Communicative language teaching and outcomes-based objectives setting: A questionnaire-based survey of a sample of tertiary teachers of English in Taiwan

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Abstract
The aim of the research reported here was to determine, using a questionnaire-based survey, the extent to which a sample of teachers of English at tertiary level (college and university) in Taiwan appear to have been affected by two of what might be described as emerging 'orthodoxies' of English language teaching – the use of approaches associated with communicative language teaching and 'can do' outcomes-based objectives setting. The findings indicate that, so far at least as the survey respondents are concerned, these approaches are much less pervasive than is sometimes supposed. This suggests that teachers of English in Taiwan may be less likely to provide a receptive audience for dominant Western discourse on language teaching and learning than is sometimes supposed.

Introduction
I report here on one aspect of a research project whose overall aim was to investigate the teaching and learning of English in tertiary institutions (that is, in degree-granting institutions, such as colleges and universities) in Taiwan. In this part of the research project, the emphasis was on the impact of the globalization of English and, in particular, of English language teaching, on two aspects of the English curriculum, that is, concepts of communicative language teaching (CLT) and the specification of achievement objectives and learning outcomes in terms of 'can do' statements, each of these being particularly associated with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001).

Critical review of selected literature on aspects of the globalization of English language teaching
Graddol (2006, p. 82) notes that although "[there] is an extraordinary diversity in the ways in which English is taught and learned around the world . . . some clear orthodoxies have arisen. As Canagarajah (2005a, xiv) observes, "the way knowledge is spread . . . [displays] a one-sided imposition of homogeneous discourses and intellectual traditions by a few dominant communities". This imposition includes "what counts as competence, who gets to define what counts as competence, and what is considered the best way to acquire it" (Heller, 2001, p. 47). To some extent, aspects of the English curriculum are "directly defined and prescribed through the influence of international organizations . . . through the models provided by dominant nation-states, and the education professionals who operate on a worldwide basis". However, it is also true that there are "receptive audiences in national societies and states eager for legitimacy and progress" (Benavot, Cha, Kamens, Meyer & Wong 1991, p. 97). Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that here is no guarantee that concepts and practices developed in one context can be transported successfully into another. As Canagarajah (2005b, p. 9) observes,"[the] local has negotiated, modified, and absorbed the global in its own way".

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Two very significant aspects of developments in English language teaching that have had an impact in many parts of the world are communicative language teaching (CLT) and the concept of specifying learning outcomes in terms of 'can do' statements. In fact, the approach to the teaching of English recommended in the Taiwanese *Grade 1~9 Integrated Coordinated Curriculum* (Ministry of Education (Taiwan), 2004a) as it relates to English (Ministry of Education (Taiwan), 2004b), a curriculum concerned with the improvement of instructional methods and techniques in elementary and junior high schools, is clearly a communicative one. Direct reference is made to a communicative approach to English teaching in the principles guiding the creation of teaching materials (Ministry of Education (Taiwan), 2001, para 6) and in a commissioned project report published by the Ministry of Education on elementary and junior high English teaching (Shih, Chou, Chen, Chu, Chen & Yeh, 1999; also see Shih, 2001; Shih & Chu, 1999). Furthermore, some of the competency indicators included in that curriculum document are expressed as 'can do' statements. One example of this is reading skill entry 3.1.10: *To be able to predict or make inferences on the basis of pictures, book titles, or contextual clues*.

From communicative competence to communicative language teaching

Over half a century ago, Chomsky (1957) challenged behaviorist theories of language acquisition, proposing a theory in which creativity rather than imitation and repetition was central. As part of that theory, he put forward the notions of 'linguistic competence' (the ideal speaker/hearer's knowledge of a language system) and 'performance' (the use to which this system was put in concrete situations). Although Chomsky was concerned with first language acquisition rather than second language learning, his proposal had an impact on the teaching of second/ foreign languages, which gradually moved away from the habit formation practices that had underpinned audio-lingualism[1] towards an approach (often referred to as 'cognitive code learning') which highlighted the importance of the students deriving rules for themselves on the basis of examples and creating new sentences in terms of what they needed/wanted to communicate rather than on the basis of repetitive drills (Stern, 1983, p. 465).

