Contextualization of Communicative Language Teaching in Confucian Heritage Culture: Challenging Pedagogic Dichotomization

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Abstract

Based on the comprehensive comparison of the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) and the pedagogic ideas of Confucian heritage culture (CHC), this study discusses the conceptual common ground, where both principles can be reconciled, and considers practical, negotiated pedagogic forms with the suggestion of some cases of contextualization of CLT in CHC. In summary, CLT and CHC can be reconciled in their pursuit of education for the whole person, cooperative learning, teaching language structures and content, and task completion orientation. Thus, by distributing more responsibilities to learners and encouraging their participation, students in CHC can experience more communicative lessons. By balancing teaching language forms and content, they can learn language in a more comprehensive way, and by applying task-based learning with precise procedures and controls, their task-orientation tendency can enable students to participate in more communicative activities. These comprehensions and discussions, as a challenge to pedagogic dichotomization, will help English teachers in CHC or intercultural classrooms to flexibly construct context-sensitive pedagogies.

Keywords
communicative language teaching, Confucian heritage culture, contextualization, negotiated pedagogy, context-sensitive pedagogy

Introduction

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach that emphasizes students’ language learning for the purpose of communication (Duff, 2014). With its practicality in the globalization world, CLT has been perceived as the best package for English language teaching (ELT). National English curricula and related policies in the countries where English is a foreign language (EFL), such as China (Lin, 2009; Wang & Lam, 2009), Japan (Abe, 2013; MEXT, 2011), Korea (MEST, 2008; MOE, 2015), and Vietnam (Mai, 2017; Viet, 2008), also follow the trend. However, several studies have reported cases of pedagogic conflict that CLT implementation generates in English classrooms in these countries which are based on Confucian heritage culture (CHC); see also the conflict between the pedagogic expectations of East Asian students and the Western teaching practice in their overseas learning contexts (Han, 2016a; Gebhard, 2013). The conflict concerns teachers’ embarrassment and misapplication of CLT or students’ resistance or maladjustment to CLT (Ahmad & Rao, 2012; Han, 2016b; Le Ha, 2008; Zhang et al., 2013). As a rationale for the conflict, the studies focus on the differences between the principles of CLT, which are based on Western modern educational values, and the pedagogies of Confucian culture.

However, despite the conflicts, it cannot be easily disregarded that CLT has a variety of pedagogic advantages to help learners enhance their practical communication skills as well as increase their interest in language learning (Duff, 2014). It also lets students learn a new language of, by, and for the various use of the language, while the grammar-translation method (GTM), which is still applied in both some CHC and Western language learning contexts, mainly focuses on teaching language structures and rigorous reading skills (Richards, 2006). Development of meaning negotiation strategies and cooperation skills is also expected in the CLT learners (Ellis et al., 2020; Richards,
sciences (Beaumont & Chang, 2011), which could be gained by the modification, adaptation, and integration of various pedagogies based on the considerations of diverse social and contextual factors (Konst & Kairisto-Mertanen, 2020). Thus, from the perspective of pedagogical practicality and development, considering the ways to reconcile different pedagogies seems more valuable than regarding CLT and other upcoming disparate pedagogies as objects that should be overcome.

The attempt to identify the possibilities of pedagogic reconciliation is a meaningful process toward establishing the culturally and contextually appropriate pedagogy that is socially and educationally acceptable and ethical to the teachers and students in foreign language classrooms. This is because it will contribute to forming the basis of the development of the pedagogies compatible with local characteristics and sensibilities (Duff, 2014). The attempt is an active process for receivers to autonomously determine the extent and forms of accepting foreign pedagogical principles for contextualization. Thus, it is also an endeavor to lessen the pervasiveness of linguistic or pedagogical colonialism or native-speakerism that could be embedded in the Western-based CLT (Holliday, 2015; Lin, 2009; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013; Viet, 2008).

Based on these deliberations, the current study compares pedagogic principles of CLT and CHC, discusses the conceptual common ground between them, and suggests some cases of and methods for contextualization of CLT in CHC; introduction of the cases will help the teachers in CHC or intercultural situations consider their own methods of CLT contextualization. In the process of comparison, discussion, and suggestion, the study respects the value of each pedagogy instead of prioritizing a particular pedagogy, and it speculates how to balance different pedagogic principles. The comparison is conducted referring to the current and original, but still prevailing, principles and practices of each, because holding on to past values to explain contemporary behavior may disregard changing socio-educational needs (Bao, 2014). Comprehension of the pedagogical common ground will relieve the discomfort that the teachers and students in CHC English classrooms or those in the intercultural situations experience with their CLT-focused classrooms. Thus, it will let them enjoy several advantages both pedagogies have and give. It will also help the educators and researchers in intercultural educational contexts consider and develop more culturally and contextually valid pedagogic values and practices.

