities to practise [English]. We learn it based on grammar and linguistic codes. [We are] not allowed to emphasise on communicative ability which is very important in learning a language. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

‘Favouring CLT’ illuminates the reasons the teacher may potentially use CLT in class, while the following two characteristics in ‘perceiving CLT’ suggest some difficulties constrain the teacher’s use of the approach.

4.3.2 Conflicting with teaching objectives

‘Conflicting with teaching objectives’ is the second characteristic in ‘perceiving CLT’, which depicts the teacher’s concern about CLT. In general, the CLT practice may not fulfil the teacher’s diverse teaching objectives. As many teachers regard CLT is mainly for listening and speaking instruction, they suggest CLT is
unavailable for achieving other teaching purposes such as the instruction of grammar, Chinese characters, and cultural knowledge.

Foreign language teaching is not the same as we acquire the mother tongue that you still need to teach some grammar. ... But if you want to teach a character [or] you want to introduce some cultural content I think you still need to use English to explain these to students. (Jess, 09/08/2010)

Meanwhile, the teacher suggest that the language syllabus has guided their teaching with diverse approaches. The language syllabus has covered three major areas in general referring to ‘using language’, ‘making linguistic connections’, and ‘moving between cultures’ (Board of Studies, NSW, 2003). Hence, language teaching and learning do not exclusively emphasise development of the student’s communicative competence. Rather, it allows the teacher to employ other approaches to achieve goals in the three areas.

If you are thinking that the high school teacher needs to continually talk to the students, then that’s not what the syllabus is all about. Syllabus just not focuses on one way of teaching. The syllabus allows many ways of teaching and focuses on the whole range of things. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

Further, the instruction of Chinese characters cannot be excluded in Chinese teaching. However, this part of language instruction cannot be accomplished by the CLT approach. Unlike English and other European languages that are alphabetic languages with relatively transparent orthography-phonology systems, Chinese is a logographic language with implicit grapheme-phoneme connections (Yun, 2005). This may result in more teaching loads on the teacher and learning burdens on the students. Regarding CLT is primarily for colloquial instruction, the teacher’s
perception that CLT cannot be used for instruction of Chinese characters is made clear.

I think characters features one of the most significant features in Chinese, so how to incorporate the characters into CLT instruction is a problem. The characters, pronunciations, and meanings are separate in Chinese, not like other language with close connection between words and pronunciations. The characters and pronunciations of Chinese they connect together, but [the connection] is in a different system that you may still need to learn some characters so that you can pronounce. So I think when we use CLT in teaching, the part of characters may be ignored. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

Hence, applying other approaches for the teaching of Chinese characters is taken for granted by the teacher. As a result, traditional instruction such as mechanically repeating the characters becomes the major method.

It’s very hard to use CLT to teach Chinese writing, I mean the written forms of Chinese language. Thus, I usually teach ‘Hanzi’ [Chinese characters] stroke by stroke and ask them to repeat my writings. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

At times, the teacher suggest that the instruction of Chinese characters could also help them to fulfil another teaching goal. That is, the cultural instruction. Chinese characters are not only the written forms of a language but also vehicles reflecting the Chinese culture. However, using CLT for teaching Chinese characters may impair the cultural manifestation of Chinese characters.

I think Chinese characters are very special. They have been evolving for thousands of years that the characters per se are reflecting one of
the most significant parts in Chinese culture. Thus, if I only use CLT to instruct the language, students may not realise the culture residing in characters. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)

In actuality, many teachers have regarded the cultural instruction as the same importance as language teaching. Thus, the CLT practice could become less significant due to this balanced view between language teaching and cultural instruction.

It’s important to teach the language but it’s also important to teach the culture and to have them expose to a foreign culture, both needs to be done, hand in hand at certain level. We do what we can do, we do according to the syllabus we teach. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

At times, aiming to introduce students more cultural knowledge is perhaps the major goal of the teacher as they realise that the students do not have much knowledge about China. In that sense, simply teaching students the language knowledge without providing the ‘background information’ can be meaningless for their learning. Therefore, the teacher expect the instruction of Chinese culture could provide the students with more understanding about Chinese language.

The purpose of my teaching is to introduce more Chinese things for the students, cause for Australian students they know China little. So I want them to know more about China and for the language I think, they don’t need to remember all things. But I think it’s better they can get more sense about Chinese and Chinese culture. ... Especially for primary students, this is probably the first time they know China and Chinese. They may have no idea about China or Mandarin, and they may not know whether they want to learn it or not. ... It’s my job here to
stimulate their interest and further their study in Mandarin. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)

Further, the teacher suggest the ultimate purpose for language learning is for improving understanding between people. This assumption motivates the teacher to introduce more cultural knowledge rather than using CLT for language instruction.

*For the culture, I think it’s meaningful for their learning. Because the culture can provide a kind of understanding, you learn a language for understanding a country, or understand a nation, understand the people.* (Mike, 29/05/2010)

The above analysis suggests that the CLT practice might be inherently inappropriate for the instruction of Chinese characters and culture as far as the teacher are concerned. However, this approach might be suitable for other areas in language teaching such as the listening and speaking instruction. The teacher have expressed this attitude in ‘favouring CLT’. Yet, due to some ‘shortcomings’ assumed by the teacher, the application of CLT in teaching listening and speaking skills is still sceptical.

The first ‘shortcoming’ perceived by the teacher is that CLT is unable to help the students memorise the language items. Memorisation of certain vocabularies or sentences is necessary for learning a foreign language. Nevertheless, the teacher confront this problem when employing CLT for language instruction.

... but in terms of reinforcing and strengthening their memory I don’t think it’s the approach very, in my practice, it [CLT] does not work very well. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)
Secondly, the teacher regard that the CLT instruction is time consuming. In other words, using CLT usually takes longer time in language instruction. Due to this problem, the teacher usually tend to clarify the meaning of the target language before using CLT for language instruction. In consequence, this results in the unpopularity of using CLT in Mandarin class.

I do not have enough time in class when you use CLT. Students take a lot of time to guess what you are talking about and for them they are just kids and they, I mean I need to repeat and repeat it again and I need to show that takes a lot of time, if I said in English that’s more easier and I can do more things within limited time. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

I have very limited time [in class] currently. For example, it’s obvious when I teach “是 (yes)” and “不是 (no)” in a class. I only have 30 minutes a lesson each week, but even teaching the very simple content like “是 (yes)” and “不是 (no)” you need to instruct for a long time let alone instructing more complicated phrases. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Thus, CLT might be more suitable in longer lesson length where the target language environment can be more easily established for communicative purpose. With the limited time for teaching the language, the teacher are less motivated to use CLT in Mandarin class. The teacher express the idea by contrasting their situation with the case in bilingual class.

Those classes have Chinese lessons one and half hour everyday [Catherine is comparing her classes with the bilingual classes in her school], which makes communicative [teaching] feasible as they are
repeating and repeating everyday, while we have only half an hour a week. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

4.3.3 Losing the students

‘Losing the students’ denotes the teacher’s tension that using CLT may result in the issue of learning resistance. The issue of learning resistance persistently exists disturbing the normal teaching process.

They [the students] have to learn it, they have to be willing to learn. But when you put 20 or 30 students together and they are not able to settle down enough for the teacher delivering something or they are not willing to follow us the course of learning and teaching that can be difficult for them to make the most of the time. Students themselves need to engage themselves. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

However, the issue of learning resistance cannot be appropriately addressed by the CLT practice. Discouraging attitudes towards using CLT to address the issue of student engagement are either explicitly or implicitly expressed by teachers. They suggest that using CLT actually will result in losing the students. This perception about the application of CLT induces the teacher to adopt other teaching practice rather than the CLT practice. This is similar to what is suggested by past research. Student personality is identified as an important factor for the success of CLT instruction (Brown, 1994). Hence, the CLT instruction seems inappropriate in a teaching context where learning resistance persists.

Regarding the research focus, this study is not going to detail the factors contributing to the issue of learning resistance. This study elicits the teacher’s tension about losing the students due to learning resistance. From the teacher’s point of view, the tension of losing the students confines their use of CLT. First, losing the students is a
general sense coming from the experience of learning resistance in daily teaching life. Second, the challenge of the Chinese language on students deepens the teacher’s tension of losing the students. Further, the CLT approach per se results in a higher level of losing the students. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the teacher’s perception about losing the students.

**Figure 4.1 The teacher’s perception about the tension of losing the students**

![Diagram showing the tension of losing the students](image)

4.3.3.1 Resisting learning with varying degrees

Students’ resistance in learning is a common phenomenon. Only a few teachers suggest the issue of learning resistance insignificant, while the majority of the teacher reveal their experience about the issue with varying degrees. Meanwhile, even though there is positive learning behaviour in some class reported by the teacher, learning resistance cannot be completely absent in those class.

The majority of the classes are good [in discipline], there are classroom teachers [As a volunteer teacher, she may not be allowed to teach Mandarin alone] after all. But some classes are a little noisy. There are one or two students who do not want to learn Mandarin, very obvious
Thus, the resistance on learning exists in every beginning teacher’s class. Resisting learning in a general sense varies from minor to major extent. Inactive Chinese learners produce the minor extent of learning resistance. The evidence can be found in problem solving activities where students need to use previous language knowledge. Even though the previous language knowledge was noted in the students’ books, they were reluctant to search.

If you ask him “今天是几月几号 (What’s the date today)” by writing the ‘pinyin’ of the question, he cannot answer. But he could say the date [in Chinese] as long as you say to him ‘today’s date’ in English. He cannot convert between the two languages easily and he is also lazy to search [from books]. [I feel] frustrated. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

The minor extent of learning resistance is also found in the students’ unwillingness to respond to the teacher’s instruction. Students are often reluctant to communicate with the teacher in Chinese.

I think students still progress slowly. My ideal lesson is that I can speak more Chinese and they can understand me well. They themselves are willing to learn more Mandarin. But I found in most classes only a few students are interested in Mandarin, some students are just unwilling to answer my questions. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)

The problem of students’ unwillingness to practise the target language has clearly made the use of CLT practice rather difficult. For example, since the students are unwilling to speak Chinese with each other, the implementation of CLT oriented activities such as role plays becomes meaningless.
I do role plays, but students get shied when they are in a role play and sometimes they will just no volunteers. If I got few volunteers I will just ask them to practice as a whole, because it doesn’t make sense if they don’t participate. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

The minor degree of learning resistance discourages the teacher to use the CLT instruction, while more significantly, the major degree of learning resistance not only affects the implementation of the CLT instruction but also disturbs the normal teaching process. The major degree of learning resistance refers to the student’s destructive behaviour that significantly challenges the teaching and learning process. This situation mainly happens in senior student classes where the teaching and learning activities cannot be controlled by the teacher. The teacher have to constantly stop teaching and manage the class.

For high school students in particular, they like talking in class and do not have interests in learning Mandarin. Then I have to manage their behaviour to make them settle down. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)

Although the teacher do not explicitly reveal their concern about using CLT in this situation, the reality obviously implies the impossibility of using the CLT practice when learning resistance becomes the major issue in class.

4.3.3.2 Mandarin challenges students

Regarding the Chinese language, nearly all the teacher express their concern about the difficulty of the language for students’ learning.

Chinese is quite foreign to them, more foreign than for example, European languages the which are written in alphabetical script, a, b,
c, for example, French and German, while Chinese has totally different writing system and it’s a totally different culture as well, pretty much, which stumps some children from accepting that they may need to learn this language or it will be a good idea to learn this language. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

Due to the difficulty of the Chinese language, the teacher suggest the students to regard learning Chinese as an adventure that they can conquer. If students have this kind of attitude, they might be more engaged in learning the language.

It’s four tones and writing is different so it is quite different which can either attract people or deter people, so that’s a double edge sword. ... It [Hanzi writing] is challenging, and those who are interesting in that will write it. They are willing to learn that. But for some, there is no incentive. They see that’s difficult, even though it can be just challenging and it can be an adventure. If that’s how they can see it [ ‘Hanzi’ ], it will be more helpful. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

However, from the teacher’s experience, they have found that the majority of students perceive Chinese as a challenging language to learn. Students confront problems in learning Chinese including pronunciation and Chinese characters. These problems often deter them from learning Chinese and give rise to the teacher’s tension of losing the students.

The Chinese pronunciation might be difficult, like ‘she’, ‘che’, ‘q’; and learning sentences must be very difficult [to students]. For students in year 2 and 3, they are more willing to learn vocabularies, which they pick it up very fast. But learning sentences is not the case. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)
When learning the language, they feel it very difficult, particularly the Chinese characters. “Chinese characters are so difficult with so many strokes”; “my hand is tired”; “I can’t do, I’m not Chinese”. Some students would comment like that. They will complain again and again. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

Since the Chinese language is challenging for the students, the teacher perceive teaching Chinese may have more problems on learning resistance and consequently increase the tension of losing the students. Yet, far from alleviating the issue, the application of the CLT approach aggravates the tension further perceived by the teacher.

4.3.3.3 CLT challenges students

The perception that CLT may further increase the tension of losing the students stems from the teacher’s view about the condition for using CLT. The condition mainly refers to the attributes of the learners. In a general sense, the teacher believe that the use of CLT can either attract or deter students from learning Chinese.

I think there might be some students who have more interests [if I teach them with CLT]. It [using CLT] might be very easy to become two sides of effects. Those students who are lost [in CLT instruction] may get totally lost on learning content [all through lessons], while those who are engaging [in the lessens] may get more interested in challenging themselves. So for those very young kids, [CLT instruction] may not be quite appropriate. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Specifically, the following condition is believed suitable for using the CLT approach. First, whether and to what extent CLT should be used is highly dependent on learners’ needs. Learners’ needs include their learning purposes, motivations, and
interests in learning a foreign language. The teacher assume that the CLT practice could be more suitable and effective if students’ learning needs are being able to communicate with the target language.

I think it [whether favours the approach or not] depends on the environment in teaching. ... For example, if I [as a foreign language learner] will go overseas right now, then the kind of approach is definitely good. But if you want to raise students’ interests, I think it may not be a good approach. After all, every kid’s intelligence varies; and some students are more self-conscious and more willing to learn, while some students may not have the consciousness. So it is just different [according to the circumstances], doesn’t mean [it is a] good or bad [approach]. But I think communicative language [teaching] actually is more challenging for younger students. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Further, CLT is assumed to be a more appropriate approach for teaching learners with the basic target language items. Here, the basic target language items refer to the basic vocabularies and grammatical and structural units of Chinese. These basic target language items need to be used for functional and communicative purposes. The teacher believe that, with the basic knowledge, students could learn more effectively under the CLT instruction. Likewise, the CLT practice can be more suitable for teaching Chinese background speakers as they have acquired some basic knowledge items in prior.

It is a very good approach for teaching students with a little bit [Mandarin], with some [Chinese] background. I mean with some adults for example, Chinese background and some, you have built up some basic knowledge around the language. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)
In actuality, teaching learners with the target language background can be considered as the second language teaching. CLT is an appropriate language approach in the second language teaching context. For example, CLT has become the most prevalent approach for teaching English as the second language (ESL) in English-speaking countries (Sun & Cheng, 2002). However, the success of CLT in the ESL context has rarely been duplicated in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) (Penner, 1995). Similarly, the Chinese teacher also express the difficulty about the use of CLT. Since most of the students are non-Chinese background speakers, teaching Chinese is more like foreign language teaching rather than second language teaching. Therefore, the effective use of CLT can be confined by the teaching context.

I think the purpose [of CLT] is to get students to say something and to react in a communicative purpose but I think with students living in the cultural context far away from target language [using] this approach is limited. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

The real teaching practice has convinced the teacher’s concern. By using the CLT practice, the teacher find the difficulty in managing the class. Consequently, the tension of losing the students emerges through the CLT practice.

I tried to speak Chinese as much as possible but the outcome was not so good. Because the students get lost and they [say] “Miss, what are you talking?” and then if you don’t explain or speak slowly they get bored easily. … They block all the information out so that’s why I do not use CLT. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

Once he [student] immerses in that [target language] environment, he could lose. Once lost [in the target language environment], he will not
be interested in and then totally give up the learning. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Furthermore, the teacher’s experience suggests that the CLT instruction can affect the students’ learning confidence. As students have difficulty in understanding the CLT instruction, their confidence can be lost through the learning process. When the confidence is lost, students may simply choose to quit learning.

They have confidence to learn more and they say ok I know I know. ... So first you need to let them feel that they are able to, they could understand your instruction in the class, know what to do, if they don’t know what to do their brain just shut down (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

Therefore, the teacher regard the inappropriateness of using CLT for Mandarin teaching in the Australian school context. As discussed earlier, the effectiveness of the CLT instruction depends on students’ learning needs including their learning purposes, motivations, and interests. However, many students in Mandarin class do not have these learning needs. On the contrary, the teacher identify that they are more passive in learning Chinese.