A major challenge to Chomsky's notion of 'linguistic competence' came in the early 1970s with notions of 'communicative competence', a term used by Campbell and Wales (1970), Habermas (1970), Hymes (1971) and Jakobovits (1970). The work of Hymes, in particular, has had a profound influence on language teaching. He included within his definition of communicative competence each of the following: *formal possibility, implementational feasibility, contextual appropriacy,* and *the performative role of utterances*. Since then, definitions of communicative competence have undergone changes which reflect developments that have taken place in linguistics and, in particular, in discourse analysis. Thus, for example, in an attempt to provide a content base for syllabus design and methodological development, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995) divide communicative competence into five major components: *discourse competence, linguistic competence, transactional competence, sociocultural competence* and *strategic competence*. More recently, the Council of Europe (2001, pp. 108-130) has proposed a model that divides communicative competence into three areas: *linguistic skills and knowledge, sociolinguistic skills and knowledge* and *pragmatic skills and knowledge* (see also Bachman, 1990). The first of these includes phonology, orthography, vocabulary, morphology and syntax; the second includes rules of politeness, norms governing relationships (e.g., between generations, sexes, classes and social groups) and

codification of social rituals; the third includes discourse competence, functional competence and design competence.

In the context of English language teaching, the effect of a focus on communicative competence has not necessarily always been entirely positive. Indeed, particularly in the early stages, it sometimes led to an underestimation of the importance of linguistic structure even though, as Crombie (1988, p. 284) notes, “grammatical form is not only included in this list [Campbell and Wales’ list of the various aspects of communicative competence], it is, in fact, the first item on the list”. Indeed, as early as 1980, Carroll (1980, p. 8) felt it important to remind language professionals that “there are rules of grammar without which the rules of use would be inoperable”. Furthermore, the notion of ‘communicative competence’ has now broadened into one of ‘communicative competencies’ in response, in particular, to research in the 1980s which began to examine the concept of strategic competencies in relation to language testing (see, for example, Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Oller, 1983). The issue of competencies (including strategic competencies) continued to occupy researchers in the 1990s (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996) and is fundamental to more recent developments such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001). Since the notion of communicative competence or communicative competencies effectively includes everything that a learner needs to know and be able to do in a target language, an attempt to incorporate every aspect of it/ them into language teaching can lead to confusion and frustration. As Widdowson (1998, p. 331) observes:

> Learners of a foreign language should be made aware of . . . cultural conditions on real communication. . . . But the explicit teaching of communicative abilities which measure up to those of the communities whose language they are learning is quite a different matter.
>
> I believe that an attempt to do so is to set an impossible and pointless goal whose only outcome is likely to be frustration. . . . It is the business of pedagogy to decide on what can be feasibly and effectively taught . . . so as to activate a learning investment for future use. Talk of real world communication is all too often a distraction.

The notion of ‘communicative language teaching’ (CLT), which has emerged alongside the notion of communicative competence or communicative competencies, has been presented and understood in a variety of different ways. Littlewood (1981) defined communicative language teaching in terms of four broad skill domains: *manipulation of the language system; ability to relate form and communicative function; understanding of the social meanings of linguistic forms*; and *strategic control in the use of language to communicate effectively in specific situations* (p. 6). He also outlined three general principles of CLT: *the communication principle* (involving the belief that activities that engage genuine communication promote learning); *the task principle* (according to which the extent to which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks is regarded as important to language learning); and *the meaningfulness principle* (according to which the learning process is supported to the extent that language is used meaningfully) (pp. 6, 77 & 78).

One of the best known definitions of communicative language teaching is that provided by Nunan (1991, pp. 279-295) which includes:

- emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language;
- introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation;
- provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself;
- enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning; and
- attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1997, p. 143) have argued that "the lack of firm linguistic guidelines led to a diversity of communicative approaches that shared only a very general common objective, namely, to prepare learners for real-life communication rather than emphasizing structural accuracy". To further complicate the issue, there is, according to Howatt (1984, pp. 296-297), a strong version and a weak version of communicative language teaching. The strong version involves the belief that "form can best be learned when the learner's attention is focused on meaning" (Beretta, 1989, p. 283); the weak version includes explicit language practice. However, as Johnson (2000, pp. 197) observes:

> These principles [the principles associated with communicative language teaching] do not have a specific set of circumscribed methodologies associated with them. As has so often been maintained, there is no best method and just as there are important variations in the teaching context, there are important differences among learners that need to be reflected in the variety of methods employed. Furthermore, a wide range of materials may be considered appropriate.