Comparison Between CLT and CHC of the Pedagogic Principles

This section examines the pedagogical principles of CLT and CHC and provides the rationales for the establishment of the conceptual common ground on which both approaches can be reconciled through negotiations.

Pedagogic Principles of CLT

Communicative competence and focus on meaning. Teaching language for communication was initiated in the 1970s, in the form of the notional–functional curriculum (Duff, 2014). In Europe and the U.S., language learning began to be implemented for purposes of communication (Duff, 2014; Richards, 2006), with a focus on the meanings that languages produce and the situations where languages are used (Savignon, 2002). Hymes (1972) proposed the concept of communicative competence which describes language competence in a social context and achieving this became the aim of foreign language learning. As specifics of this competence, Canale and Swain (1980) suggested socio-cultural, strategic, discourse, and grammatical competences, which encapsulate learners’ development of social, as well as linguistic, competence for the real use of the language. These also have been applied as main competences to be achieved in the national English curriculum of several countries, such as Korea (MOE, 2015), Japan (MEXT, 2011), China (Lin, 2009), and Vietnam (Mai, 2017, Viet, 2008). With social development, CLT now became a more functional, practical, and global approach to language learning, which describes diverse practices and principles (Duff, 2014).

Humanistic idea and learner autonomy. As the pedagogic principles of CLT are rooted in the idea of learner-centeredness, in keeping with Rousseau’s educational aim concerning children’s self-perfection and Locke’s pursuit of the humanistic approach (Shin, 2012), CLT pursues the holistic human development of learners. The significance of whole person education has been constantly emphasized in the Western curriculum as a basis of every area of education (Hanstedt, 2016; Harward, 2012; Long, 2013; McSweeney, 2015). In communicative classes, learner participation is encouraged, learner individualities are respected, and the meaning of language learning is connected with real-life language use and the development of critical thinking (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). The humanistic aspect of CLT lets learners make a choice and have autonomy in language learning, as well as facilitates the shift of power from teachers to students in classrooms (Massouleh & Jooneghani, 2012). In CLT, learners are active participants; teachers work as communication facilitators (Richards, 2006), creators of collaborative learning communities, and providers of worthwhile activities (Duff, 2014), beyond the role of a
knowledge giver. Thus, in general, classes are more learner-centered and less structure-centered (Hajizadeh & Salahshour, 2014), and the relationships of teachers and students are close, positive, and relaxed (Borg, 2006). In this sense, implementation of CLT is the realization of whole person education, and simultaneously a democratic mindset in ELT (Massouleh & Jooneghani, 2012).

Cooperative learning. Founded on Rousseau’s idea of desirable education, cooperative learning is supposed to foster learner participation during the lessons and to facilitate communication and interaction among students or between the teacher and the students, resulting in the learners acquiring cognitive development as well as social skills (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003; Richards, 2006). While cooperating, learners with different levels of (meta)cognition can be a constructive stimulus to one another and can draw out each other’s potential through meaning negotiations (Han, 2021). Specifically, one can refer to the others’ ideas and reshape their own ideas through self or interactive reflection, assisted by others’ cognitive and metacognitive competencies (Han, 2021). In addition, cooperating learners can help each other understand and solve tasks more successfully and construct knowledge together (Henson, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). In these ways, communicating with their peers or teachers, learners can proceed to achieving cognitive growth overcoming the zone of proximal development (ZPD), that is the distance between a learner’s cognitive ability and the higher level of cognitive ability others have (Vygotsky, 1978).

Task-based orientation. In line with Dewey’s preference of experience for effective learning, task-based learning (TBL) has been developed as an extension of CLT (Duff, 2014; Ellis et al., 2020; Lai & Li, 2011). It is a way of realizing (quasi) real-world communicative activities (Skehan, 1998). A task is “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is . . . focused on meaning rather than form” (Nunan, 1989, p. 10). Completing tasks, learners can increase their amount of talking, and experience broader cooperation and negotiations of meaning (Harmer, 2001), so they can acquire social and linguistic knowledge naturally. According to Richards and Rogers (2001), teachers become facilitators, advisers, and managers in TBL, who decide, make, and modify tasks to meet the learners’ needs and demonstrate successful task completion. The three steps of (1) pre-task, in which the topic and its linguistic aspects are introduced, (2) task-cycle, in which learners practice language performing tasks, and (3) language focus, where they report on the tasks, are conducted by the teacher’s guide (Willis, 1996; Willis & Willis, 2007). In this sense, teachers’ precise preparation for lessons is significant in TBL.