They [students] are different from adult learners they are not interested in that before you teach Chinese. They are more passive than those adult learners who are more active [in learning]. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

Meanwhile, the CLT practice is more suitable for teaching students with some background knowledge about Chinese. However, the majority of students do not have the Chinese background. Thus, they may find difficulty in understanding the CLT instruction.
I tried to teach communicative language initially with introducing my name and asking students to say their name, but when I conduct this approach with very young kids, they just don’t get it. They just guess but they just don’t understand what I am talking about, which makes me very confused. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

Moreover, as the teacher concern, the condition will be more inappropriate for using CLT when the learners are younger students. The CLT practice could be more challenging to younger students than senior students as younger students from kindergarten or stage one may have not developed their understanding abilities.

Language is a big issue when you teach younger students. ... Like kindergarten they even haven’t developed their English understanding. (Jess, 09/08/2010)

I do tried out some communicative language approach now with year 8 kids and they guess very well because they have some ability of understanding, so I think it depends on the students you teach. ...I think with young kids it’s that, sometimes it [using CLT] could end up with knowing nothing. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

As these issues may arise through the teaching process, the teacher regard that they cannot simply use CLT for Mandarin teaching. Rather, combining CLT with other traditional approaches could be more feasible in practical teaching. Thus, the teacher suggest the grammatical instruction is essential for establishing the students’ basic knowledge of Chinese.

Foreign language teaching is not the same as we acquire the mother tongue, still you need to teach some grammar. And the environment is
different because students cannot be immersed as in the first language environment. (Jess, 09/08/2010)

I think we don’t need to use CLT in a whole lesson. We could make a combination [with other language approaches], which will be better in practice. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

4.4 Situating CLT

Learning resistance from the students can significantly obstruct the teaching and learning process. Thus, the teacher have to seek appropriate teaching practice and strategies to address the tension of losing the students. The third dimension ‘situating CLT’ addresses these actions from the teacher. ‘Situating CLT’ reflects the teacher’s perspectives of CLT in the situational dimension. For addressing the tension of losing the students and achieving teaching objectives, the situational dimension suggests three types of strategies upon which the teacher may contingently act. These types of strategies include ‘promoting learning’, ‘adapting self’, and ‘maintaining the status quo’. The CLT practice is identified within these aspects of strategies. Thus, by understanding these strategies in the teaching process, it implies how the teacher utilise the CLT practice.

4.4.1 Promoting learning

‘Promoting learning’ is perhaps the most significant feature in ‘situating CLT’. It highlights the teacher’s practice for engaging the students in learning. There are two major aspects constituting ‘promoting learning’, they are ‘creating a comfortable environment’ and ‘reducing learning difficulties’. Creating a comfortable environment refers to the teacher applying a variety of strategies to promote learning. For motivating learning of Mandarin, the teacher have applied a wide range of activities such as language games, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese songs, and origami
to engage the learning process. The teacher hope that these dynamic activities can make learning process easier and ultimately promote students’ learning. In contrast with ‘creating a comfortable environment’, ‘reducing learning difficulties’ emphasises more on the learning content. Reducing learning difficulties involves the teacher ‘simplifying learning content’ and ‘making clear instructions’. The teacher expect these strategies may help students to reduce risks of learning a foreign language and foster their learning confidence.

4.4.1.1 Creating a comfortable environment

Creating a comfortable learning environment is regarded as the priority in the teaching process by the teacher. The teacher assume that students may learn better when they feel comfortable in learning. Thus, providing a comfortable learning environment may alleviate the tension of losing the students. Meanwhile, the teacher attempt to seek opportunities for teaching the target language which is the primary teaching objective in language class. Therefore, the CLT approach usually has to be situated in the process of creating a comfortable environment. In class, the teacher look for the appropriate time for language instruction. For example, the target language communication probably happens when the students feel comfortable to organise the activities on their own. The teacher notice their willingness and give students the right to take charge of the activities.

For example, [when we play] Simon says, I pick two students who think they are good in speaking Mandarin. So I make them host the activity, and I just watch them to play. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

Likewise, the teacher strive for seeking opportunities to make students use the target language after class. For example, after class teaching misbehaving students to say “老师，对不起 (lao shi, dui bu qi; Teacher, sorry)” is quite effective as the students are willing to say the sentence so that they can leave the classroom as soon as
possible. Similar situation also happens when the teacher teach ‘thanks’ in the reward process.

I will give the quality award. [If] he does well, I will give him the quality award. He then could have a chance to win an ipod, which our school establishes the lottery activity to win ipod or DVDs. Then they will become very happy. I will ask them to say “谢谢老师 (xie xie lao shi; thank you, teacher)”, and if they don’t [say it], I won’t give the prize. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

In addition, some teachers also pay particular attention to the students’ learning habits as a way for creating a comfortable environment. Learning habits parallel with the theory of multiple intelligences (MI) which consists of eight dimensions: linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, and naturalist (Gardner, 1993). The MI theory suggests that all humans have these intelligences, but they differ in terms of strengths and combinations of intelligences. When learners’ different learning styles, preferences, or intelligences are acknowledged and accommodated in teaching, pedagogy could become most successful (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In practice, understanding students’ learning habits creates a comfortable learning environment and consequently may create the potential for the use of CLT instruction.

Well I have two year 8 classes in one school and the students in these two classes quite have different, I mean they are in different types, using a word like students are in ‘multi-intelligence’, so one class is more academic excellent they like using logic thinking in, they like writing or calculating something; another class they are more kinaesthetic so they, I mean they like move more so like something they could stand up and they can walk around, drawing pictures and colouring or something um, so they have totally different from each other. Um... when I teach the first
class I mean the more academic excellent class, I will give oral drilling first because they are good at memory and then I will let them write down and that’s ok, and I could make some games more harder like say when I teach them number I will not say the word I want is, I will not say please find out the number “六” (six), I will say the number I want is “三加三 (three plus three)” and they quite like that way, more difficult and challenging way to learn. But for the second class, I will let them write down first, do a little bit oral [practice] but not long, and let them write down and they are confident and they see pinyin and then let them do oral drilling again and because they know the pinyin they can read the pinyin so they get more confidence and in that activity section I let them draw pictures or other games involved more body movements and they feel that more comfortable in that way. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

The above analysis generally describes how the teacher create a comfortable environment for language teaching. In detail, creating a comfortable environment starts with the selection of interesting topics. Topics including family, sports, food, and colours may motivate students’ learning as they are relevant to the students’ daily lives and reflect their interests.

[The learning content] could involve with the students themselves so that they will have more interests. Just like relating to my family, “我的家有几 口人 (how many people are there in my family)”; “我家有爸爸 、妈妈、哥哥、姐姐 (There is dad, mom, brother and sister in my family”. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

Meanwhile, making students choose the learning content is another attempt to engage learning. Topics chosen by the students indicate their communicative needs. The teacher believe this strategy can be effective for the CLT instruction as students are more willing to learn when they have the communicative needs.
I will plan a topic, but they can also ask me something that they feel particularly interested. They feel satisfied when I teach their interested topics. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

Regarding the process of language instruction, some teachers believe using activities, especially interesting games, is an essential strategy to engage students’ learning. Students may have positive attitudes towards learning when they feel the activities are pleasant and enjoyable. Based on the assumption, when the teacher identify a large number of students are resisting learning, they will ascribe the issue to activities that may not be interesting enough.

Encourage them [through activities] so that they can [learn something]. That’s because, it seems that students here need to play games so that they can learn. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

If there are four or five students not learning in class [there are no more than 20 students in her class], the issue might ascribe to the problem in your teaching design. Maybe your activities are not interesting enough. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Then, the use of CLT practice has to be incorporated within these activities. The teacher do attempt to use the CLT practice when they instruct activities. They incorporate the meaning exchange process in language activities or games.

I mainly use the Communicative Language Teaching for students to guess and to talk. ... I use the flashcards to show them food, and organise some activities like ‘catching cards’, and ‘Chinese whispers’ something like that. (Jess, 13/08/2010)
Even though [students pick it up] slowly, I asked them to say “是 (yes)” or “不是 (no)” rather than “yes” or “no” as they were doing that `celebrity head [an activity] `. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

There are lots of activities, competition games, and guessing games for example, I hold bunch of flash cards and I pick one and hide that and let them guess which cards do I hide, and they say “爸爸 (dad)” I say “不是 (no)”, and another may guess “姐姐 (elder sister)”, I say “不是 (no)”. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

Yet, some issues may need to be considered when the teacher use the CLT practice in activities. First, only a few activities can be regarded as the CLT practice such as ‘Bingo’, ‘Simon says’, ‘calling out game’, and ‘celebrity heads’. These language activities could be categorised as ‘functional communication activities’ (Littlewood, 1981) because the process of meaning exchange is mainly for accomplishing a specific activity. Nonetheless, strictly speaking, these activities are not significantly communicative oriented when compared with the functional activities Littlewood (1981) suggests.

Functional communication activities include such tasks as learners comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures; discovering missing features in a map or picture; one learner communicating behind a screen to another learner and giving instructions on how to draw a picture or shape, or how to complete a map; following directions; and solving problems from shared clues (Littlewood, 1981; cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 166).

The activities Littlewood suggests are more ‘complex’ than the ones the teacher used, and they are situated in a more ‘authentic’ context where solving practical problems is the purpose. The other type of communicative activity is termed as ‘social interaction activities’ which includes conversation, discussion, and role plays
(Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, the teacher rarely use this kind of communicative activity for practising the target language. Social interaction activities such as role plays require students to use more target language. Thus, they could be more challenging to students than other language activities. Meanwhile, social interaction activities are less interesting than other language activities or games. As a result, the teacher find the difficulty of using social interaction activities to engage students’ learning.

I asked some students to practice a conversation in a role play, but most of them were reluctant to come to the stage. ... They just are not interested in Mandarin and then few students take part in the role play. Since then I didn’t do the role plays any more. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)

I do role plays, but students get shied when they are in a role play and sometimes they will just no volunteers. If I got few volunteers I will just ask them to practice as a whole, because it doesn’t make sense if they don’t participate. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

Secondly, even though the teacher claim the use of CLT practice in speaking and listening activities, the communication content in these activities is often predetermined rather than taking place in a natural discourse. Students in these activities could merely use the predetermined language content, while are unable to create meaning on their own.

I make them play the calling out game in which a student makes the first call will win. They feel very excited and actively take part in the activity. Another one requires students to hit a flashcard. They need to ask me “你喜欢吃什么? (ni xi huan chi shen me; what do you like to eat?)” Then I will say “我喜欢吃春卷 (wo xi huan chi chun juan; I like to eat spring rolls)”. They need to [hit] the picture and say “我喜欢吃春天的花朵. (wo xi huan chi chun de hua duo).
欢吃春卷”。Just repeat after me. That makes them implicitly practise the sentence pattern. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

Thirdly, the language content is often minimised in these activities. Meaning exchange in these activities merely involves simple language content such as a single word or phrase, while much time is taken for having fun in activities.

I teach three words when I make them play basketball, that is “投 (shoot)”, “传 (pass)”, and “好球 (good ball)”. They must use these words when they play. When they do certain actions they need to say the corresponding words. If they don’t, I will give them a minus mark. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

As the above analysis suggests, even though the teacher are able to use the CLT practice when a comfortable learning environment is created, their use of the CLT featured activities is problematic. Therefore, the effect of the CLT approach for fostering learners’ communicative competence can be impaired.

Furthermore, the effect of the CLT practice can also be impaired due to other teaching practice being employed for creating a comfortable learning environment. In other words, the CLT practice can be marginalised by other language instruction. For example, the CLT practice is not available when the teacher teach students writing Chinese characters.

For characters, I’ve taught them making posters [Michelle showed me the samples on the wall whose work has been made by her previous students.] They [current students] said then “Miss, that’s so difficult”. So I taught them how to type Chinese characters [on computers], like in year 8. They’ve found it’s interesting. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)
The cultural instruction is another aspect that marginalises the CLT practice. The teacher seem more willing to teach students about the cultural knowledge as a way for creating a comfortable environment. The cultural instruction including the introduction of Chinese history, lifestyle, and artefacts through video and hands-on activities can significantly create a comfortable environment and consequently engage the students. However, the cultural instruction usually does not involve the CLT practice. Therefore, it decreases the teacher’s opportunities of using CLT for language instruction.

This term I conduct more activities about like Chinese cultural things, like about paper cutting, also calligraphy and use chopsticks, they love that. ... When I teach them chopsticks, I just simply get them to say “筷子 (chopsticks)”, but very limited language input. And when I teach them calligraphy, [I teach them] simply just the character you are going to write. I will introduce the character but no more than that. ... Sometimes I show them photos of China, they get very interested in that because they don’t access the kind of information a lot and I bring photos majorly taken by myself around my hometown and the place I travelled to. It’s a very real China so I think it is a very good strategy to make kids know China. Let them see how local Chinese persons’ life looks like. I show them my home, my house, my dinner. Sometimes I took pictures of my dinner and also I travelled to Beijing, Harbin, Shanghai, Hangzhou, I show them those places in China, and they just get amazed how different they think of China and how they look like. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)

4.4.1.2 Reducing learning difficulties

‘Reducing learning difficulties’ is the other aspect in ‘promoting learning’. Reducing learning difficulties attempts to make students more easily access the learning
content. Two types of strategies were identified in reducing learning difficulties. They are ‘simplifying learning content’ and ‘making clear instructions’.

4.4.1.2.1 Simplifying learning content

As Mandarin is a challenging language for many students, the teacher need to simplify learning content as a way to promote learning. The teacher expect the students can engage learning when the learning content is simplified. This strategy may reduce the tension of losing the students. However, it impairs the effect of the CLT practice. In other words, the simplified learning content often cannot meet the condition the CLT instruction requires.

First, the teacher prefer to teach vocabularies rather than Chinese sentences. The teacher believe that the students are more likely to engage learning in the vocabulary instruction as it is less challenging and straightforward to learn.

Sometimes I will introduce very very simple questions like “what's your name” and something like that or “how are you” like that. But a lot of time I will teach them noun [vocabularies] and they can use these nouns to describe something in their real life so... (Mike, 10/05/2010)

Second, regarding the teaching of Chinese sentences, the learning content is according to the students’ learning abilities. The sentence instruction often requires higher learning abilities from the students. Therefore, for intelligent kids they can teach more complex target language without incurring the learning resistance.

... For those good class, when they are learning nationality they can say like “从澳大利亚，美国，加拿大来 (come from Australia, the America, or Canada)”. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)
However, in most occasions the teacher teach simple sentences to make sure every student retains their learning confidence. This is particularly important when the teacher teach younger students. As younger students can more easily access the learning content, they are more willing to learn the language.

In year three and four I tried to use questions and answers pattern, but for stage one students I only use the answer pattern so that they can feel it easier and learn more. (Jess, 09/08/2010)

Moreover, the teacher often teach sentences as language input rather than language output. That means the students only need to understand the meaning of the target language without necessarily producing the target language. Thus, this way reduces the learning difficulty for the students.

I mainly focus on teaching vocabularies, few sentences. For example, “你叫什么名字 (What’s your name?)”, I did not expect them to say the sentence. But they need to understand what I am saying and reply appropriately. [For instance], when they hear the question “你几岁了 (How old are you?)”, they can say their ages in terms of numbers. This is what I am expected. (Mike, 29/05/2010)

Third, the simplified learning content can be found in the dialogue instruction. The teacher use some scaffolding strategies to make students practise the target language dialogues. Taking the role-play activity for example, the teacher write down the dialogue content in ‘pinyin’ and ‘hanzi’ on the board for the students to practise. As a result, the learning risk can be reduced. The students can feel more confident in practising the target language.
I asked them [students] to come to the stage and practice the dialogue in pairs. But when they are practising speaking, I put the enquiry and reply on the board with 'pinyin' and 'hanzi'. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

As the teacher mainly focus on teaching vocabularies and a few sentences, the communicative feature of such instruction can be minimal. Therefore, the simplified learning content may confine the implementation of the CLT instruction. Most importantly, using scaffolding strategies in language instruction may also impact on the effectiveness of the CLT instruction. As the content in the conversation is largely predetermined, this teaching practice reflects few communicative features.

4.4.1.2.2 Making clear instruction

Making clear instruction also reduces learning difficulties so that promotes learning. The purpose for making clear instruction is due to the less clear meaning conveyed by the CLT instruction. When the teacher try to use CLT to teach the language content, they often find that students cannot well understand their instruction. In contrast, they realise that students seem more able to understand some traditional language instruction rather than CLT. Thus, the teacher have to rely on other strategies in the teaching process. In the traditional teaching practice, students can access meaning without making too much effort.