There is considerable evidence that learners often appreciate approaches associated with communicative language teaching. Thus, for example, Savignon and Wang (2003), who elicited the views of 174 first-year university students in Taiwan, found that there was a significant preference for meaning-based classroom activities and "a dislike for both form-focused teaching and the amount of class time devoted [in high school] to the explanation and practice of rules of grammar" (p. 230). This preference was particularly marked in students who had attended private pre-school English language classes in which the emphasis was on communication-based practices (p. 235). These findings are consistent with those of Huang (1998) whose study of the views of Taiwanese senior high school students also revealed a strong preference for approaches to the learning of English that centered on use of the language.

Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) explored the beliefs of ten teachers of Japanese in Australian high schools in relation to communicative language teaching. Overall, these teachers thought of CLT as being about learning to communicate in the target language. They also thought of it as including many different types of activities, as focusing more on listening and speaking than on reading and writing, and as involving little, if any, grammar teaching. In connection with these perceptions, it is important to note that CLT need not necessarily focus more on listening and speaking than on reading and writing and that grammar tends to be taught implicitly and communicatively rather than explicitly. It is also relevant to note that Sato and Kleinsasser (p. 507) reported that their language teacher informants generally believed

that there were barriers to the implementation of CLT that included lack of sufficient preparation time and appropriate resources. Most of them claimed to use role-play, games, simulations etc, but the classes observed "were heavily teacher-fronted . . . and there were few interactions . . . among students" (p. 505).

Kervas-Doukas (1996, p. 187) conducted an attitude survey of 16 Greek teachers of English, finding that "[while] most teachers profess of be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more traditional approaches" (p. 187).

Achievement objectives, learning outcomes and 'can do' statements

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001) emerged out of an inter-governmental symposium that was held (on the initiative of the Swiss government) at Rüschlikon in Switzerland. The symposium was called *Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Evaluation and Certification*. Out of that symposium emerged the recommendation that the Council of Europe should develop a *comprehensive, transparent* and *coherent* framework of reference for the description of language learning and teaching at all levels in order to:

- provide a basis for the international comparison of language objectives and language qualifications, thus facilitating personal and vocational mobility in Europe;
- provide policy analysts, teacher trainers, teachers, textbook writers and learners in both schools and adult education contexts with a comparative basis for establishing a set of common standards and levels for language teaching and learning, thus facilitating the design of a unit credit system that can be used across institutions and countries;
- offer a consistent, coherent and comprehensive framework for describing all of the necessary facets of language competence.

As Graddol (2006, p. 84) observes, the European language portfolio attempts to record a learner's experience and achievement in non-traditional ways and *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* employs the concept of 'can do' statements rather than focusing on aspects of failure. A general movement towards outcomes-based curricula has come to be associated with an emphasis on communicative competencies. It is evident, for example, in recent New Zealand Ministry of Education curriculum documents for languages where the lists of structures and vocabulary that characterized earlier syllabus documents have been replaced by a relatively small number of outcomes-based achievement objectives (see, for example, Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2002). Bruce and Whaanga (2002, pp. 10-11) make the following observation with reference to New Zealand Ministry of Education curriculum documents:

> The achievement objectives introduced at each level are the same for both French and German in the draft curriculum guidelines. In fact, there is no reason in principle why they should not be the same for all languages irrespective of similarities and differences in relation to, for example, structures and script. Thus, all students can aim to perform similar types of communicative task at the same stage of learning whatever their target language. Of course, they will not do so in the same ways.

Examples of this type of outcomes-based achievement objectives (Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2002) are provided below:

Students should be able to:

- communicate about likes and dislikes, giving reasons where appropriate;
- communicate about obligations and responsibilities;
- communicate about immediate plans, hopes, wishes and intentions.

Research aims and research methods

The overall aim of the research reported here was to determine to what extent the beliefs and reported practices of a sample of teachers of English in tertiary institutions in Taiwan appeared to have been influenced by communicative language teaching and the specification of learning outcomes in terms of 'can do' statements. Questions relating to each of these were included as part of a self-completion questionnaire (available in both English and Chinese).