Content-based orientation. CLT can be performed by content-based learning (CBL), which integrates content learning with language learning (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). In CBL, students can communicate in their L2 in order to make meanings while using authentic materials (Duff, 2014). CBL increases learners’ intrinsic motivation and empowers them as they can focus on the content meaningful to their lives (Brown, 2001). This environment is anxiety-free and is thus considered to provide the learners with successful learning condition (Krashen, 1985). In order to maintain the learners’ low anxiety levels, comprehensible subject matters or inputs are needed, which are based on the consideration of the learners’ language competence, needs, interests, and knowledge (Krashen, 1991). Meanwhile, CBL is often condemned as it is premised on the learners’ high level of pre-existing language competency and weakens teaching language forms. However, it can be used for lower-level learners in immersion or bilingual programs through adaptation (Duff, 2014). Teachers’ feedback that encourages the learners’ language use and metalinguistic awareness can also compensate for such weakness of CBL (Pessa et al., 2007). In addition, applying CBL through cooperative learning can increase learners’ language use in a less stressful environment, and enhance confidence with shared responsibility (Shaw, 1997).

Misconceptions of CLT. Emphasis on real-life communication has often led CLT to be understood as teaching oral communication skills (excluding grammar), using group or pair work, and applying games or activities (Ellis et al., 2020; Savignon, 2002). Thus, CLT is confused with teaching English in English (Han, 2016b, 2017a; Li, 2001) and memorizing dialogue (Beaumont & Chang, 2011) in Korea, applying the audio-lingual method in China (Duff, 2014), and teaching speaking and listening skills in Japan (Abe, 2013). However, communicative lessons can be constructed in various forms based on the understanding of the learners’ socio-cultural contexts and pedagogic decisions founded on such understanding (Duff, 2014; Savignon, 2002). Thus, CLT involves focusing on teaching and learning written as well as oral communication skills along with adaptations of digital as well as traditional methods, tools, and materials (Duff, 2014; Richards, 2006). In addition, in performing task- or content-based lessons, the focus on forms, translation, and memorization via some games or activities can also be welcomed to the teacher’s repertoire (Savignon, 2002). The degree to which the first or second language is used, the teacher and student roles, and the form of activities can also be determined based on consideration of the teaching and learning contexts and teacher factors (Duff, 2014). These pedagogic flexibilities give CLT the potential to be reconciled with pedagogic principles founded in different cultures. However, such flexibility can also be the cause of teachers’ or their trainers’ misinterpretation and disorganized implementation of CLT (Littlewood, 2013; Spada, 2007).

Pedagogic principles of CLT are summarized below, as in Table 1.
Personality education and focus on meaning. Similar to the ideas of Plato and Comenius, education in Confucianism has aimed at finding the ego (Choi et al., 2007), developing a good personality, and producing intellectuals in action (Shin, 2012). These ideas are in line with Locke’s emphasis on developing a sound body and mind, Rousseau’s idea of self-perfection, Kant’s enhancement of free will, and Herbart’s establishment of ethical awareness through education (Shin, 2012). In content, Confucianism focuses on teaching moral principles required in our daily lives, so as to shape all our social relationships (Pham et al., 2020; Shin, 2012). However, the relationships in the past, including between teachers and students, were based on hierarchy, which seems still to influence current perspectives on teacher authority (Choi et al., 2007; Pham et al., 2020). Domains of intellectual development contained teaching and learning the odes, history, rites, music, social changes, and social order (Huanyin, 1993; Shin, 2012). These concerns aim to realize the order of nature in human society and stimulate the development of a holistic human while recovering and enhancing personality. Confucian education also involved teaching practical knowledge, as their scholars explored scientific knowledge and developed daily necessities (Shin, 2012).

This is reconciled with Dewey’s (1916) idea that education is the experience of life itself; his concept of life is inherently democratic. The current national (English) curriculum in Confucian countries still partly pursues these components of personality development, whole person education, and acquisition of practical knowledge (Mai, 2017; MEST, 2008; MEXT, 2011; Wang & Lam, 2009).