The classroom teacher sometimes will help me and she did find out what I am trying to teach [when I was using CLT to instruct language]. One time I remember very well. I teach kindergarten kids last year and the classroom teacher helps me with a very very traditional approach and students suddenly get it and she smiled at me and ask me it is how you do it with young kids and I’m very shocked that sometimes the basic way is used, very very traditional way, [is] more useful with young kids. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)
For making clear instruction, the teacher prefer to directly translate each single word of Chinese into English so that students can well understand meaning. However, this kind of strategy is quite mechanical towards learning and impairs students’ learning in a more communicative manner.

I will draw a language table with three columns. That is ‘Chinese characters’, ‘pinyin’ and ‘English meaning’ and put the new vocabulary in it [the table] and pinyin, and related English meanings, I let them copy down on their language notebooks. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

Sometimes, the teacher do not completely discard the use of the CLT instruction. For example, they attempt to combine CLT with other practical strategies such as using the body language.

When I say these I use actions to help them guess what I am talking about, I say “把你们的帽子拿下来 (put off your hat)” I will use this action and they know what I’m talking about and “两只手放旁边 (put your hands aside)” I will show them my hands put beside my bodies properly and I will say “起立 (stand up)” I will put my hands up “请坐 (please sit down)” I will use another hand sign so all of them can guess these things so I feel it is useful to use CLT in giving such simple instructions. (Cindy, 16/05/2010)

However, the combination may affect the effectiveness of the CLT practice. The body language is used for clarifying the meaning created by the CLT instruction. The body language could be regarded as an alternative means of communication, but it marginalises the oral communication which is the key element in language class. In other words, the students understand the meaning from the body language rather than
the CLT instruction. Hence, the combination obscures the authentic meaning exchange through the target language.

### 4.4.2 Adapting self

When strategies for promoting learning are not effective in addressing the tension of losing the students, the teacher have to adapt their status in the teaching process. Adapting self involves the teacher lowering their expectation on students’ language learning. As the teacher lower their expectation, the tension of losing the students can become less stressful. For example, some teachers do not expect their students to be able to speak Chinese fluently, while merely require them to understand meaning of the target language. This can be seen in the case of ‘simplifying learning content’.

The teacher concern that some factors leading to the tension of losing the students cannot be reconciled. One of the most significant factors is the dramatic differences between the students’ life context and the target language context. In other words, the teacher consider that the students, as living in a completely different context, may find learning Chinese quite challenging. This perception on Chinese could largely deter students from learning the language. Moreover, perhaps the perception is so strong that even if the teacher promote learning the tension of losing the students cannot be resolved. Therefore, the teacher choose to adapt themselves to fit the surroundings. They only expect their teaching can encourage the students learning Chinese when they grow older.

Because many of students will not pick up and be fluent by the time they finish at year 7 and 8 or even year 12. Even they finish Chinese at year 12 they are not gonna be extra fluent you cannot expect them be like
that, because they are come from backgrounds of those totally not Chinese at all. And it’s challenge language to pick up, but hopefully, from down the track they become interested in it, they are able to pick it up by themselves just like I did, so pick it up by themselves individually and they will have to make their own decisions later on. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

Another reason resulting in adapting self is the learning environment in major Australian schools. From the school experience, the teacher regard that they should not make too much pressure on students’ learning. Rather, they need to make students enjoy learning Chinese.

...interests matter especially to those primary school students. And when you look at other subjects, it seems that they are all based on interests without any learning pressure like English and maths. So I think learning Mandarin should be also based on interests, to primary school students. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

As the teacher lower their expectation on the teaching and learning process, their initial teaching objectives can be changed. Changing the teaching objective enables the teacher to fit their teaching environment better. Since most of the beginning teachers are native Chinese speakers, they attempt to systematically teach students Chinese with their language expertise. However, as they obtain more teaching experience, they realise that developing students’ interests might be more important than simply teach them language skills.

I think at the very beginning, I aimed to teach the language as much as possible. To them [students], I think it’s more beneficial having a Chinese native speaker to teach them Mandarin. Thus, at that time, I think I must teach them the language explicitly and systematically. But
gradually, I realised that it may not be necessary to do it like that, interests matter especially to those primary school students. And when you look at other subjects, it seems that they are all based on interests without any learning pressure like English and Maths. So I think learning Mandarin should be also based on interests, to primary school students. (Catherine, 15/08/2010)

Thus, in order to develop students’ interests, the teacher tend to change their teaching goals from language teaching to cultural instruction. Teaching culture may develop students’ interests as the instruction is less challenging than language teaching. Meanwhile, as many students have shown their ignorance about China, the teacher suggest the teaching of Chinese culture is necessary. However, when the teacher focus more on the cultural instruction, language instruction, particularly the use of CLT, can be marginalised.

Firstly, I want them to, I really want them to say something, like I really want them to learn language systematically, but later on I found out that the students in the school don’t know China a lot, they don’t know Chinese person, they don’t know how they live in house, how their life is, and they don’t know modern China. They keep asking me: “Do Chinese have colour TV” something like that. So I think my goal now is to let them know China, to know Chinese people, to let them enjoy learning Chinese and find it’s an interesting thing. Sometimes you just question why firstly I got here [wondering the mission of teaching Mandarin as a volunteer], [and] I questioned education [here] because I don’t find students learn much. So I think maybe my Chinese lesson could change something. Now you are going to adapt the culture there because students really, the goal here is enjoying learning. (Tracy, 22/08/2010)
4.4.3 Maintaining the status quo

‘Maintaining the status quo’ refers to the teaching practice used mainly for maintaining the tension of losing the students. Maintaining the status quo emerges when strategies for promoting learning is ineffective. Consequently, the teacher have to adapt their instruction. Normally, more traditional teaching practice will be used at this point. This kind of teaching practice, however, is not employed for the purpose of promoting learning. Rather, it is applied to maintain the learning process by keeping the issue of learning resistance to a minimal impact level.

This alternative (to maintain the status quo) derives from the teacher’s experience in strategies for promoting learning. The practice for promoting learning, in terms of playing language games or doing interesting tasks, sometimes cannot effectively engage students in learning. These interesting activities may possibly fail to attract the students or make them over excited. Yet, neither can engage students in learning. In these circumstances, students may still not pay attention to the learning content. As a result, the practice for promoting learning still would not appropriately address the tension of losing the students.

I won’t make the students do activities in a whole lesson. Sometimes we do an activity and then I make them do some quiet work such as doing a worksheet to make them calm down so that they won’t become very excited. Once you make them excited, they will talk, chat, and distract their attention. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

Traditional teaching practice, in this sense, can help the teacher maintain the status quo as the practice usually involves students doing some routine or quiet activities. Writing practice is one of the activities that the teacher usually make students do as a routine work.
...Then I try to teach them ‘Hanzi’ writing prac, I get them to write the sentence and response ten times. ... Because it’s ‘Hanzi’ is based on totally different writing system than English, it’s not alphabetical so we need to practice and practice otherwise they won’t remember any of them. ... It’s hard for them to write, but when they find the writing prac is a routine process in my lessons they won’t complain too much. (Jonny, 22/06/2010)

Since the writing practice is a routine process, students may accept the practice and quietly learn Chinese even though they may still feel disinterested and resist learning. Such a practice could minimise the student’s destructive behaviour in class, but there is few CLT features in the practice. However, some practice for maintaining the status quo could be regarded as the CLT oriented practice. It happens when the teacher make students write their birthday in Chinese or do listening activities. These kinds of activities involve the meaning creation and negotiation. Yet, these activities cannot be convincingly labelled as the CLT practice since the process of meaning exchange is rather limited.

We have 75 minutes [in a lesson]. For the first 15 minutes, [I] make them calm down slowly. ... By making them write, that is “introduce yourself into sentence”. Then “write your birthday”, [I] have taught ‘date’ before. So if they need to write, they will be quiet and look for [the learned content] in books. (Michelle, 13/08/2010)

*It’s really hard for them [high school students] to do some activities like ‘celebrity heads’. Students don’t want to go to the front and do it.* So sometimes I just replace the game with some worksheets. ... For example, I will give them a multiple-choice worksheet for practicing listening. (Kristy, 20/06/2010)
4.5 Summary of the chapter

Chapter four has reported on the analysis of the interviews. As the major source of evidence in the research project, the data from interviews have indicated three interrelated dimensions that explicate the teacher’s interpretation of the CLT practice. The three dimensions are generated from the teacher’s perspective of CLT. The epistemic dimension has indicated the teacher’s understanding of CLT including their knowledge and misconceptions about CLT. The perceptual dimension has highlighted the teacher’s attitudes towards CLT. Many teachers are generally in favour of this language approach. However, they suggest CLT may not successfully fulfil their diverse teaching objectives as well as address the tension of losing the students. In the situational dimension, the teacher adapt the use of CLT within three types of strategies, namely promoting learning, adapting self, and maintaining the status quo. In the next chapter, my teaching reflection about CLT is analysed as the complementary source of evidence.
CHAPTER FIVE
My conceptions about using CLT for Mandarin teaching

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five exclusively addresses the data from the researcher’s teaching reflections. This chapter first presents my understanding about CLT. Following this, the analysis of three sample lessons is specified. The analysis of my teaching generates the CLT practice in terms of three fold: using the target language as classroom language, teaching the target language with CLT, and practising the target language in CLT-oriented activities. Likewise, four kinds of non-CLT oriented instructions are also identified: using English as classroom language, teaching the target language with the non-CLT approach, practising the target language in non-CLT oriented activities, and teaching the cultural knowledge. The analysis of my teaching practice suggests the application of CLT can be constrained by my knowledge of CLT and concerns such as attitudes, teaching objectives and student behaviour.

5.2 My understanding of CLT

The CLT approach is a language teaching methodology that teaches the target language in a communicative process. This instructional process requires the teacher to create the target language environment in class. This understanding derived from my learning experience in a German lesson. I was exposed to a German environment along with the real life teaching materials and the body language of the German teacher. The teacher only used the German language in the lesson. Meanwhile, the teaching engaged the learners in a survey activity that learners enquired each other about the fruit preference. As a result, the lesson gave me the impression that the CLT approach meant creating the target language environment in class. However,
after reading more about CLT, I have been developing a clearer picture about this language approach.

Firstly, the teacher need to design activities featured as negotiating and exchanging meanings (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Specifically, the teacher design activities in which language learning occurs through information exchange between students and the teacher. Yet, the communication activities involve meaningful information exchange rather than mechanical repetition about the learning content. Secondly, the CLT approach does not necessarily mean using the target language extensively and discursively in class. In contrast, the teacher need to focus on the learning content. Thirdly, the use of the CLT approach can be extended to teach reading and writing skills. The CLT approach is presumably limited to the spoken language instruction. However, applying the approach in teaching other language skills is plausible. For example, activities for reading instruction could be reading a paragraph of the target language and processing the information obtained. Fourthly, the learning content needs to be as authentic as possible. Although the language class cannot replicate the real life context, the teacher can approach authenticity by using real life teaching materials and situating learning into a culturally appropriate context.

5.3 Analysis of three sample lessons

This section I provide some of my reflective journals about my teaching process. I use the unit of work ‘daily routines’ to exemplify my teaching. I have taught this topic for eight lessons. The learning content in this topic includes the teaching of essential vocabularies and sentence patterns that the students may use for communication. The vocabularies includes ‘get up (qi chuang)’, ‘go to school (shang xue)’, ‘have breakfast (chi zao fan)’, ‘have lunch (chi wu fan)’, ‘go back home (hui jia)’, ‘have dinner (chi wan fan)’, ‘go to bed (shui jiao)’, and the expression of time. The sentence patterns for communication are “when do you (go to school) (ni ji dian shang xue?” and “I (go to school) at (nine o’clock) (wo jiu dian shang xue)”. I chose
this topic because it was close to students’ life and they may feel interested in learning. I select three sample lessons about this topic, both the CLT and non-CLT oriented practice can be found in these lessons.

5.3.1 Teaching process and strategies in the first lesson

In the first lesson, I only taught three phrases including ‘have breakfast (chi zao fan)’, ‘have lunch (chi wu fan)’, and ‘have dinner (chi wan fan)’. As most of the students did not have the Chinese background, the language content needs to be simple and focused so that the students can feel less stressed and have the confidence to learn. Here is the reflection for my first lesson:

Unit of work: Daily routines (1) (28/04/2010)

Today I taught (them) “meals of the day”, namely “have breakfast”, “have lunch”, and “have dinner”. (...) When I entered in the classroom, I greeted students in a Chinese way and students responded to me in Chinese as well. I then asked them to come and sit down in front of me. I introduced the first phrase “have breakfast (吃早饭)” to them. I only showed them the characters of the phrase without ‘pinyin’. I said the phrase in Chinese and asked them to guess the meaning of it. I provided them with some hints. I said: “it was an activity that we should do it everyday even though we don’t have to.” I also provided them with gestures to support their thinking. Once they figured out the meaning I asked them to look at the characters of the phrase carefully. I introduced the second phrase in the similar process. As I completed the vocabulary instruction, I asked them to go back to their seats and look at my instruction of an activity. I put the characters of the three phrases separate on the floor standing for three areas. Students had to pick one of the phrases and sat in that area when I counted down ten seconds in
Chinese. Students had to sit down in the area they chose when the time was up. Then the rest of students who were not participating in the activity needed to ask me: “What are you eating Mr. Wolf?” I responded by “I’m (having breakfast)” in Chinese. Then students who were sitting in the corresponding (have breakfast) area were “eaten” by me which meant they had to quit the activity. The (listening, reading) activity did not stop in this way until one student was left, while I would prize the last three students. After the activity I asked students to go back to their seats again and practice writings. This time I put the characters of the three phrases on the board and the corresponding ‘pinyin’ as well. I then started to instruct the writing of these characters by instructing character strokes on the board. I walked around to see if students had difficulties in doing this. The last step of the lesson was playing a Chinese animation ‘Calabash Brothers’ in which the speaking language was Chinese with English subtitles. I provided them with the reading about the animation as a way to introduce some Chinese beliefs and cultural artefacts. After the animation I asked a question which was related to students’ previous learning of Mandarin. I picked one phrase in the animation and asked them the meaning of English. As I got the answer, the lesson finished. In the end, I said “bye bye (zai jian)” in Chinese to students and they responded to me “thank you, see you (xie xie, zai jian)” with the target language.

5.3.2 Self-reflection of the first lesson

The main content of the lesson was the instruction of the three phrases. The communicative teaching practice employed in the lesson was found in two types of instructions. Firstly, at the start and finish of the lesson the class used the target language communication. Secondly, the activity involved practising students listening and reading skills. When I called out “I’m having (breakfast)” in Chinese,
students knew who had to quit the activity because they would look at the characters and matched them with the information I produced.

Even though I adopted the communicative teaching practice as part of my lessons, the major part of classroom instruction was identified as non-communicative oriented. Firstly, the instruction of the three phrases involved my demonstration of the pronunciation and students’ repetition in these phrases. I termed this kind of instruction as ‘constant repeating’ in which students were drilled by the teacher with the exposure to and imitation of the target language. The instruction is necessary as students could clearly understand the learning content. As they understand the instruction, they could be more engaged in my teaching.

Secondly, using gestures to support the target language instruction was another feature that was not a communicative oriented teaching practice. Even though the kind of instruction with the body language could be regarded as communicative instruction in a broad sense, using gestures cannot be regarded as the communicative language teaching practice. The term communication in CLT usually refers to the use of the target language for purposes of notional (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency) and functional (requests, denials, offers, complaints) interactions (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Although using the body language is not the CLT practice, I used this strategy mainly for the purpose of delivering clear instruction and attracting students’ attention.

Thirdly, the instruction of writing Chinese characters was not the communicative teaching practice either. The process involves the demonstration and imitation of characters writing. The instruction of Chinese characters, however, is unavoidable since the Chinese character is a significant part in learning the Chinese language.

The fourth point regards the animation played in class. Although the language of animation was Mandarin and I taught students one phrase from the video, the main
purposes of playing the video were for making students expose to some Chinese artefacts and providing entertainment in learning Mandarin.

Fifthly, English was frequently used as the classroom language for language instruction and classroom management. Using English can facilitate the learning process so that students would not feel stressed. I notice that students would lose attention or resist learning when they cannot well understand my instructions. Hence, I suggest using English to make the lesson less challenged.

5.3.3 Teaching process and strategies in the second lesson

Based on the instruction of the three phrases, I taught students a sentence pattern that they may apply to express their daily activities. The following excerpt described how I taught this lesson.