The target population was teachers of English in the tertiary education sector in Taiwan. The sample was one of convenience in that only those tertiary level teachers of English who attended particular workshops in Taiwan (on teaching methodologies) were asked to participate. However, these workshops were delivered in a number of different locations and participants came from many different institutions.

The questionnaire was initially written in English and five Taiwanese teachers of English were asked to trial it by (a) attempting to answer the questions, and (b) providing a written commentary on any problems they had in doing so and any issues that occurred to them as they did so.[2] Three of the five teachers involved at this stage had problems with some of the terminology in English and two felt that there should be a final question that allowed teachers to add any comments they wished. A final question of this type was added, the terminology was adjusted, and the questionnaire was translated into Chinese. The original five participants were then asked to comment on the revised versions (the English version and the Chinese version). With the exception of some aspects of the translation (which were modified in a way that satisfied all five teachers), no further issues were raised at this stage. The final version of questionnaires in English and Chinese included 51 questions.

Before the questionnaire was trialled, it was submitted to the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato[3]. Committee members were satisfied that responses would be provided anonymously, that no form of coercion was used to secure responses, that the aim of this part of the research program (included on the front page of the questionnaire) was clearly communicated, and that participants were advised that their responses would be included in reporting of the research. The questionnaire was therefore approved.

Of the 150 questionnaires that were distributed, 71 were returned. Of these, 66 included responses to all of the questions and one (1) included responses to most of the questions. The remaining 4, which are not included in the analysis, were either blank (2) or contained responses only to the questions in the background information section (2). The questions that are relevant to the current research report were the following ones:

Questions relating to course outcomes:

26. If you were asked to provide a list of the expected **SPECIFIC OUTCOMES** of each of your English courses (that is, a list of what students **can do** in English as a result of the course), could you do it?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

27. If you answered YES to Question (26) above, please give the year and type of one of your courses (e.g. Year 1: General English) and list one specific outcome that relates to that course.

Year and type of course: ____
One outcome:____

Questions relating to CLT:

44. Do you believe that what is sometimes referred to as 'communicative language teaching' is relevant at the levels you teach?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

45. Do you believe that 'communicative language teaching' can take place **only** in small classes (e.g. in classes of 20 students or fewer)?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

46. Would you describe your teaching of English as 'communicative'?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

47. If you answered YES to Question (46) above, what are the characteristics of your courses that you would describe as 'communicative'?

____
____

48. How much of the time that you speak in class do you use English? Please tick the most appropriate box.

1. ☐ 100% of the time
2. ☐ Between 80% and 99% of the time
3. ☐ Between 79% and 51% of the time
4. ☐ 50% of the time or less

49. Which of the following activities would you use in your English classes? (Please tick more than one box if appropriate)

1.	Whatever is in the textbook	
2.	Oral drill practice	
3.	Written drill practice	
4.	Explicit grammar teaching	
5.	Implicit grammar teaching	
6.	Singing	
7.	Role play	
8.	Grammar-based games	
9.	Vocabulary-based games	
10.	Designing graphs on the basis of written or spoken text	
11.	Group discussion involving problem-solving	
12.	Writing or telling a story based on a sequence of pictures	
13.	Writing letters	
14.	Short answers based on interpreting text	
15.	Reading and/or writing film or television program reviews	
16.	Debating	
17.	Reading aloud the dialogues and/or texts in textbooks	

50. Which of the following statements **best** describes your philosophy about English teaching? **Please tick ONLY ONE BOX.**

1. ☐ I believe it is important to explain grammatical rules explicitly in Chinese and translate sentences into Chinese so that students can understand
2. ☐ I believe that students will be more motivated if my teaching mainly focuses on listening and speaking in English.
3. ☐ I believe that students can learn better if the focus is on meaning; learning grammar is less important.
4. ☐ I believe that students' English will improve naturally if I speak English all or most of the time in class.

The findings

Question 26 asked whether participants would be able, if requested to do so, to provide a list of the expected specific outcomes of each of their English courses. In response to this question, more than half (37 – 56%) ticked 'yes'; 15 ticked 'no', 13 ticked 'I don't know'. Two (2) did not respond (see *Figure1*).