Unit of work: Daily routines (2) (05/05/2011)

The content for this lesson was stating a person’s daily routines. After the lesson, students were expected to be able to say a sentence in Mandarin such as “I have breakfast at seven o’clock (wo qi dian chi zao fan)”, “I have lunch at one o’clock (wo yi dian chi wu fan)”, or “I have dinner at seven o’clock (wo qi dian chi wan fan)”. As usual, I started the lesson by greeting students “good morning (zao shang hao)” in Chinese. Students responded to me “good morning (zao shang hao)” in Chinese as well. After the greeting phase, I first instructed the time expression in Chinese, namely seven o’clock, 12 o’clock, etc. Since students have already learnt the expression of time this part of instruction could be regarded as a short review. I wrote down a time in numeric forms (7:00) on the board and asked in Chinese: “what’s the time? (ji dian le?)” Students rose up their hands and responded in Mandarin. I instructed the writing of
Chinese characters the same time as I was conducting the practice. I wrote down characters of seven o’clock (七点) and asked students to write them down as well. After finished the writing, I moved the practice from time expression to the three phrases (have breakfast, have lunch, and have dinner) which students have learnt last week. I directly asked them: “how to say ‘have breakfast’ in Chinese?” Then students responded to me with the target language. Then I wrote down the characters of “have breakfast” after the time “seven o’clock” and asked students to do the same thing as well. I instructed the rest of two phrases in the same way, i.e. “have lunch at one o’clock” and “have dinner at seven o’clock”. Then I wrote down the character “I (我, wo)” before each sentence and asked students to look at it for a while. I recorded my writing orders of the character through the Interactive White Board and asked students to look at the stroke orders and write one in their books. By the time I did not tell them the meaning of the character. Instead I asked them to think of and guess the meaning. I provided students with some hints such as gesture that I used my hands to touch my chest. As students had no idea I told them directly the meaning of the character. I then read the whole sentence and asked students to repeat. As I read all sentences I encouraged students to think of the regularity that they may apply in other expressions of daily routines. After the instruction I asked students practice the language in a board game. The board game was on the Interactive White Board and consisted of five to six teams. Each team could accommodate for five to six students to participate in. Each team or team member had to reply my question in Mandarin so that the team could roll a dice and make a move. I asked them the question “when do you have (lunch)?” in English and students replied me with their daily routines.

5.3.4 Self-reflection of the second lesson
I taught a sentence pattern rather than vocabularies in this lesson. However, the language elements in the sentence were based on previous content such as the time expression and the three phrases. Throughout the instructional process, I adopted only a few CLT featured practice. Firstly, the CLT practice happened in the greeting phase. This type of CLT practice has become the routine in my class. Secondly, the communicative interaction was identified from my instruction about the board game. Students interacted with me by using the target language during the game process. Students told me their daily routines about the time they have breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Meanwhile, I used some target language when we were playing the game. I called out the number on the dice in Chinese and counted the moves with the target language as well. I regarded this type of instruction as input processing where the comprehensible input was taught. The comprehensible input may help students gradually build the ‘form-meaning’ connections of the target language (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

However, as I reflected on the game instruction in-depth with the concern of the CLT principles, I realised that the interaction in the game cannot be regarded as the authentic communication. Students’ replies had formed a particular pattern with little control of information by themselves. For example, when one student told me that he had breakfast at seven o’clock in Mandarin, other students can easily copy this expression and tell the same information. As a result, some students can only reply me with a ‘fixed’ response without the need to understand the meaning of the sentence. In contrast, the authentic communicative practice suggests the “communication should follow a natural pattern of discourse rather than be pre-determined or routine” (Mangubhai et al., 2007, p. 18).

Other evidence about the non-CLT instruction was also identified in my teaching. Firstly, the instruction of Chinese characters required the students to copy down my writing without meaningful exchanges. Secondly, the sentence instruction involved
students and the teacher constantly repeating in the drilling process. The most significant feature in this lesson was my instruction of the language syntax. I broke down the sentence pattern into three parts, namely ‘I (wo)’, ‘seven o’clock (qi dian)’, and ‘have breakfast (chi zao fan)’. Then I provided students with three examples of the sentence pattern and asked students to figure out the pattern. Thus, the instruction did not involve any meaningful exchanges but rather was a practice for the language habit formation. The purpose for using the strategy is to make students clearly understand the language structure of Chinese so that they may have the confidence to apply in future. However, this form-focused instruction utilises few knowledge of CLT.

5.3.5 Teaching process and strategies in the third lesson

In the previous lesson I made the enquiry for daily routines in English and the students responded to me in Chinese. Therefore, in the third lesson, we learned the Chinese expression of the enquiry for daily routines.

Unit of work: Daily routines (3) (12/05/2010)

I planned to teach students the expression of “when do you have (breakfast/lunch/dinner)?” in Mandarin. ... As I got everything ready and did a mutual greeting in the class I asked students to sit on the floor closer to me. We first did a matching activity on the Interactive White Board for reviewing the previous content. There were some Chinese characters on the board without ‘pinyin’. A blue ‘box’ on the board contained the English meanings and ‘pinyin’ of the Chinese characters that students could not see. I asked one student to drag one item out of the box and match the item to the corresponding Chinese characters. Students also were required to say the Chinese characters in Mandarin once they matched one item. Students who had learned in previous weeks
may find the activity pretty easy. However, I found some students were struggling to complete the activity. The majority of students could not recognise the characters on the board let alone read them in Mandarin. Even though they had difficulty in doing the activity, I did not stop it but still encouraged students to come and match the items. As far as I was concerned, they were senior primary school students who need and should learn some characters rather than reading the ‘pinyin’. After the activity I said a question sentence “when do you have breakfast (ni jidian chi zao fan)’” by using the characters on the board. I asked them to figure out the meaning and reply my question in Chinese. I encouraged them to figure out the meaning by using the characters we’ve practised. However, I noticed many students were struggling in working out the meaning. Therefore, for supporting their learning I said another question “when do you have lunch” in English and asked them to translate it by using the correct Chinese characters. Then, some students started to understand the way of expressing the question “when do you have (breakfast/lunch/dinner)” in Chinese, while other students were still getting lost. The question sentence pattern was then further practised in the board game that we used to do. While the difference as the previous one was that students had to interact, namely ask and reply, only with the target language. The practice process had been conducted in various forms. I first asked the question in Mandarin to each team. As they became fluent to reply the question, I asked different teams to interact with each other. Sometimes I chose individual students to do the conversation. If the class was doing particular well in doing the conversation, I also made some changes. I asked a team or an individual for the information of the previous team or an individual. I would ask the question in Mandarin like “when does Mary have breakfast, Lucas?” When some students cannot respond me appropriately I would then give
them some support. As a result, students practised the conversation within the game till the end of the lesson.

5.3.6 Self-reflection of the third lesson

Besides the greeting phase in this lesson, I adopted the CLT approach when I was teaching the enquiry sentence pattern. I first asked the question in Mandarin and requested the students to reply me in Chinese. At that moment, the students were expected to figure out the meaning with the support from characters and phrases on the board. The interaction can be maintained only when the students figure out the meaning of my question.

I also employed CLT in the game-based activities in which communicative interactions between students or between students and the teacher were involved. However, the interaction in the game cannot be regarded as the communicative teaching if the response was replicated from other students. Thus, I constantly changed questions to promote genuine communications. For instance, instead of asking the students “when do you have breakfast” in Mandarin, I would ask them “when does Mary have breakfast” by using the target language. As Mary had just expressed her daily routines, the students needed to process the obtained information and produce it in Chinese.

Other teaching practice, however, was less communicative oriented. First, the matching activity as a way of reviewing previous content was the case. The activity involved assessing students’ memory of the connection between meanings, pronunciations and the characters. Therefore, the activity did not foster the communicative competence. Second, when the students were struggling to reply my question, I changed my question into English and asked them to do a translation activity. This changed teaching process was less communicative oriented as it did not focus on the meaning exchange. Furthermore, the game activity per se cannot be
regarded as a communicative activity since students were not participating in an authentic communicative context. Yet, I have to introduce these kinds of activities as these activities can motivate and engage the students’ learning.

5.4 Identifying the CLT oriented instruction

Last section, I have selected three sample lessons to exemplify my teaching process. This section I aimed to summarise the CLT practice I used in my teaching. In general, the CLT instruction was identified in the following three fold:

- Using the target language as classroom language;
- Teaching the target language with CLT;
- Practising the target language in CLT-oriented activities

5.4.1 Using the target language as classroom language

Through self-reflection, I recognised that the target language was used as classroom language in two different ways. First, using the target language as classroom language took place at the beginning of a lesson. I greeted students by saying ‘good morning’ or ‘good afternoon’ in Mandarin. Students responded me with ‘good morning’, ‘good afternoon’ or ‘hello teacher’ in Mandarin as well. Similarly, the target language was also used at the end of a lesson. When I said ‘goodbye’ to students in Chinese, they responded me accordingly. Since the kind of target language was easy to learn and close to students’ daily life, almost every student was able to respond spontaneously once I initiated the conversation.

Secondly, I taught some Chinese as the language input with the expectation that students can understand the target language. In this teaching process, I did not require the students to be able to say the target language. When I gave out commands in the target language such as ‘quiet (an jing)’ students were expected to respond me
with certain reactions. I recognised that introducing new target language as classroom language was not an easy task. Even teaching the language items (vocabulary, phrases, etc) as input needed several lessons. This type of instruction was time consuming and consequently discouraged me to use more target language as classroom language.

**5.4.2 Teaching the target language with CLT**

Teaching the target language content through the medium of the target language is one of the key features in the CLT approach. This is described as “the medium of ‘instruction’, the language in which lessons are conducted, is also the message of the lessons, the goal” (Pachler & Redondo, 2007, p. 4). The teaching of the question sentence in the sample lesson three exemplified this type of teaching. I asked a question in Chinese and requested the students to reply me with the target language. This teaching practice required the students to work out the meaning of the question so that they can communicate with me by using the target language.

Different from the traditional process that the teacher transmit knowledge to students, the CLT instruction empowers the students to take control of their learning. That means the students have to consciously and actively engage in the process of meaning negotiation and creation. For example, the students need to negotiate the meaning I created in the sentence instruction rather than passively listen to my translation. However, in practice I did not use this type of language instruction frequently. Since the instruction is relatively complex to students, issues of student engagement may emerge. I noticed that students, particularly those at the lower academic levels, cannot successfully process my information. Once they found the difficulty of processing the information, they can feel stressed and lose their attention on learning content.
I cannot instruct sentence expression in this way [for] too long as students cannot concentrate on the learning content (for long). When they came across difficulties in processing the meaning of the sentence, their attention can be distracted immediately. Some were stuck in their seats; others began to talk with their friends. (12/05/2010)

5.4.4 Practising the target language in CLT oriented activities

Practising the target language through different activities is another key feature in the CLT approach. The activities aimed to engage the students in learning the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Some activities were used primarily for developing a single skill, while other activities can serve multiple skills. Examples in the self-reflective journals indicated how I integrated the CLT principles into these activities for the development of students’ language skills.

First, the listening skill can be practised through meaning exchange activities. The extent of the meaning exchange in these activities can be classified as weak meaning exchange and strong meaning exchange (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Weak meaning exchange involves simple language content used in communication activities. Thus, vocabularies are perhaps the only target language content in these activities. On the contrary, the language content in strong meaning exchange is much more complex. Information is usually conveyed through questions, statements, or conversations of the target language.

The ‘bingo’ game was a case of the weak meaning exchange. In this game students listened to the information from me and crossed out the items in their boxes.

This week we practised ‘numbers’ in the ‘bingo’ game. ... I first started by reviewing the numbers from 1 to 25. I lead the students to read those numbers in Chinese. When all of students were able to recognise the
numbers, I asked students to draw a ‘bingo’ box of five by five grids. Then students chose the numbers from 1 to 25 and randomly wrote them in each grid. One number a time in one grid was required. Students who got all the numbers in a row horizontally, vertically or diagonally and called out ‘bingo’ first would win out. I told them the instruction in English to make sure they were doing the right things. ... I called out the numbers in Chinese and students crossed out the numbers in their boxes. When one student called out ‘bingo’ with a correct result I prized the student with a paper-made clover symbolising as luckiness. (21/04/2010)

I also made the students practise the target language with the body language. I applied this practice to engage the students in learning the language input. The practice made students convey the meaning of the target language by using the body language. The excerpt below is an example where students practised the target language with the body movement.

I taught students numbers from 1 to 12. The instruction was divided into three groups, namely 1 to 4, 5 to 8, and 9 to 12. ... I asked students to imagine four numbers were around them in four directions. For example, “1” was in front of them, “2” was at the back, “3” was on their left, and “4” was on the right. In the activity students were required to listen to the number I called out and turned to the direction where the number was. In other words, when I called out “2” in Chinese they needed to turn around facing to the “2” side. ... Students performed well in the activity and quickly learnt the number in Mandarin. (03/03/2010)

Likewise, students were asked to do certain gestures when they heard my command. I called out some Chinese phrases and students responded me with certain gestures that denoted the meaning of the target language.
I taught students the daily activities including “listening to the music (ting yin yue)”, “shopping (mai dong xi)”, “playing ball games (da qiu)”, “watching TV (kan dian shi)”, and “learning (xue xi)”. I introduced these phrases with specific gestures. ... Then I asked students to respond to me with corresponding gestures when I called out one of the phrases in Mandarin. (02/03/2010)

This activity was extended further when one student replaced my role as an instructor and called out the phrases in Chinese. This strategy has made the students practise both the listening and speaking skills.

In general, activities for weak meaning exchange only involved the practice of vocabularies as the target language input. Unlike the process of working out complex meanings, instruction for weak meaning exchange did not assign much burden on the students. As it was simple for students to process the information, more students can pay attention on these activities. On the other hand, I would also prefer using the kind of practice as it helped me to achieve a higher level of student engagement. Meanwhile, I paid attention on the students’ learning habits. Gardner’s concept of multiple intelligences (1993) suggests learners perform more effectively in learning process when their particular learning styles are met. Hence, for meeting the students’ diverse learning habits and making the activities more entertaining, I made the language practice visually, audibly, and kinaesthetically available. The above excerpt exemplified how I practised listening in a kinaesthetic way.

Different from the weak meaning exchange, activities with strong meaning exchange were more complex and thus, challenging to students. However, these activities were more committed to the principles of the CLT approach (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In the topic of daily routines, I asked the students to practise the target language by using a timetable.
After completing a sheet for their [students'] daily routines, I asked some students to present their timetables in Mandarin and others asked the student questions with the target language. For example, when one student asked “when do you get up? (ni ji dian qi chuang?)” in Chinese the student who was reporting her timetable replied by “I get up at (7 o’clock) (wo qi dian qi chuang)” in Chinese as well. As students finished the enquiries about all the activities, I collected the information from the student’s replies and asked other students questions of Chinese again. For instance, I would ask: “when does Alice get up? (Alice ji dian qi chuang?)” The purposes for doing this were assessing whether students understood the previous conversations and were able to apply the information in meaningful interactions. The whole process involved the prize motivation to promote students’ engagement in the activity.

(23/06/2010)

The excerpt suggests that strong meaning exchange activities can develop students’ multi-language skills. However, the success of doing the kind of activities was based on students’ willingness and mastery of the learning content. In reality, there was resistance from the students when the target language was practised in this way. Meanwhile, except for a few students who had higher academic levels, the majority of the students did not want to take part in this kind of meaning exchange. Therefore, motivating the students in learning the target language was necessary in these activities. I incorporated the language practice into some games so that the activities can become more attractive, and I also gave students prizes when they did well in the practice. Hence, in order to successfully engage the students in the complex communicative activities, strategies for motivating students’ learning is needed.

Second, other than practising the listening skills, I also adopted the CLT practice to develop students’ reading skills. Reading activities involved students reading phrases or sentences of the target language with or without ‘pinyin’. I incorporated the
teaching practice in activities such as colour-in, writing timetables for daily routines, and processing information from a train timetable. For example, I applied the colour-in activity to teach simple language content such as Chinese vocabularies.

When I completed the instruction of six colours, i.e. red, blue, yellow, orange, green, and purple, I made students do a colour-in activity in which students were required to colour a turkey on the sheet. Students had to colour the parts of the turkey with designated colours which I had already written down on the sheet. For instance, when the part one was for red I wrote down the Chinese characters for red as well as the ‘pinyin’ of the word. (09/03/2010)

The activity was simple to do as I provided the pronunciation of the Chinese vocabularies. As a result, students accomplished these activities well. In other circumstances, I did not write down the ‘pinyin’ in the worksheet. That meant students had to figure out the meaning of the target language through reading the Chinese characters. This kind of activity can be more challenging to students.

This week I made students do task involving processing information from a messy train timetable. ... I gave students the worksheets one between two. At first, when students saw the characters on the worksheets the majority of them felt scary about the characters. To them, the characters on the sheet were too many and overwhelming. I asked students first to understand the meaning of each sentence and then complete the question by using the information. I wrote down the Chinese sentences without providing the 'pinyin'. The sentence was like “the train arrives at Blacktown at 11 o’clock in the morning. (火车上午11点到Blacktown)” ... Although the task was challenging for students, some students accomplished the task successfully within the given time. (16/03/2010)
The time in the reading task was deliberately made by me for practising the target language. I wrote all kinds of time expression that the students might encounter in real life. By using the information, the students needed to work out a correct timetable and answer the questions. Although the train timetable used in the activity was not the authentic one in the real train service, I classified this type of instruction as the CLT practice. This type of activity involved the information negotiation, and thus manifests the communicative principle that “emphasis should be placed on meaning-focused self-expression rather than language structure” (Mangubhai et al., 2007, p. 18).

However, as the case in listening activities, the complex meaning negotiation in the reading practice also resulted in disengaging behaviour from the students. I noticed that the majority of students did not actively take part in the task, which gave rise to a high level of incompleteness in the task. Concerning the challenge the task brought to the students, I discarded the type of practice in the subsequent lessons.

Third, regarding the practice of speaking skills, I provided many opportunities for the students to use the target language in presentations and game activities. The presentation activity involved one student presenting her daily routines in the front and other students interacted with her. The dynamic communication between the students can be fostered as the students engaged in the meaningful interaction through the process of presenting statements, asking and responding questions.

At first, one student presented her daily routines at the front by saying “I get up at seven o’clock (wo qi dian qi chuang)”, “I have lunch at one o’clock (wo yi dian chi wu fan)”, etc. Then I asked other students questions such as “when does Lucy (pseudonym) have lunch? (Lucy ji dian chi wu fan?)” Students who correctly provided the answer in Mandarin were able to get a prize. ... The students who presented their
daily routines also had the chance to get the prize. We did the activity for several rounds till the end of the lesson. (23/06/2010)

In addition, the speaking ability was also practised through game-based activities. Game-based activity was the most popular teaching practice as it can highly engage the students. I adopted games such as ‘board games’, ‘card games’, and ‘guessing games’ to encourage the practice of spoken language. The following excerpt provided one example in which the target language and game were combined together.

_The card game was called “Gun, Heart, and Bomb” in which students organised into several teams and involved in a ‘battle’. I used this game to instruct students in the discussion about their favourite food. The target language were “what do you like to eat? (ni xiang chi shen me?)” and “I like to eat (beef). (wo xiang chi niu rou)” Students engaged in the conversation before drawing cards. Each card had a certain function that students may use as ‘weapons’. For example, when a student got a card functioning as ‘heart’ this meant the student had one more life point. Each student in the game had three life points to start the game. The team lost the battle when all of members’ life points were lost. Sometimes, I might change a little bit in the pattern of the conversation by using the information in previous conversation. I might change the question as “what does Zac (pseudonym) like to eat, Jack (pseudonym)? (Jack, Zac xiang chi shen me?)” In that case, Jack had to know the information about Zac’s preference to reply me in Mandarin. (04/05/2010)_

The enquiry and response process, however, emerged an issue requiring me to address. I noticed that students were imitating the response question from other students when I asked them about food preference. This suggested that the conversation was no longer a meaningful interaction. Thus, I changed the question
by asking about other student’s food preference. This strategy can maintain the communicative teaching practice that is described as “students should be actively involved in the construction of meaning”, and “communication should follow a natural pattern of discourse rather than be pre-determined or routine (Mangubhai et al., 2007, p. 18)”. However, another issue occurred when I changed my enquiry. Some students who were not taking part in the learning cannot reply me appropriately.

When I asked a student “what does Zac like to eat? (Zac xiang chi shen me?)” in Chinese, the student replied me “I like to eat chicken (wo xiang chi ji rou)” in Chinese. (04/05/2010)

This indicated that the student did not engage in the learning process. This problem can be alleviated to some extent when the practice was incorporated in a game or competition where the students’ enthusiasm can be motivated. However, the positive learning effect was not enduring. Firstly, students’ attitudes toward the game or competition largely determined the teaching practice. In one circumstance, some students perceived these activities seriously and became too excited over the competition. Their discussion about the competition usually disturbed my instruction. As a result, I had to constantly stop the activity and manage their behaviour. In another circumstance, some students did not enjoy the activity and consequently may result in another type of disengagement. In both situations, I could do nothing but occasionally managed their behaviour to ensure the activity stayed on track. The second reason accounting for the ineffectiveness of incorporating the language practice in game-based activities was the students’ perceptions in language learning. Many students did not focus on the learning content when they were playing games. The lack of interests in learning the language can also result in a reduced level of student engagement.
Fourth, there were few activities for developing the writing skill. I may simply make students produce some phrases using the target language.

I applied a writing task to instruct the use of greetings in various situations. The situations were described in the worksheets in which I asked students to write down the language they may use. ... Through the process students were able to use the language of greetings in terms of “good morning (早上好)”, “good afternoon (下午好)”, “good evening (晚上好)”, and “good night (晚安)”. (09/03/2010)

However, writing implied the learners to actively organise the target language to create a written form of meanings. Therefore, the writing practice presented above cannot squarely be considered as the writing instruction. The main reason for not practising the writing skill was because the difficulty in Chinese characters.

When students saw the Chinese characters on the sheet, many of them felt a bit of scary as it seemed too many and overwhelming. ... Some students complained the characters were too small to copy, while others were struggling writing the characters to answer the questions on the sheet. (16/03/2010)

The excerpt suggested that students may have difficulty in reading and writing by Chinese characters. They preferred reading the ‘pinyin’ rather than the characters. Writing by characters was even harder for them. The difficulty in copying characters for answering questions manifested this point. As reading and copying of Chinese characters were extremely difficult for the students, making students create a meaningful piece of writing by characters seemed impossible. Hence, I regarded that developing students’ writing skill may not be feasible at this stage.

5.5 Identifying the non-CLT oriented teaching practice
Although some CLT practice was identified in my teaching, a large part of my practice was not CLT oriented. The analysis of my reflection journals has identified the following four categories characterising the non-CLT practice:

- Using English as classroom language;
- Teaching the target language with the non-CLT approach;
- Practising the target language in non-CLT oriented activities;
- Teaching the cultural knowledge

5.5.1 Using English as classroom language

The students’ first language, namely English, was the predominate language used in class. Although I applied some target language as classroom language, I spoke English in most occasions. For example, I preferred to speak English to explain the rules of activities as this way can facilitate my instruction. I identified that the students’ disengaging behaviour was sometimes caused by unclear instruction. On the contrary, the students could actively engage in learning and practising the target language when they understood my teaching. Therefore, for facilitating the teaching process, using English to deliver clear instruction was necessary.

5.5.2 Teaching the target language with the non-CLT approach

Besides the classroom language, the language instruction often required me to teach Chinese pronunciation, meanings, characters, and grammatical structures. I transmitted the language knowledge through constant repetition and translation. For example, I taught the pronunciation of vocabularies by engaging students in repetitive drills.
I hold the flash card “having breakfast (chi zao fan)” and said the phrase loudly and clearly. Students would spontaneously follow me and practice the pronunciation. When some students did not participate in the practice I said “repeat after me” in English and tried to make them say the word with me. (28/04/2010)

The teaching practice that did not involve the communicative process was also identified when I translated some Chinese vocabularies into the English meanings.

I read the phrase ‘having breakfast’ for them and asked them to guess the meaning of the phrase. I gave them some hints by doing some gestures. Meanwhile, I described the phrase with some words: “this is an activity that we should do everyday even though we don’t have to.” As students figured out the meaning, I made them read the phrase again for several times and moved on introducing a second phrase. (28/04/2010)

Likewise, for delivering clear instruction, I made the students work out each meaning of the vocabularies in a language table. I called this activity as ‘making Chinese dictionaries’ as the students needed to match the characters, ‘pinyin’, and English meaning correctly. As they finished their work, the table became their ‘Chinese dictionaries’ for later use.

A table was made for the dictionary which consisted of three columns: the Chinese characters, pinyin, and the meanings of English. The Chinese characters were already printed on the first column of the table, while the pinyin and meanings were printed on another worksheet in a messy sequence. I asked the students first to cut out the pieces of the pinyin and meanings and then match them with the characters by pasting them on the columns. (09/06/2010)
In general, the teaching process aimed to enable the students to clearly understand the target language. For making clear meanings, the language instruction often involved direct translation between English and the target language.

As for the teaching of the grammatical structures, I applied a similar strategy by illustrating the meaning of each vocabulary in a sentence. The emphasis on explicit explanation of word meanings, however, did not comply with the CLT practice for the sentence instruction. The CLT practice often teaches sentences through meaningful interactions (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

I instructed students to make the enquiry about preference of animals. I wrote down the Chinese expression of the enquiry. That was: “你喜欢什么动物? (What animal do you like?)” Since students have learned the vocabularies in the question, I asked them the meaning of each word. ... “So, as we translated the question into English the meaning is ‘you like what animal’ does that make sense?” I asked the students. “Yes,” replied by the students in English. ... I then presented the question with the order of English and made the students compare the two questions. ... In the end the students understood the difference of enquiries between English and Chinese and were able to use the target language. (23/06/2010)

The non-CLT oriented teaching also occurred in the teaching of Chinese characters. I taught students to write the Chinese characters by demonstrating the stroke orders of the characters. I slowly wrote down each character stroke by stroke and asked the students to follow my instruction. Meanwhile, for making the instruction less boring, I asked the students to write the characters ‘in the air’ so that they may feel interesting.

“Right, now take out one of your hands and let’s write in the air.” The students then followed the writing orders and waved their hands in the
I also applied other strategies to teach the character writing. I separated the characters into several parts and asked the students to assemble these parts.

I made students assemble characters. I called the activity ‘Hanzi Jigsaw’ in which I demonstrated one character and made students assemble the character by using the parts. I found this was an effective strategy to instruct students writing characters since many students were able to write the characters after the practice. (04/05/2010)

This character instruction was effective as many students can write the characters after the practice. However, it still cannot be considered as a CLT oriented practice. This strategy was merely designed for helping the students memorise the Chinese characters. Thus, through the instruction, the students were able to understand how a character was constituted.

To summarise, the non-CLT oriented teaching practice consists of ‘constant repeating’, ‘direct translating’, ‘grammatical instruction’, and ‘character instruction’. The common rule they have shared is ‘easy to access’. This means the kind of teaching practice makes the students easier learn the foreign language. As the teacher-centred practice, I play the role as leading the pronunciation drill, translating the target language, transmitting the knowledge about grammar, and demonstrating the writing orders of the Chinese characters. In the teacher-centred practice, students feel less challenged as compared with the CLT oriented practice. Even when the students were taking risks in these learning activities, they were supported by my scaffolding strategies. For example, I helped the students to work out the meanings when they were ‘making Chinese dictionaries’. I also encouraged students to talk with each other when they were doing these tasks. The reason for minimising
students’ exposure to risks is for raising their confidence in learning Mandarin. The students’ confidence can be developed when they find they are capable in accomplishing these tasks. As they complete their tasks, they are expected to be more willing in learning Chinese.

5.5.3 Practising the target language in non-CLT oriented activities

The non-CLT oriented activities for practising the target language also do not foster the communicative competence. These kinds of activities aim to make students memorise the language items including the pronunciations, meanings, and the Chinese characters of the vocabularies. The practice was first found in the listening activities. The excerpt below demonstrated how I taught the students to memorise the meanings of the vocabularies.

I made two students stand in the front and compete with each other. In this activity I taught one vocabulary in Chinese, while the students were required to say the meaning of the vocabulary as quick as possible. The student who correctly called out the meaning would get a point. (10/03/2010)

The practice made students get familiar with the vocabularies. However, the process cannot be considered as the CLT oriented instruction since the meanings created in the process were not for accomplishing communicative purposes. The instruction, thus, was merely for learning the vocabularies.

Second, regarding the practice for reading, I applied some activities to make students recognise Chinese characters. Since the kind of activity involved recognising the characters, they can be perceived as the basis for the reading practice. One practice involved the students matching the correct characters with the information provided
Previously, I’ve taught students the colours including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, while the activity was on the Interactive White Board that I designed for recognising characters of those colours. When a student tapped on the board, one colour out of the six was randomly revealed along with three choices written by the Chinese characters. The student then was required to choose the characters out of the three. The process was supported by the flashcards in which characters were printed rightly on the corresponding colours. However, as students became familiar with the characters I took off these cards. The activity was then becoming more challenging. (09/06/2010)

At times, the practice for developing the four language skills was often intertwined. For instance, reading and listening were practised in one activity when I taught ‘the days of the week’.

I wrote down the characters of the seven days of the week on the board, and said: “Now, let’s do an activity. In this activity, I will call out the days of the week in Chinese one by one and you need to cross out the day I called. The time you finish the task will be recorded, and let’s see who spends the least time to complete the task”. (23/03/2010)

The activity required the students to listen to the Chinese phrases as well as to recognise the corresponding characters. However, again the process did not involve the authentic meaning exchange and therefore, was not the CLT oriented practice.

Third, as for the speaking practice, I made the students involve in conversations that the content was written on the board. I wrote down the content by ‘pinyin’ and asked the students to practise. Through the conversation instruction, students were organised either in pairs or in groups to practise the language content. However, this teaching practice was not CLT oriented as it involved the mechanical repetition
about the target language. With the help of ‘pinyin’, some students even can conduct
the conversation without necessarily understanding the meanings.

Furthermore, having been mentioned previously, the CLT oriented practice for the
speaking instruction could become the mechanical repetition as well. This was
evident when I incorporated the speaking practice in the game-based activities.

In the game, I asked students questions in Chinese such as “when do you
have breakfast (lunch/dinner)?” The student I asked may have a go in the
game once he/she replied my question in Chinese. The example sentence
for the reply could be: “I have breakfast (lunch/dinner) at seven
o’clock.” As we have done several rounds in the game I realised that
some students replied me the same sentence as previous students did.
Students were telling the ‘answer’ to their teammates: “just say ‘qi dian
(seven o’clock)’.” The reply in that sense was meaningless since the
student may not understand the meaning. (12/05/2010)

Fourth, there was virtually no activity for the writing instruction in my teaching. The
practice relevant to the writing instruction was merely the writing of Chinese
characters. For engaging the students in practising the Chinese characters, an activity
called ‘passing characters’ was applied.

The last section of the lesson was a team game called ‘passing
characters’. Four students organised into a team to compete with another
team. The first student in each team would write a character at the back
of a team member. The student who ‘received’ the character from his/her
back would pass the character to the next person in the same way. When
the last person in each team ‘received’ the character from his/her back
the student was required to write down the English meaning of the
character on the white board. (16/03/2010)
To summarise, the non-CLT oriented practice involved simple activities that the meaning processing and risk taking by students were kept to minimum levels. No matter what activities were applied for practising the learning content, students did not need to actively create meaning on their own. Students in general, were risk-averse in learning Chinese and favoured the simple learning content. These features characterised the students as passive language learners. As a result, I had to encourage their participation in activities. Meanwhile, by providing simple activities, the students’ learning confidence can be protected. I recognised that retaining confidence in learning the language was more important at the current stage than teaching them much language. With the confidence obtained from the simple activities, the students were more likely to engage not only in the lessons but also in their future learning of Mandarin.

5.5.4 Teaching the cultural knowledge

The instruction of Chinese culture was a key part in my Mandarin class. Cultural instruction in terms of introducing the Chinese values, customs, lifestyles, ancient and modern societies, offers students a holistic background against the language learning. Meanwhile, I assumed that cultural instruction could provide a way to foster and retain students’ interests in learning Mandarin. The animations I played in class were made for these purposes.

As usual, I played a Chinese cartoon at the end of the lesson. I made the English subtitle for each episode so that students could understand the story in the cartoon. I incorporated the language teaching in the cartoon by instructing one vocabulary of colours. But the teaching was simple that I only made students repeat the pronunciation of the colour with me.

(05/05/2010)
Through the cultural instruction, students may have a better understanding about China and have more interests in Mandarin learning. However, the cultural instruction generates other issues. As shown in the excerpt, cultural instruction was taken separately in the Mandarin class. This means that I did not spend much time on teaching the target language relating to the cultural experience. I found difficulty in combining cultural instruction with language instruction, and therefore, suggest that cultural instruction would impair my use of CLT for the language instruction.

Regarding the issue, Liddicoat (2002) argues that cultural instruction could dynamically be incorporated into language instruction. The dynamic view towards cultural instruction is in contrast with the static view that treats the teaching of culture as merely cultural artefacts. The dynamic view regards that language and culture are inseparable. The use of language is based on a particular cultural context. Hence, situating the use of the target language in a target cultural setting could enhance the language learning towards a more culturally appropriate manner. Meanwhile, this learning process increases students’ motivation in learning the target language (Liddicoat, 2002).