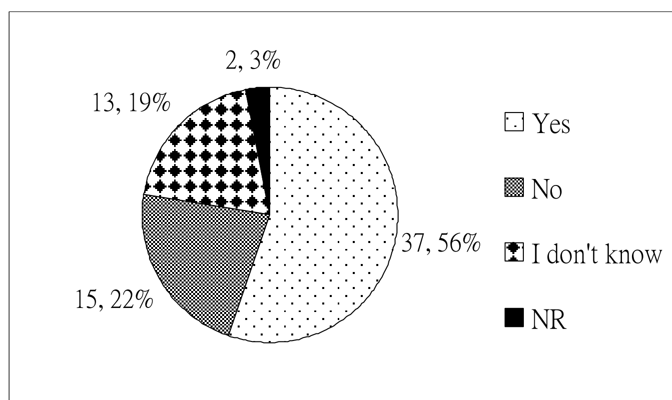

***Figure1:** Participants' beliefs in relation to whether they would be able to list the expected specific outcomes of each of their English courses*

Question 27 asked participants to provide, in English or Chinese, an example of a course outcome for any of the courses they teach. The responses indicate that almost all of the respondents would, in fact, find the task of specifying course outcomes (and, therefore, also, presumably, teaching objectives) very challenging.

Thirty-two (32) out of the 37 who responded to Question 27 provided examples in some form. Of these, 3 gave only a course title. The remainder provided course types/ titles *plus* examples of course outcomes. Some of those provided were very general indeed, so general as to be effectively meaningless as learning outcomes (see examples below). Note that where examples are in brackets they have been translated into English from Chinese by the researcher.

> *Year/Course Title:* English conversation and writing
> *Outcome:* To improve writing skill.
>
> *Year/Course Title:* First Year Listening and comprehension
> *Outcome:* Students can thoroughly understand the daily conversation
>
> *Year/Course Title:* Fourth year (without course title)
> *Outcome:* (To be able to understand clearly how to listen to a long speech/ lecture).
>
> *Year/Course Title:* General English
> *Outcome:* To be able to read in the daily life context.

Some responses were a little less general but not much more informative (see below):

> *Year/Course Title:* Writing
> *Outcome:* (To be able to write an organized composition.)
>
> *Year/Course Title:* Practical English Writing
> *Outcome:* (To be able write English sentences without serious mistakes, and express meanings clearly in compositions.)
>
> *Year/Course Title:* English Reading
> *Outcome:* (To be able to analyze the content of readings.)
>
> *Year/Course Title:* Journalistic English
> *Outcome:* Acquire general Newspaper English vocabulary.

One response focused on knowledge about language (see below), suggesting that general English courses are sometimes perceived to be as much courses *about* language as courses whose aim is to improve language proficiency:

> *Year/Course Title:* General English
> *Outcome:* Enable the learner to distinguish nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs.

Some responses referred to 'passing' a particular English test as an outcome of the course (see below):

> *Year/Course Title:* 1st and 2nd Year, English reading
> *Outcome:* (Passing CSEPT.)
>
> *Year/Course Title:* 2nd Year, English Listening
> *Outcome:* (Students will be able to understand relevant topic content and to make notes, as well as to apply listening skills in the listening part of CSEPT)

Only two provided course outcomes that were specific (or relatively specific) and directly relevant to the course type:

> *Year/Course Title:* 3rd Year English Reading
> *Outcome:* (To be able to learn and apply meanings from contextual clues, grammatical knowledge, word structures and lexical comprehension.)
>
> *Year/Course Title:* Freshman Writing
> *Outcome:* The student will be able to write a well-formed paragraph with a clear topic sentence, well-developed cohesive ideas, transitional words, and concluding sentence.

Question 44 asked whether participants believed that what is sometimes referred to as 'communicative language teaching' is relevant at the levels they teach. Three (3) participants did not respond to this question; 16 ticked *I don't know*; 8 ticked *No*. Forty-one (41) – 61% of the total sample – ticked *Yes* (see *Figure 2*).