I agree with the idea that incorporates the cultural instruction into language instruction. However, few successes were found in my teaching experience. I utilised the opportunity of teaching greeting language to introduce the Chinese classroom culture. In Chinese class, students and the teacher both need to go through a formal greeting procedure at the beginning of a lesson and a formal farewell at the end. Students stand up and bow down to the teacher and say “lao shi hao (hello, teacher)”. In return, the teacher bow back to the students and say “tong xue men hao (hello, students)”. I endeavoured to take the same procedure in my Mandarin class, but in practice students greet by saying “good morning (zao shang hao)” in Chinese and do not do the bow gesture.
When I did a bow gesture and greeted in Chinese “Hello, students (tong xue men hao)”, only a few students responded exactly and to say “Hello, teacher (laosh i hao)” in Chinese. (The responses were even fewer in classes which students’ academic levels were low.) Meanwhile, as I had taught them “good morning (zao shang hao)” and “good afternoon (xia wu hao)”, some students responded to me with these kinds of expression rather than “hello, teacher (laosh i hao)”. Sometimes, the classroom teacher asked the students to greet me with “good morning (zao shang hao)” in Chinese which students got used to say in other classes. As time went by, I got used to say “good morning, students” and did not keep on the traditional Chinese greeting. Similarly, I did not insist on doing the Chinese style of farewell by the end of the lesson but rather casually saying “goodbye” in Chinese. (09/03/2010)

I did not intend to change the pre-existing culture in class as I worried that any change in class, made by the target language or a foreign cultural custom, may incur resistance from the students.

Students’ attention on or their interests in learning the language could be lost when I tried to instruct something new or strange to them. (03/03/2010)

My concern was not unreasonable. Every effort made for introducing new language content could involve lengthy instruction and resistance from the students. Hence, to avoid the risk of losing the students, I chose not to maintain the Chinese classroom culture but rather made a compromise.

I didn’t mind whether the greeting in the classroom was Australian or Chinese, students were learning anyhow. Meanwhile, maintaining the Chinese tradition in class still did not reflect the Chinese culture outside
the classroom. After all, students’ learning of the language was for communicative purpose outside the class. (10/03/2010)

5.6 Other pragmatic strategies in teaching

The pragmatic strategies include my choice of learning topics, the utilisation of body language and pictures to support the teaching, as well as the practice for classroom management. These strategies may occur at any point in a lesson rather than significantly relate to the language instruction. Thus, the discussion of these pragmatic strategies is neither part of the theme of the CLT oriented instruction nor the theme of the non-CLT oriented instruction. They can be regarded as ‘grand others’ that take place in the daily classroom practice. I applied these strategies mainly for the purpose of managing students’ attention. Choosing interesting topics was the very first step to obtain their attention. Likewise, the use of body language and pictures were the essential strategies to maintain students’ attention. The following excerpt indicated how I utilised the body language and pictures to support my teaching.

I usually make flashcards for the learning content. When I taught the topic animals, I made flashcards for each vocabulary such as “cat (mao)”, “dog (gou)”, “pig (zhu)”, etc, with a beautiful picture of the animal. … I used my body language when the learning content was daily activities such as “shopping (mai dong xi)”, “studying (xue xi)”, “watching TV (kan dian shi)”, etc. (02/03/2010; 02/06/2010)

At times, for getting students’ attention, I had to use some pragmatic strategies to manage the class. Thus, CLT cannot be used alone. I also need to concern other issues emerging during my teaching process. This was identified when I arranged the seats for the class. Moving the students between seats and ground was an effective strategy to refresh their attention.
I asked the students to sit on the floor so that they can concentrate on my *instruction*. ... *After having been on* the floor for a long time, I realised that the students were starting to lose their attention. Therefore, I asked students to move back to their seats. (28/04/2010)

5.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has analysed my teaching reflections about CLT. My understanding of CLT has been examined. Meanwhile, the analysis of the teaching practice has identified the CLT and non-CLT oriented instructions. I merely adopted CLT to teach simple classroom languages or combined CLT with interesting activities. In contrast, for meeting diverse teaching objectives, making clear instruction, and engaging the students in learning, I have to use the non-CLT oriented instruction. Both the analysis of the CLT and non-CLT teaching practice has suggested the difficulty of applying CLT in practice, even if I have relatively more comprehensive knowledge of CLT and make the effort to use CLT. In Chapter six, the discussion of the research findings as well as the conclusion of the thesis are addressed briefly.
CHAPTER SIX
The discussion and conclusion of the research project

6.1 Introduction

This study was undertaken using grounded theory in an effort to identify the beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives of CLT and how these perspectives inform their CLT practice. Evidence of the enquiry was empirically grounded through intensive semi-structured interviews. Meanwhile, as a beginning Mandarin teacher, I also use my teaching reflections to triangulate the data. Through the theoretical analysis with the grounded theory techniques, the emergence of a substantive theory was fostered. The substantive theory presents one possible explanation of how the beginning Mandarin teachers apply the knowledge of CLT into practice. The study argues that the teacher’s perspectives of CLT inform their application of this language approach in Mandarin teaching. These perspectives emerge in three dimensions, namely epistemic, perceptual, and situational dimensions. Perspectives in the epistemic dimension indicate the teacher’s theoretical knowledge of CLT. The obtained knowledge can be either accurate or misinterpreted, while it informs the teacher’s attitudes and practice of CLT. The perceptual dimension generally addresses the teacher’s attitudes towards CLT with concerns about the teaching objectives and surroundings. The teacher are perceptually in favour of CLT as they believe this language approach may foster the students’ communicative competence. However, they also tend to limit its use because of the various teaching objectives and issues of learning resistance. The learning resistance, in particular, has become the teacher’s major concern that significantly affects the use of CLT. For coping with the tension of losing the students, the teacher have to adapt the use of CLT in the situational dimension. In ‘situating CLT’, strategies for classroom management are considered first, while this circumstance usually impairs the use of the CLT practice.
This chapter includes a discussion of the findings in relation to the teacher’s perspectives of CLT. Then, the limitations of the study are identified, the implications of the findings for practice and language teacher education are made, and recommendations for further research are proposed. This thesis ends with a final concluding commentary.

6.2 Discussion of the findings

6.2.1 Incomprehensiveness and misconception in understanding CLT

Understanding CLT refers to the teacher’s knowledge about the CLT theory. The teacher acquire the knowledge of CLT from sources such as teacher educators, language courses, and the demonstration from experienced teachers. These sources have informed their perspectives about the theory of CLT. From data analysis, it found that there existed perspectives of incomprehensiveness and misconception about CLT. First, many teachers tend to regard CLT as a language approach exclusively for teaching the colloquial aspect of a language, namely the speaking and listening skills. This finding parallels past research (Thompson, 1996; Liao, 2003; Mangubhai et al., 2007). Thompson (1996) suggests one of the major misconceptions about CLT is regarding the approach as merely for teaching the spoken language.

Moreover, even though some teachers have more comprehensive knowledge about CLT, few can tell a CLT oriented lesson in practice. Thus, the CLT practice is still confined by the insufficient strategies that can be used to make CLT happen in class. For example, some teachers believe that CLT not only can be used to teach the spoken but also the written language. They have created some ideas about using CLT to teach reading and writing activities. Yet, in reality the CLT practice only happens when they speak Chinese for creating the target language environment.
Another interrelating problem with incomprehensiveness is their misconceptions towards CLT. Taking their perspectives about the role of fun activities for example, some teachers regard the use of fun activities as the CLT practice, while some do not agree with this point. Both perspectives have some bias about CLT and these misinterpretations may derive from the knowledge sources such as language courses, teacher educators, and experienced teachers’ demonstrations. Whitley (1993) and Mangubhai et al. (2007) suggest that the teacher’s use of CLT can be misguided by these language sources as they present the knowledge of CLT in diverse ways with varied emphasis. Hence, for improving teacher’s understanding of CLT, the study suggests the need of consistency in the instruction of the CLT approach. Regarding my understanding of CLT, I have relatively more comprehensive knowledge about this language approach. I also took part in the language methodology training, but more knowledge was obtained from my further readings about CLT. Thus, my experience suggests that the teacher can improve more in the epistemic dimension as long as they make more effort in learning the theory of the CLT approach.

6.2.2 Identifying conflicts and tensions in perceiving CLT

Perceiving CLT denotes the teacher’s perspectives of CLT in the perceptual dimension. These involve the teacher’s attitudes towards CLT and decision making about whether and how to use CLT. At first, the teacher express their preferences on CLT, namely ‘favouring CLT’. Factors such as the teacher’s past learning experience and the conformity of CLT with the syllabus have induced the teacher to favour this language approach. The teacher experienced the struggle in learning English through repetitive drills and mechanical recitation. In contrast with the learning experience, the teacher regard that CLT might be different and may offer significant changes in the learning experience. They believe it a suitable language approach as the principles of CLT emphasise language learning on communicative competence which is also a norm in the language syllabus of NSW.
The second feature in perceiving CLT is the conflict between CLT and teaching objectives. ‘Conflicting with teaching objectives’ suggests that the CLT practice could not completely fulfil the teacher’s diverse teaching objectives. Based on the understanding of CLT, the teacher concern the CLT approach merely can be used for listening and speaking instructions. However, other than teaching listening and speaking skills, the teacher regard that they also need to teach grammar, vocabularies, and Chinese characters that are important to teach Chinese as a foreign language. Yet, they suggest that CLT could not be used for the latter purposes. This perception, as a result, marginalises the potential of using CLT for teaching the grammatical and structural elements of the target language. In actuality, CLT is an integrative language instruction that combines both the traditional form-focused instruction and the meaning-focused teaching (Celce-Murcia et al., 1997).

From my teaching experience, although I understand the grammar can be taught by the CLT practice, I also agree that using other traditional approaches for grammar instruction is necessary. The effects of using CLT for grammar instruction might be less discernible than using other approaches. This is similar to the Gatbonton and Segalowitz’s (2005) findings that ascribe the modest use of CLT to its insignificant learning effects. In contrast, more traditional and direct methods, such as grammar teaching and vocabulary instruction, can provide students with more concrete and tangible learning content. As a result, the teacher have to think of traditional approaches for fulfilling their teaching objectives. Besides the language instruction, the purpose for instructing Chinese culture is also in conflict with the use of CLT. Both the teacher and I believe that learning a foreign language should not be limited to the language content, while the non-language content such as cultural instruction also matters. Similarly, Sun and Cheng (2002) suggest that there are wide ramifications in the objectives of teaching and learning a foreign language. This means the instruction needs to emphasise not only on developing the language competence, but also on providing students with the cultural experience.
Moreover, the use of CLT can be influenced by the issue of learning resistance. The teacher believe that students are usually resisting learning, while the difficulty of the Chinese language further challenges their learning. In this circumstance, the tension of ‘losing the students’ can emerge when the teacher apply CLT to teach the target language. The kind of tension has previously been identified by Romano (2008) that the beginning teachers often face the struggles about the issues of student behaviour and personal feeling of being secure in surroundings. The teacher perceive that the application of CLT can be more difficult when students are resisting learning and this application can potentially impose the risk of losing the students. Rather than the teacher transmitting information to the learners in the traditional classroom, CLT is a learner-centred language approach that requires the learners to control their own learning in the communicative process (Song, 2009). However, the students in practice are reluctant to use Chinese in communications. Other than the reluctance, the students’ destructive behaviour further impairs the use of CLT as the students do not engage in learning Chinese. As a result, the two types of learning resistance have made it difficult for the teacher to implement the CLT approach. Hence, the teacher regard CLT as more appropriate when the students are motivated and ready to learn Chinese.

6.2.3 Addressing the tension in situating CLT

‘Situating CLT’ is the third dimension in the theory-practice process. As previous research suggests, beginning teachers may have tensions of applying appropriate techniques to motivate students’ learning and gain their participation in the teaching-learning process when they face the issue of student behaviour (Romano, 2008). This circumstance also applies to the teacher in the research project. When the teacher are facing the tension of ‘losing the students’, they attempt to address the issue by employing various strategies. As a result, three types of strategies are identified including ‘promoting learning’, ‘adapting self’, and ‘maintaining the status quo’.
Promoting learning refers to practice for engaging students in learning. For promoting learning, the teacher have to adopt strategies including ‘creating a comfortable environment’ and ‘reducing learning difficulties’. Firstly, the language instruction has to be situated in a comfortable learning environment. The teacher strive for creating a comfortable learning environment by introducing interesting topics and activities. Then, the CLT practice has to be incorporated in this process. Yet, only a few activities are compatible with the CLT instruction. My reflection suggests the similar experience. The students would enjoy the interesting activities, while the language instruction and practice can be marginalised by these activities.

Secondly, the teacher need to reduce the learning difficulties via ‘simplifying learning content’ and ‘making clear instructions’. For promoting learning, the teacher simplify the learning content by teaching the basic language items such as vocabularies and simple sentences. Likewise, the students can feel less stressed when they practise the target language with predetermined content. The simplified learning content, in this sense, can be in conflict with the CLT practice as the CLT instruction emphasises on the meaning exchange in a natural discourse. Therefore, the teaching practice results in the difficulty of implementing CLT.

Besides simplifying learning content, the teacher attempt to make clear instructions. Clear instructions refer to traditional teaching practices such as the direct translation of the target language and explicit explanation of the grammatical rules. The teacher find that students can understand traditional teaching practice better than CLT. My reflection also identifies the experience. The CLT instruction can be more difficult for the students to comprehend than other approaches such as the grammar translation method. For making clear instructions, the teacher also combine the CLT instruction with other more comprehensible strategies such as using body language. However, the effect of the CLT practice can be impaired since the students
understand the meaning largely through the body language rather than the CLT practice.

‘Adapting self’ is another practical strategy to cope with the tension of losing the students. In ‘adapting self’, the teacher lower their expectations on students’ language learning. Students are not expected to learn Chinese particularly well, while having a certain amount of basic language and Chinese cultural knowledge would be sufficient for the school students. As a result, the CLT approach cannot be fully used in practice. The lowered expectation further results in the change of teaching objectives. Before entering the teaching field, the teacher attempt to systematically teach the students Mandarin in terms of the four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, the teacher change their teaching objectives when they find learning language not the only goal in foreign language classrooms. Based on the assumption, the teacher and I, attempt to develop students’ interests through the non-language instruction such as the teaching of Chinese culture.

When the strategies for promoting learning and adapting self are not effective in addressing the tension of losing the students, the teacher’s alternative is to maintain the status quo. Maintaining the status quo attempts to keep the tension at a minimum level. As a result, students can be still resistant to learning Chinese, while their disengaging behaviour does not significantly disturb the teaching and learning process. The teaching practice for maintaining the status quo is largely non-CLT oriented. These include some quiet activities such as writing practice and listening activities. These activities usually involve mechanical rather than communicative drills. Therefore, maintaining the status quo also marginalises the use of CLT in practice.
6.2.4 An integral view of the substantive theory

In general, the research project offers a substantive theory to depict a process about how the theory of CLT is used in actual practice from the beginning Mandarin teacher’s perspectives (see Figure 6.1). As seen from the scheme, the three dimensions are positioned between the theory and practice of CLT.

In the epistemic dimension, knowledge about CLT is obtained from sources such as the teacher education course. However, the knowledge about CLT in the epistemic dimension is not a simple reproduction from the theory of CLT. Rather, it is the teacher’s personal interpretation about the CLT practice. The personal interpretation can be either an accurate or inaccurate understanding of the original theory. However, no matter how the personal interpretation is, it becomes individual’s understanding of CLT and informs the teacher’s CLT practice.

The perceptual dimension connects both the epistemic and situational dimension. It consists of three propositions identified from the data. ‘Favouring CLT’ is the result of both the teacher’s understanding about CLT and their living surroundings. From their past learning experience and the requirement of the language syllabus, the teacher reveal the preference of using CLT for Mandarin teaching as they believe the principles of CLT provide a dynamic teaching and learning process and fit with the language syllabus. Likewise, the teacher’s sense about the conflicts of using CLT with teaching objectives is also generated from the teacher’s concerns about the knowledge of CLT and situations they live. The most significant proposition in the perceptual dimension is ‘losing the students’ as it is highly relevant to the teacher’s strategies identified in the situational dimension.

The situational dimension is the actual practice of CLT. However, the CLT practice depends on the teacher’s strategies for coping with the tension of losing the students. Three types of strategies are found for addressing the tension. They are ‘Promoting
learning’, ‘adapting self’, and ‘maintaining the status quo’. Although the three types of strategies may not directly involve the CLT practice, their emergence in class determines how and to what extent the CLT practice can be implemented. In sum, this model explains the beginning Mandarin teacher’s practice of CLT. However, the general illumination about the relationship between the categories is only based on the available data in the research project. Thus, it is a tentative model and open for further investigation.
Figure 6.1 A schematic presentation about the substantive theory

Theory of CLT

The epistemic dimension
(Understanding CLT)

Personal interpretation about CLT

The perceptual dimension
(Perceiving CLT)

Favouring CLT
Losing the students
Conflicting with teaching objectives

The situational dimension
(Situating CLT)

Promoting learning
Adapting self
Maintaining the status quo

Practice of CLT
6.3 Limitations of the study

In this section, I will discuss two limitations identified in the research project. The first limitation relates to the number of research participants. There were merely eight beginning Mandarin teachers taking part in the interviews. Hence, for readers whose paradigmatic perspective is positivist, the problem of the small sample size might be significant. The delimitation strategy consists of two fold. First, the research project applied the grounded theory method as the research methodology. For the grounded theory method, credibility of a research can be achieved through the constant comparison process in the data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Second, this study utilised my teaching reflections for data triangulation. My teaching reflections were expected to alleviate the tension of relying on a single data source in theory generation. However, the bias of self-reflections was also noticed. The data generated from the reflective journals cannot be regarded as objective facts (Prior, 2003). Rather, the reflections denoted my knowledge and perception of the CLT instruction which were constructed by my interaction with the social, cultural, and situational contexts (Charmaz, 2006).

The second limitation relates to the lack of data collected from qualified teachers who were the major population in the area. This limitation would constrain the explanatory range of the theory. Qualified teachers may have different issues in their interpretations of CLT. However, the three dimensions identified in the theory could be applied in a wider context including the professional teaching field. This assumption can be verified through conducting further research in a wider teaching context. Meanwhile, as the research project did not specify the relationships between the three dimensions, subsequent research may also help to clarify the interplay and generate new ideas about the theory-practice process.
6.4 Implications of the study

The substantive theory provides significant implications for language teaching and teacher education. First, it provides insights for the beginning language teachers. By uncovering the teacher’s perspectives of CLT, pre-service teachers would understand better the facilitating and constraining factors in the application of CLT in practice. They are expected to understand the cognitive process of applying a theory into practice. The identified caveats in the epistemic, perceptual, and situational dimensions may help the beginning teachers build confidence in teaching. Moreover, since the research project focused on the use of CLT in the Chinese language context, it particularly helps the Chinese language teachers understand the connection between this language approach and Chinese. For instance, many teachers find CLT fits with the spoken language instruction, while inappropriate in the teaching of the Chinese characters. Then, to what extent the Chinese teacher agree with this perspective depends on how they define the issue in their teaching. Therefore, this perspective implies the teacher’s teaching practice and helps them to critically reflect on their current instruction.

For language educators, the substantive theory helps them consider the teacher’s concerns in teacher education courses. It may improve the pedagogical practice about the introduction of the CLT approach. For the first dimension, ‘understanding CLT’ implies the language educators to be cautious of the teacher’s incomprehensive and misinterpreted understanding of CLT. The teacher may regard CLT as for teaching spoken language. Hence, the language educators may need to provide a comprehensive view of CLT for those teachers. The second dimension encourages the teacher education course to notice the teacher’s concerns. The majority of the teacher are perceptually in favour of CLT. However, they consider CLT may not help them to achieve their diverse teaching objectives. This can be true to certain extent, but the CLT practice can be used for accomplishing some teaching objectives such as the grammar instruction. The teacher’s perception that CLT cannot be used
for grammar instruction might be due to their incomplete understanding of CLT and lack of sufficient CLT oriented strategies. Hence, the teacher educators could develop a CLT course by demonstrating the potential of CLT in meeting the teacher’s diverse demands. The third dimension ‘situating CLT’ primarily situates the CLT instruction in a context where student resistance is the major issue. Many teachers suggest CLT cannot effectively engage the students in learning. Instead, they have to either use CLT in the capsule of fun activities or simply discard it by utilising other strategies to promote learning. Concerning this issue, language educators who emphasises on the CLT approach, may need to develop pedagogical CLT practice to help the language teachers engage students in learning.

The findings in the research project also indicate the potential for generating a formal theory. The identified three dimensions for illuminating the process of the CLT application can also imply how people apply a theory or certain knowledge in general. The process of applying certain knowledge from theory to practice could include the three dimensions identified from the teacher’s perspectives of CLT. The epistemic dimension reveals the mastery of certain knowledge people possess. In the perceptual dimension, people make decisions about the application of certain knowledge as concerning their knowledge, personal preferences, objectives and particular situations. The perceptual decisions include whether to apply the knowledge, to what extent, and how to apply the knowledge. The situational dimension is the actual practice of certain knowledge. This process is the realisation of people’s perceptual thinking, which may involve the adaptation of the theoretical knowledge to fit particular situations. As a result, the three dimensions depict a process about the application of certain knowledge or theory.

The substantive theory may also help to explain the issue of theory-practice gap. The theory-practice gap suggests that certain theoretical knowledge cannot be completely applied in reality. Then, the three dimensions in this theory might be accountable to the theory-practice gap. The result of the gap between theory and practice could
because of problems found in the epistemic dimension, namely the insufficiency or misconceptions of certain theoretical knowledge. Likewise, the perceptual or situational dimension could also affect the knowledge being fully practised in reality. Thus, the integral three dimensions can be regarded as the driving force accounting for the gap between theory and practice.

6.5 Recommendations for further studies

Further studies may need to be conducted to better understand the finding in the research project and its implications. First, the theory generated from the research does not thoroughly specify the relationships between the three dimensions. Further study may need to deeply explore this aspect by collecting more data or by applying other research methods. Secondly, subsequent studies could focus on the teacher’s concerns identified from the research project. For example, many teachers believe that CLT cannot effectively engage students in learning. Thus, further study could focus on the relationship between CLT and student engagement. Third, to ensure the emergent theory being applicable to a wide range of social settings, cross-disciplinary research is advocated. Cross-disciplinary research enables the generation of the substantive theory to become a formal theory with enhanced credibility and applicability.

6.6 Concluding commentary

One and a half years ago, when I came to Australia, I had no idea of how to teach students, let alone use CLT in my Mandarin lessons. CLT was repeatedly promoted for Mandarin teaching in the language methodology training. However, I was still uncertain of how to apply the CLT in practice. Then, I was curious about other teacher’s views about the application of CLT. Consequently, for understanding the teacher’s CLT practice, I started my research journey by investigating the teacher’s perspectives of CLT. Through the journey I took to arrive at the final destination, I
not only have learnt a great deal of knowledge about the CLT approach, but also understood how the gap between the CLT theory and its practice is informed.

To achieve the research aim for understanding the beginning Mandarin teacher’s practice of CLT, the research project has detailed the review of CLT related literature and relevant studies on teacher knowledge and development. Regarding the research methodology, the development and features of the grounded theory have been explored. The theoretical foundation of the contemporary grounded theory has been examined, which has informed the research design in terms of the recruitment of research participants, the data collection techniques, the data analysis strategies, and the validity and credibility of the research.

A substantive theory, grounded on empirical evidence, has emerged. The theory consists of three dimensions identified from the teacher’s perspectives of CLT. This theory has provided one possible explanation to address the gap between theory and practice, and suggests the application of CLT is underpinned by the three dimensions from the teacher’s perspectives. Moreover, the substantive theory has implications for many parties, including the language teachers and teacher educators, for developing pedagogical practices. Bearing on the limitations of the research project, I suggest conducting further studies to develop the research findings and address the teacher’s concerns that emerged from the study. Meanwhile, the theory implies a general process of how people apply certain theoretical knowledge into practice. This implication requires cross-disciplinary research to develop the substantive theory into a formal theory that would be applicable in a wide range of social contexts.


Song, Y. (2009). How can Chinese English teachers meet the challenge of creating a learner-centered, communicative, intercultural classroom to achieve optimal student learning outcomes? Canadian Social Science. 5(6), pp. 81-91.


175

### APPENDICES

**Appendix 1. Schedule for Language Teacher Training (NSW DET)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 July</td>
<td>Child Protection; Teaching in NSW schools; Chinese syllabus K-10 and technology resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 July, 30 July</td>
<td>School observation in primary and secondary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 August</td>
<td>Discussion about observations; background/Communicative Approach; Learning styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 August</td>
<td>Practical classroom teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 August</td>
<td>School visit and discussion with practising classroom teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 August</td>
<td>Classroom organisation; intro to QT- teaching and learning cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 August</td>
<td>Visit to The Hills Sports High; QT reflective assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 September, 8 September</td>
<td>Quality Teaching-Intellectual Quality; school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 September, 15 September</td>
<td>Quality Learning-Environment &amp; Significance; School visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 September</td>
<td>School visit discussion with practising classroom teacher using QT framework for observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 September</td>
<td>Hanzi, Pinyin and Tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 October</td>
<td>Planning and programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 October</td>
<td>TBA-dependent on needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 November</td>
<td>Evaluation of program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2. List of criterial and non-criterial attributes of CLT  
(Mangubhai et al. 2007, pp. 18-21)

(Non-criterial attributes are in italics)

Goal focus (principal goals)
GF 1  To develop students’ communicative competence in L2, defined as including grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic competencies.
GF 2  To have students use L2 productively and receptively in authentic exchanges.
GF 3 Other

Theoretical assumptions (beliefs, principles etc underlying approach)
TAS 1 Students should be actively involved in the construction of meaning.
TAS 2 Learning L2 involves students solving their own problems in interactive sessions with peers and teachers.
TAS 3 Communicative competence is best developed in the context of social interaction.
TAS 4 Communication among classroom participants should be authentic i.e. not staged or manipulated by a power figure.
TAS 5 Communication should be stimulated by genuine issues and tasks.
TAS 6 Communication should follow a natural pattern of discourse rather than be pre-determined or routine.
TAS 7 Classroom culture should be characterised by teacher/student tolerance of learner error.
TAS 8 Risk taking by students should be encouraged.
TAS 9 Classroom culture should be characterised by student centeredness i.e. an emphasis on student needs and socio-cultural differences in students’ styles of learning.
TAS 10 Emphasis should be placed on meaning-focused self-expression rather than language structure.
TAS 11 Grammar should be situated within activities directed at the development of communicative competence rather than being the singular focus of lessons.
TAS 12 Resources should be linguistically and culturally authentic.
TAS 13 More attention should be given, initially, to fluency and appropriate usage than structured correctness.
TAS 14 Use of L2 as a medium of classroom communication should be optimised.
TAS 15 Other

Strategies (methods used with a CLT approach)
S 1 Role plays
S 2 Games
S 3 Small group and paired activities
S 4 Experiences with resources involving speaking, listening, writing, and reading in L2
S 5 Tasks requiring the negotiation of meaning
S 6 Asking questions of students that require the expression of opinions and the formulation of reasoned positions.
S 7 Other

Social system
Teacher Roles
TR 1 Facilitator of communication processes
TR 2 Guide rather than transmitter of knowledge
TR 3 Organiser of resources
TR 4 Analyst of student needs
TR 5 Counselor/corrector
TR 6 Group process manager
TR 7 Other

Student Roles
SR 1 Active participant, asking for information, seeking clarification, expressing opinions, debating
SR 2 Negotiator of meaning
SR 3 Proactive team member
SR 4 Monitor of own thought processes
SR 5 Other

Teacher-Student Relationships
TSR 1 Friendly
TSR 2 Cooperative
TSR 3 Informal where possible
TSR 4 Other

Normal student behaviours (behaviours that teacher wants students to display during lessons)
NSB 1 Engaging in autonomous action, defining and solving own problems
NSB 2 Risk taking
NSB 3 Activity-oriented behaviours
NSB 4 Cooperation with peers, teacher
NSB 5 Using L2 as much as possible
NSB 6 Other

Support System
Teaching Skills
TS 1 General teaching and management skills
TS 2 Skills in the use of technology
TS 3 Ability and commitment to work with community
TS 4 Other
Teacher attributes
TAT 1  Outgoingness
TAT 2  Proficiency in L2 (for non-native speakers)
TAT 3  Proficiency in English (for native speakers of L2)
TAT 4  Fascination with L2 and its culture (non-native speakers)
TAT 5  Teaching experience
TAT 6  Experience as a resident in the L2 culture
TAT 7  Other

Special resources (resources needed over and above usual resources in classrooms)
SPR 1  Authentic L2 materials
SPR 2  Human resources with facility in L2 in community
SPR 3  Internet; CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) resources
SPR 4  Other

Principles of teacher reaction (Guidelines used by the teacher in reacting to student questions, responses, initiations, etc)
PTR 1  Encourage learners to initiate and participate in meaningful interaction in L2
PTR 2  Supports learner risk taking (e.g. going beyond memorised patterns and routine expressions
PTR 3  Places minimal emphasis in error correction and explicit instruction on language rules
PTR 4  Emphasises learner autonomy and choice of language topic
PTR 5  Focuses on learners and their needs
PTR 6  Encourages students self-assessment of progress
PTR 7  Focuses on form as need arises
PTR 8  Other

Instructional and nurturant effects
Instructional Effects
IE 1  Proficiency in L2
IE 2  Greater understanding of one’s own culture and mother tongue
IE 3  Other

Nurturant Effects
NE 1  Respect, fascination for L2 and its culture
NE 2  Other

Teacher affect
Grand other
Appendix 3. University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Approval

From: Kay Buckley <k.buckley@uws.edu.au>
To: "Dacheng Zhao" <D.Zhao@uws.edu.au>, <1183035@student.uws.edu.au>
Subject: HREC Approval H7708
Date: Mon, 08 Mar 2010 16:22:10 +1000

Notification of Approval
8 February 2010
Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Dear Dacheng and Jiadong Liao

I’m writing to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has agreed to approve the project.

Ensure that the dissemination via student thesis is noted in the Information sheet.


H7708 Student: Jiadong Liao (Supervisor: Dacheng Zhao)

The Protocol number for this project is H7708. Please ensure that this number is quoted in all relevant correspondence and on all information sheets, consent forms and other project documentation.

Please note the following:
1) The approval will expire on 30 January 2011. If you require an extension of approval beyond this period, please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer humanethics@uws.edu.au prior to this date.
2) Please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer of any future change to the research methodology, recruitment procedure, set of participants or research team.
3) If anything unexpected should occur while carrying out the research, please submit an Adverse Event Form to the Human Ethics Officer. This can be found at: http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/human_ethics_adverse_event/end_of_project_report
4) Once the project has been completed, a report on its ethical aspects must be submitted to the Human Ethics Officer. This can also be found at: http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/human_ethics_adverse_event/end_of_project_report

Finally, please contact the Human Ethics Officer, Kay Buckley on (02) 4736 0883 or at k.buckley@uws.edu.au if you require any further information.

The Committee wishes you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor Janotte Perz,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Kay Buckley
Human Ethics Officer
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith NSW 1797
Tel: 02 4736 0883
http://www.uws.edu.au/research/ethics/human_ethics
Appendix 4. Participant Information Sheet (General)

Participant Information Sheet (General)
An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section ‘hover your cursor’ over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: Language Pedagogy in Chinese Language Teaching: A Grounded Theory Study on Perspectives of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Who is carrying out the study?
Researcher Student: Jiadong LIAO

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by LIAO Jiadong, the research student currently studying at the Center for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney.

What is the study about?
The research aims to investigate the perspectives of Chinese language teaching with the practice and beliefs in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach and language pedagogy.

What does the study involve?
By using interviews to generate data from Chinese language consultants and teachers, the relationship between Chinese language teaching and CLT approach will be understood in terms of professionals’ perspective on language pedagogy, confidence and effects on using CLT, and practices in Chinese language class.

How much time will the study take?
The language consultants and teacher participants involve in-depth qualitative interviews in a multiple sequential manner which will last for approximately 45 minutes each. Data will be elicited from open-ended and in-depth interviews exploring the CLT approach that the interviewees have substantial experience combined with considerable insights. In order to inform a stronger basis for understanding language approach in Chinese teaching, the multiple sequential interviews provide opportunities for researchers to correct earlier errors and omissions, check leads over time and refine more complex analysis.

Will the study benefit me?
Deeper understanding of CLT and language pedagogy allow more strategic actions and develop alternative actions from the theoretical pool of L2 methodologies. Thus, the findings have the potential to impact on the Chinese syllabus and curriculum. Meanwhile, the findings will be seen as synthesized perspectives of CLT in Chinese language teaching in the Sydney region. Participants who are involving in the Chinese language teaching in the Sydney region will be better informed from the findings of the research about the insights of CLT as language pedagogy on Chinese language.
Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
Participants have complete freedom in deciding whether to participate and they are free to quit the project at any time during the research process. However, the project may take participants part of their time for interviewing with a tape recorder and a follow-up interviews might be required to gather further details for the research question.