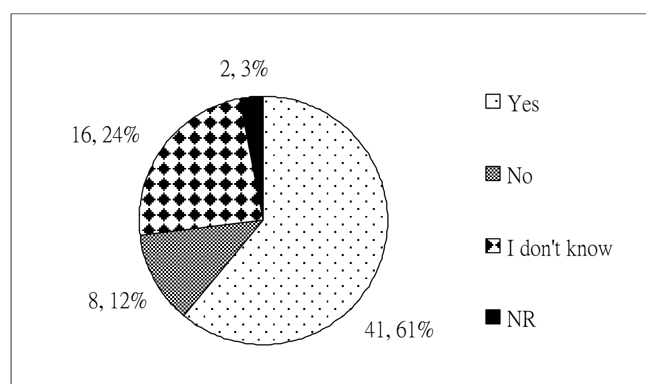

Figure 2: *Participants' views on whether 'communicative language teaching' is relevant at the levels they teach*

The next question (Question 45) asked whether participants believed that 'communicative language teaching' could take place only in small classes (e.g. in classes with 20 students or fewer). Five (5) participants did not respond to this question. Fifteen (15/ 22%) selected *I don't know*; 29 (44%) selected *Yes*; 18 (27%) selected *No* (see *Figure 3*):

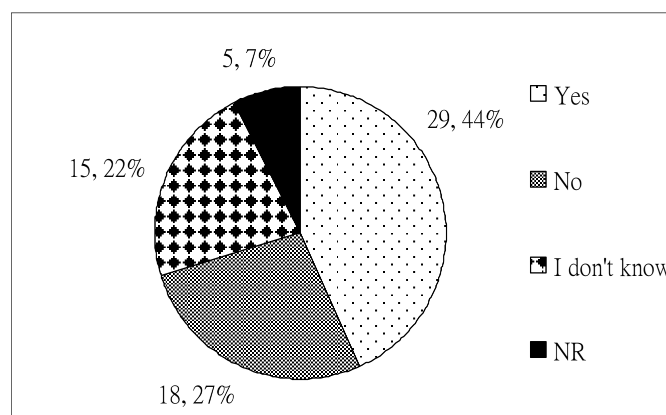

Figure 3: *Participants' views on whether communicative language teaching can take place in small classes (e.g. in classes of 20 students or fewer)*

Question 46 asked if participants regarded their own teaching as ‘communicative’. Eleven (11) participants did not respond to this question. Of the 56 who did respond, 11 (16%) answered *I don’t know;* 19 (28%) answered *No*; and 32 (47%) answered *Yes (see Figure 4)*.

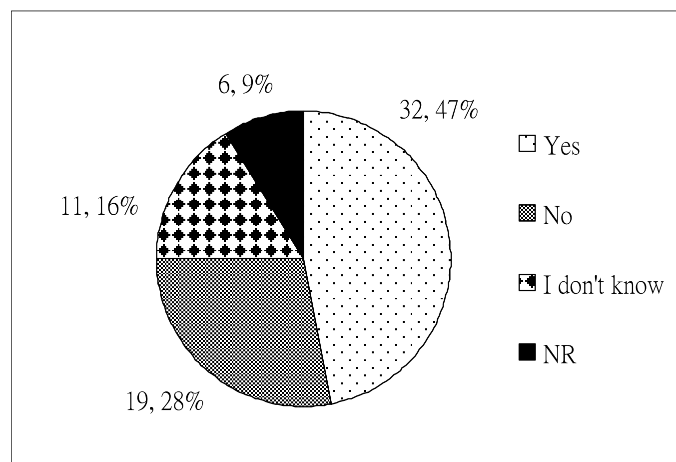

***Figure 4:** Participants’ views on whether their own teaching could be described as ‘communicative’*

Question 47 asked those who had answered *Yes* to the previous question to identify those characteristics of their own teaching that they would describe as ‘communicative’. Although 32 respondents had indicated that they *would* describe their own teaching as ‘communicative’, only 23 responded to this question and there were only 32 items listed, with the majority of respondents listing only one item. The responses were grouped into categories as follows: group discussion; information gap activities; jigsaw activities; role play; problem-solving; teacher-student interaction; student-student interaction; authentic materials (see *Figure 5*):

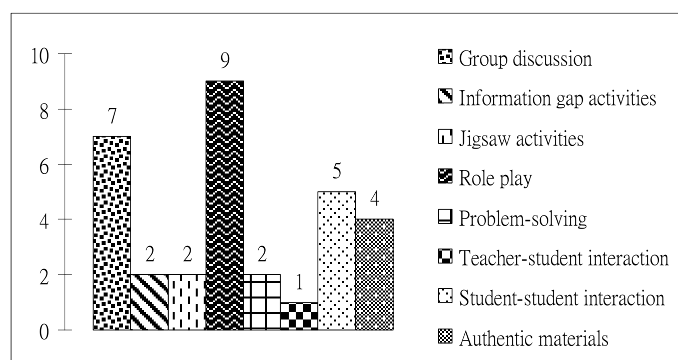

***Figure 5:** Characteristics of own teaching described as ‘communicative’ - Number of times items occurred*

Question 48 asked participants to estimate how much of the time they used English when they spoke in class?

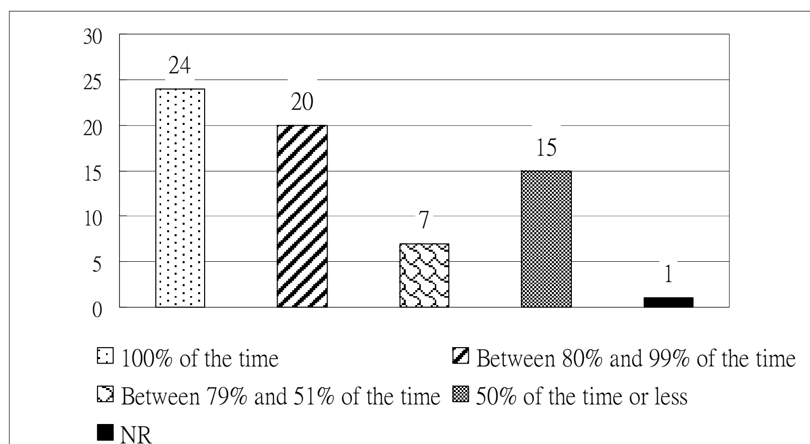

Figure 6: *Participants' estimates of the amount of time they use English when speaking in class*

Twenty five (25) respondents selected the first category (*100% of the time*); 20 selected the second category (*between 80% and 99% of the time*); 7 selected the third category (*between 51% and 79% of the time*); 15 selected the fourth category (*50% or less of the time*). Thus, over 20% of the respondents claimed to use English for 50% of the time or less when they spoke in English classes and over 30% claimed to use English for less than 80% of the time.

Question 49 asked what kind of activities respondents used in their English classes. There were 17 options and respondents could tick any number of categories. There were 517 selections as indicated in *Table 1*:

Table 1: *Activities participants use in class*

11.	Group discussion involving problem-solving	52
1.	Whatever is in the textbook	49
2.	Oral drill practice	49
14	Short answers based on interpreting text	44
7.	Role play	40
17.	Reading aloud the dialogues and/or texts in textbooks	39
3.	Written drill practice	37
4.	Explicit grammar teaching	34
6.	Singing	26
12.	Writing or telling a story based on a sequence of pictures	26
5.	Implicit grammar teaching	23
15.	Reading and/or writing film or television program reviews	19
13.	Writing letters	23
9.	Vocabulary-based games	16
8.	Grammar-based games	15
16.	Debating	14
10.	Designing graphs on the basis of written or spoken text	10

Question 50 asked: *Which of the following statements best describes your philosophy about English teaching?* There were four options:

- I believe it is important to explain grammatical rules explicitly in Chinese and translate sentences into Chinese so that students can understand;
- I believe that students will be more motivated if my teaching mainly focuses on listening and speaking in English;
- I believe that students can learn better if the focus is on meaning, learning grammar is less important;
- I believe that students' English will improve naturally if I speak English all or most of the time in class.

Eight participants did not respond to the question. Although the expectation was that participants would make only one selection, seven respondents' made two selections.