How is this study being paid for?
The study has no sponsored entities, all expenses in the project will be undertaken by the researcher himself

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. The results will be disseminated via the student researcher's thesis.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate -you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Liao Jiadong will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact the research student Liao Jiadong whose mobile phone number is 0405913760 and e-mail account is jiadongliao@gmail.com; or his principal supervisor Dr. Dacheng Zhao, CER, 0410322732.

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [H7798]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0883 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 5. Participant Consent Form

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

Participant Consent Form

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text.

Project Title: Language Pedagogy in Chinese Language Teaching: A Grounded Theory Study on Perspectives of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

I, __________________________, consent to participate in the research project titled "Language Pedagogy in Chinese Language Teaching: A Grounded Theory Study on Perspectives of Communicative Language Teaching Approach".

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, ‘have had read to me’] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher(s).

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the interview with audio taping, and also the possible followed up interviews for further details to clarify.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

Signed: __________________________

Name: __________________________

Date: __________________________

Return Address: Mr. Jiadong Liao, Room J.G.07, Building J, Kingswood Campus University of Western Sydney Locked Bag 1797 or via e-mail: jiadongliao@gmail.com
Appendix 6. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

How long have you been teaching Mandarin here?

What kind of students do you teach?

How many lessons do students have per week?

The first section of interview

Could you tell me what does your teaching practice look like? Could you describe one or two of your lessons? (I will have some questions while you are introducing your teaching)

The second section of interview

1. What is your general goal and personal belief in teaching Mandarin?

2. How do you promote your goal and belief?

3. Could you tell me when, if at all, did you first experience the Communicative Language Teaching Approach?

4. How do you think of the Communicative Language Teaching approach or teaching foreign language in a communicative way?

5. What is your understanding about this teaching methodology?
6. How do you think of the teaching methodology that can be used in Mandarin class?

7. How do you think the teaching methodology can be used in K-12 class in Australia?

8. How do you engage your students in class?

9. How do you think of the Communicative language teaching approach that can facilitate or constrain your engagement with students?

10. What did you find is most troublesome in your lesson? What makes that happen? And How do you alleviate the problem? Is that effective?

11. What aspects of Chinese or Chinese lesson do you think is challenging to students? How do you alleviate the issue?
Appendix 7. Questions used for the pilot study

General questions:

How many years of experience do you have in teaching Chinese?

When and how you get in contact with CLT approach?

What does CLT look like in your view?

Specific questions:

1. How do you usually start your language lessons?
   (For opening the topic)

2. And then what activities do you usually do with your students?
   (For understanding the CLT process and the student’s role)

3. Why would you like to do these things in your class?
   (For understanding the CLT process and the student’s role)

4. What kind of language did students use when they are doing these activities?
   (For understanding the language used in class)

5. So what did you do then?
   (For understanding the teacher’s role in the CLT process)

6. What else did you do during the lesson and in these activities?
   (For understanding the teacher’s role in the CLT process)

7. Why would you like to do these instructions in your lesson?
   (For understanding the teacher’s role in the CLT process)

8. About the content of the lesson, what kind of content you will use in your lesson?
   (For understanding the language content in the CLT practice)

9. How did you find these are necessary for teaching Chinese?
   (For understanding the language content in the CLT practice)

10. Is that the expected lesson you want to demonstrate? Why?
    (For understanding the potential tension in the CLT process)
11. If not, what is your ideal Chinese lesson and how can this lesson be realised?  
(For understanding the potential tension in the CLT process)

12. To accomplish the objective, what else you want to do or what kind of support that is required to better meet the target?  
(For understanding the teacher’s strategy for coping with the tension)

13. So, in your belief, what is the goal you would like to achieve in your Chinese lessons?  
(For understanding the teacher’s goal)

14. Why do you think that is your goal or mission?  
(For understanding the teacher’s goal)
Appendix 8. Sample of interview transcript (Tracy)

Researcher (R): How long have you been teaching Mandarin here?
Tracy (T): I’ve been teaching here for more than one year.

R: What kind of students do you teach?
T: Basically, I teach students with non-Chinese background the speak Chinese as the foreign language and their first language is mainly English and sometimes their first language is not English but their language of their own background, so it’s huge diversity in my students.

R: And which stage?
T: I teach from stage 1 to stage 3 and I also teach high school students in year 8.

R: And usually how many lessons do students have per week?
T: Primary students get one lesson per week, and high school students get one lesson fortnightly.

R: How long is one lesson?
T: For primary kids, it’s about 40mins to 1 hour, depends on the period they have; and high school students they probably have half an hour because it’s a cross faculty so I have to cooperate with the classroom teacher there.

R: So could you describe one or two lessons?
T: For example, when I teach colour this term, I started with introduce every colour in Mandarin and then I ask them to repeat after me, and when I do that I show them something that is in that colour, and students will say like “红色 (hong se, red)”, “绿色 (lv se, green)”, and also I will ask students to go around classroom to looking for something that is has the colour I teach, so students will working around and point in the class, and then I will ask them to think of something that has the colour sometimes they will for example, they like ‘spongebob’ very much so I use this to teach them ‘spongebob’ is yellow like in Chinese and they learn very quickly and they remember very well and lastly I will prepare a worksheet for them mainly is colouring and because I teach colour so I will label the colour out to ask them to filling the certain colour they don’t have the choice so and this is very typical lesson and another lesson I think is, another kind of lesson is I want to introduce some Chinese culture and get them to do some hand craft like paper cutting and calligraphy.

R: About the colours do you demonstrate them characters and pinyin?
T: Yeah, I will firstly show them like a flower in the red colour I will say “红色 (hong se, red)”, and then I will show them something else that has the same colour let students guess what I am saying, and then when they get my meaning I am saying the colour red, I will show them the character and the pinyin in a flashcard and they know exactly what I’m teaching about.

R: And how do you teach the characters?
T: I don’t teach characters I just show them the character giving them the impression that Chinese, what is Chinese language look like and also when I teach numbers because the characters are simple it’s just “一” (yi, one), “二” (er, two), “三” (san, three), so I will sometimes, generally introduce “一” is one line, “二” is two lines, but not more than that.

R: And is the same as in high school?
T: High school is another story, but when I taught something about character I won’t touch very deep topic like stroke orders, I do try out stroke orders last term but students find it’s boring and they don’t get it, so it’s…

R: How do they react?
T: They just simply react with no engagement you know, I just ask them to follow me use the finger to write character they just simply follow but they don’t show any engagement no motivation to learn that.

R: And after that they talk with each others?
T: Sometimes, but they just think it is something I ask them to do, they don’t see the meaning in it they don’t get it.

R: Can you reflect some activities you have done before?
T: I didn’t do a lot of activities this term but I do have a lot of activities last term for them, because we attend the DET methodology training they introduce some activities like write stroke orders on the back let students guess what the character is, I did try that but it’s not very good. Sometimes students just don’t get the character and the game cannot continue and I also tried an activity guessing game you put a number behind the student and let them guess but sometimes they don’t have enough practice they cannot remember the characters well, so they just keep silent and this term I conduct more activities about like Chinese cultural things like about paper cutting, and making a story book out of an A4 paper, they love that also calligraphy and use chopsticks.

R: When you are doing cultural activities how do you teach Chinese in these activities?
T: You mean language?
R: Yeah.
T: When I teach them chopsticks, I just simply get them to say “筷子” (kuai zi, chopsticks), but very limited language input, and when I teach them calligraphy simply just the character you are going to write I will introduce the character but no more than that.

R: How about story books?
T: The story book is about a unit of work I do with, introduce themselves, so they will learn a lot of language before like my name is I’m a Chinese person, I’m an Australian person I’m a student I’m not a teacher I like something they learn that and I ask them to do a book about themselves so they will write I am an Australian student, and they will draw some pictures decorate it. They have choice they can write only pinyin but some students do willing to try out characters, they love characters. I cannot force them to write down only characters.
R: How do you think if you force them to do?
T: If I ask them “could you try to write some characters?” They just simply say “no I don’t want to write characters Miss”, so… but most students are willing to try some.

R: What is your personal goal to teach Mandarin here?
T: Firstly, I want them to, I really want them to say something, like I really want them to learn language systematically, but later on I found out that the students in the school don’t know China a lot, they don’t know Chinese person, they don’t know how they live in house, how their life and they don’t know modern China, they keep asking me does China have colour TV and something like that. So I think my goal now is to let them know China and to know Chinese to let them enjoy learning Chinese, find it’s an interesting thing. Sometimes you just question why firstly I got here, I questioned education because I don’t find students learn much so I think maybe my Chinese lesson could change something but now you are going to adapt the culture here because students really, the goal here is enjoying learning.

R: And particularly Mandarin here is a sub-subject.
T: Yeah, and I think the opportunity is very good, because they don’t have many opportunities to get to know China very much that’s why we are here.

R: Could you tell me what is your first experience of the CLT and how do you think of that approach?
T: I know CLT approach from the methodology training course offered by DET. This is the first time I heard about it, firstly I think it’s a very good approach because when I was a language learner I don’t have a lot of opportunities to practice we learn it based on grammar and linguistic codes not allowed emphasise on communicative ability which is very important in learning a language. So this is my first experience. (Classroom context) I tried to teach communicative language initially with introducing my name and asking students to say their name but when I conduct this approach with very young kids, they just don’t get it they just guess but they just don’t understand what I am talking about and which makes me very confused and the classroom teacher sometimes will help me and she did find out what I am trying to teach and she, one time I remember very well I teach kindergarten kids last year and the classroom teacher help me with a very very traditional approach and students suddenly get it and she smiled at me and ask me it is how you do it with young kids and I’m very shocked that sometimes the basic way is used very very traditional way, more useful with young kids, but when they got some basic knowledge about the language, I do tried out some communicative language approach now with year 8 kids and they can guess very well because they have some ability of understanding, so I think it depends on the students you teach.

R: And what is your understanding about this methodology?
T: I think when I, it is a very good approach for teaching students with a little bit with some background but I mean with some adults for example, Chinese background and some, you have built up some basic knowledge around the language.
R: Yeah, because I know that in the communicative language teaching, the prerequisite is called pre-communicative, that is you have some language firstly input and then use that.
T: Yeah, I think with young kids it’s that sometimes it could end up with know nothing.

R: And which part of lesson do you think is communicative?
T: I think it’s mainly the introduction, I mean we will introduce some new things and when they build up some knowledge around it I can use some communicative language approach for example, I have taught them the colours and I can introduce new things like they know “红色 (hong se, red)”, and I teach them “草莓是红色的。 (Strawberry is red.)” And they know “红色 (hong se, red)” and “草莓 (cao mei, strawberry)” they can guess what is the thing I am saying but before that, no.

R: You mean that you need to let them know “红色 (hong se, red)” first and you can use this language to extend. How do you think the methodology can be used in Mandarin class and how do you think that can be used in the young kids learners?
T: I think it just depends because my students have a very dynamic language background and some students cannot even understand English very well so while I tried out the communicative language in the target language sometimes for these kids they have a very the same start point with other ones who knows English very well, so I think in this point of view that’s good and also with some older kids like year 8 kids they like guessing what you are saying so this is good, but in terms of reinforcing and to strength their memory I don’t think it’s the approach very, in my practice, it does not work very well.

R: And my teacher, he pushed them to, he used the target language in Mandarin to instruct part of the lessons like asking the students “有没有问题? (you mei you wen ti?, any questions?)” and the student will respond to him “没有问题 (mei you wen ti, no problem)”, and this process has taken several lessons and some smart kids of who, the kids are willing to learn Mandarin they can get that but actually they don’t need to understand each meaning of the character, like “没有 (mei you, don’t have)” means, but they can respond to him “没有问题 (mei you wen ti, no problem)”. How do they remember these ones? They actually associate with the English ones, “没有问题 (mei you wen ti)”, “没有问题 (mei you wen ti)”, sounds like ‘empty’, ‘empty’ and they associate ‘empty’ with ‘no problem’.
T: Sometimes when I teach them, they all know “你好 (ni hao, hello)”, and they all know like “你叫什么名字? (ni jiao shen me ming zi?, what’s your name?)”, because I said I tried out communicative language teaching mainly on the first several lessons so they learn “你叫什么名字” as a sentence not as language blocks, so at the end I asked them “what does ‘你 (ni, you)’ mean?” They don’t know and when I tried to replace some linguistic parts to make other meaning like “你是学生 (ni shi xue sheng, you are student)”, I teach them “我是老师 (wo shi lao shi, I’m teacher)”. They just don’t know what ‘你” means and they are not aware that they have learnt that long long time ago.

R: So let’s look at these examples, I’m just wondering is this the purpose of communicative language teaching how do you think?
T: I’m not sure I think the purpose is to get students to say something and to react in a
communicative purpose but I think with students living in the cultural context far away from
target language this approach is limited.

R: And they say a sentence like “你叫什么名字? (what’s your name?)”, they don’t know what
‘你’ (ni, you)’ means; what ‘名字 (ming zi, name)’ means. They just say the whole sentence,
but I think this is not the purpose of communicative language teaching, because the CLT also
emphasises the grammatical competence to make them flexibly utilise these words and
organise new meanings not the predetermined sentence.
T: Yeah, I think it has a very hard requirement for the learner so for young kids we should reflect
on it to what extent we should incorporate this methodology into our teachings.

R: Yeah, and this methodology is also originally from adult learners context.
T: Yeah.

R: And how do you engage your students?
T: You mean promote their learning?
R: Yeah, what do you think you tried some strategies is interesting
T: I simply prize them a lot and when you praise them you gave them stickers also I corporate
with classroom teachers strategy like happy face and sad face put their names on happy face so
they got a happy square so at the end of the term so go some certificates and also I prepare
something that is very Chinese like in new year I prepare ‘红包 (hong bao, red envelop)’ I
gave each student a ‘红包’, and also I think of some activities to engage their learning not
always to let them sit down and repeat they will get bored, just getting them walking around.
The ‘红包’ is empty but in China the new year you have money in it. They like it very much.

R: So how do you think the methodology can help you to engage students or constrain your
strategies to engage them?
T: I think sometimes when I say something in Chinese they just became very very focused
because they don’t know what I am saying if sometimes I talk in English too much they will
just drifting, but when I talk to them in Mandarin they will get very very focused and trying to
get the meaning so that’s a very good part sometimes I tried and they will show their curiosity
about what I am talking about and would guess, they just I think it’s the nature of kids they
want to know what you are saying and they just want to guess.

R: So does that mean you can teach them in Mandarin language?
T: No, no, no, it’s like a surprise, if you gave them too much surprise they will just cut off, but
when you gave them some surprise they will try to … because they don’t know what I’m
saying. And sometimes they just ask me, “Miss, can you say it quickly?” They just want to feel
another language.

R: Do you play some videos something like that?
T: I play videos but the technology sometimes doesn’t work I have, I tried out but sometimes it
doesn’t work so I have limited … now I tried not to use too much technology thing but I do
play some like the ‘36 characters’, students love that and also I play some videos of Chinese
traditional cartoons with very simple language they like it as well.

R: What aspects of Chinese do you think is challenging to them?
T: Some kids I think let them speak is very difficult, but it depends, sometimes you will find there are just 4, 5 students that speak a lot but the rest of them they just don’t speak and listen, and sometimes.

R: Because you don’t emphasise the writing part so…
T: No I don’t emphasise the writing part because my students cannot write sometimes they can, they even start English as writing so I don’t put much on writing. Yeah, the speaking part is with some kids I mean is a problem.

R: I found some activity that relating to listening, more students will get attention.
T: Yeah, I think they understand what I’m talking about but when I ask them to actually say it they will just don’t want have a try, I don’t know what’s the reason maybe find speaking Mandarin is silly or I don’t know.

R: How about role plays?
T: I do role plays, but students get shied when they are in a role play and sometimes they will just no volunteers. If I got few volunteers I will just ask them to practice as a whole, because it doesn’t make sense if they don’t participate.

R: And how do you alleviate the issues when they are reluctant to speak?
T: Sometimes I will get the very active kids to speak first and then I will say Ok let me hear the boys and girls who speak better, when they get the sense of competition sometimes they will get involved more, but it’s difficult I mean, some kids don’t want to try.

R: Do have anything else want to talk about?
T: Maybe I can tell you about the cross faculty things because it’s very different thing I’m doing so sometimes I show them photos of China, they get very interested in that because they don’t access the kind of information a lot and I bring photos majorly taken by myself around my hometown and the place I travelled to, it’s a very real China so I think it is a very good strategy to make kids know China. Let them see how local Chinese persons’ lives look like. I show them my home my house my dinner, sometimes I took pictures of my dinner and also I travelled to Beijing, Harbin, Shanghai, Hangzhou, I show them those places in China, and they just get amazed how different they think of China and how they look like.

R: That’s all, thank you very much!