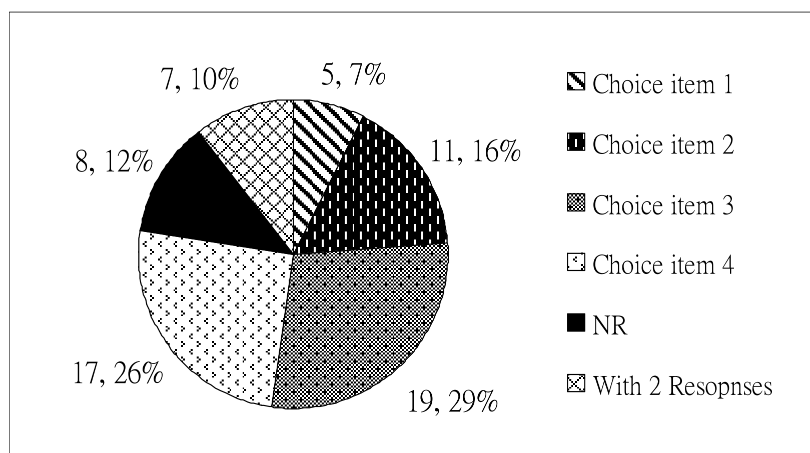

Figure 7: *Respondents' teaching philosophy*

The most popular option (19 responses) was the third one: *I believe that students can learn better if the focus is on meaning; learning grammar is less important*. The next most popular option (17 responses) was the fourth one: *I believe that students' English will improve naturally if I speak English all or most of the time in class*. Next in popularity (11 responses) was the second option: *I believe that students will be more motivated if my teaching mainly focuses on listening and speaking in English.* Least popular (5 responses) was the first option: *I believe it is important to explain grammatical rules explicitly in Chinese and translate sentences into Chinese so that students can understand*.

Discussion

It is interesting to note that only 41 respondents (61% of the total cohort) reported believing that communicative language teaching was relevant at the level they taught and only 18 (27% of the total cohort) indicated clearly that they did *not* believe that communicative language teaching could take place only in small classes (of, for example, 20 or fewer students). Furthermore, although 32 respondents (47% of the total cohort) claimed that their own teaching was communicative, only 23 (34% of the cohort), attempted to specify some of those aspects of their teaching that led them to classify it as communicative. Of these 23, the majority provided only one such characteristic. Since a communicative approach to language teaching generally emphasizes the importance of using the target language in class, it is relevant to note

that fewer than 70% of respondents claimed to use English when talking in class for 80% of the time or more. Also relevant here is the fact that when asked about the activities they used in class, only 23 (34%) selected 'implicit grammar teaching' (generally characteristic of a communicative approach), whereas 34 (51%) selected 'explicit grammar teaching'. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that although responses to Question 49 indicated that many in-class activities appeared to be communicatively oriented (for example, group discussion involving problem solving (52 entries); role play (40 responses); writing or telling a story based on a series of pictures (26 entries); reading and/ or writing film or television program reviews)), this may be largely due to the nature of the textbooks used since 52 respondents (77%) indicated that in-class activities related to 'whatever is in the textbook'.

What all of this suggests is that, so far at least as this sample of tertiary level teachers of English in Taiwan is concerned, the impact of communicative language teaching is by no means as pervasive as one might expect on the basis of the amount of coverage it has had in the literature on language teaching.

When asked whether they could give examples of the specific outcomes of the courses they taught, just over half of the participants (37/ 55%) said that they could. However, only 32 (67%) provided examples of specific learning outcomes when requested to do so and only two of these examples were *both* specific *and* of direct relevance to the type of course indicated in the course title. This would appear to indicate that the trend towards the specification of learning outcomes in terms of 'can do' statements has thus far had little impact on this sample of tertiary level teachers of English.

These findings suggest that, so far as the teachers involved in this study are concerned, at least two major 'orthodoxies' (Graddol, 2006, p. 82) of English language teaching emerging out of the "homogenous discourses [of] . . . a few dominant communities" (Canagarajah, 2005a, xiv) may be having less impact than is sometimes supposed. As Canagarajah (2005b, p. 9) observes, the local appears to be negotiating and modifying the global in its own way.

Endnotes

1. The audio-lingual approach generally involved explicit rules and the repetition of the core structural elements of model sentences (with lexical variation).

2. It is relevant to observe that only responses to those parts of the questionnaire that relate to CLT and outcomes-based achievement objectives specification are reported here.

3. The Human Research Ethics Committee of the School of Māori and Pacific Development (in which I was then enrolled for a PhD degree).

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