Standards of a good teacher. Instead of mostly limiting teaching practices to the classroom situations as in Western education, Confucian education includes education out of the classroom. Han Yu stated that the teacher is a person who teaches knowledge, enlightens learners, and shows the way to be human (Liu, 1973). Hsün-tzŭ defined a teacher’s qualities as having the potential to be respected by the students, memorising the Confucian scriptures, and teaching the deep meanings of these, but not over-transmitting knowledge to the students (Shin, 2012). Thus, in CHC the teachers were expected to be the ethical and intellectual examples and guide their students to follow them. These roles and expectations of teachers seem to partly remain in current CHC countries but in somewhat transformed ways (Han, 2016c; 2017b; Pham et al., 2020), combined with modern educational values adopted from the West (Phillipson, 2008; Shepard & Hayduk, 2002).

Table 1. Pedagogic Principles of CLT.

| Main features                           | Attributes                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communicative competence and focus on meaning | English learning for communication  |
|                                        | Emphasis on meaning                                                       |
|                                        | Socio-cultural, strategic, discourse, and grammatical competence          |
|                                        | Functional, practical, and global approach                                 |
| Humanistic idea and learner autonomy   | Learner-centeredness                                                      |
|                                        | Learner-autonomy                                                          |
|                                        | Holistic human development                                                |
|                                        | Learner participation encouraged                                          |
|                                        | Learner individualities respected                                         |
|                                        | Shift of power from teachers to learners and democratic classroom          |
|                                        | Teachers as communication facilitators, creators of learning communities, and providers of activities |
|                                        | Teacher–student relationships as close, positive, and relaxed             |
| Cooperative learning                   | Cooperative learning for participation, interaction, and communication     |
|                                        | Development of social as well as linguistic skills                        |
|                                        | Cognitive growth stimulated by others                                     |
| Task-based orientation                  | Task completion through quasi real-world communication                    |
|                                        | Focus on meaning                                                          |
|                                        | Increased talking, cooperation, and negotiation of learners                |
|                                        | Teachers as facilitators, advisors, managers, and guides                  |
| Content-based orientation              | Increase of students’ intrinsic motivation using the content of their concern |
|                                        | Anxiety-free environment                                                  |
|                                        | Comprehensible inputs                                                     |
| Misconceptions of CLT                  | Teaching oral communication skills                                        |
|                                        | Teaching English in English                                                |
|                                        | Applying the audio-lingual method                                         |
|                                        | Using group or pair work                                                  |

Pedagogic Principles of CHC

**Personality education and focus on meaning.** Similar to the ideas of Plato and Comenius, education in Confucianism has aimed at finding the ego (Choi et al., 2007), developing a good personality, and producing intellectuals in action (Shin, 2012). These ideas are in line with Locke’s emphasis on developing a sound body and mind, Rousseau’s idea of self-perfection, Kant’s enhancement of free will, and Herbart’s establishment of ethical awareness through education (Shin, 2012). In content, Confucianism focuses on teaching moral principles required in our daily lives, so as to shape all our social relationships (Pham et al., 2020; Shin, 2012). However, the relationships in the past, including between teachers and students, were based on hierarchy, which seems still to influence current perspectives on teacher authority (Choi et al., 2007; Pham et al., 2020). Domains of intellectual development contained teaching and learning the odes, history, rites, music, social changes, and social order (Huanyin, 1993; Shin, 2012). These concerns aim to realize the order of nature in human society and stimulate the development of a holistic human while recovering and enhancing personality. Confucian education also involved teaching practical knowledge, as their scholars explored scientific knowledge and developed daily necessities (Shin, 2012).
According to Cortazzi and Jin (1998), a good teacher in China is regarded as patient, humorous, friendly, moral, as having deep knowledge, and being responsive to learners’ questions. As standards for good English teachers, giving learner support, possessing language knowledge, teaching skills, and humanism, dedication, centering learners but with teacher lead, and building good relationship with students are suggested in China (Chu et al., 2021). In Vietnam, teachers’ language ability, teaching methods, socio-affective skills, dedication, friendliness, and responsiveness are expected by the students (Nghia, 2015). In Korea, teaching is a socially desirable job and teachers tend to gain a socially positive reputation (Lee & Kim, 2020). English teachers’ knowledge in theory and practice, language competence, teaching and management skills, interpersonal and social skills, material development and application competence, and efforts toward professional development are regarded to be significant (Han, 2016c, 2017b). Recently, Korean students expect their English teachers to be more competent and active in leading communicative lessons (Bao, 2014). The English language curriculum of Vietnam (Mai, 2017), Japan (MEXT, 2011), and Korea (MOE, 2015) also require their English teachers to develop the learners’ language competence, autonomous learning ability, and global citizenship. Thus, current expectations of teaching practices in CHC are mixed with traditional, Western, modern, and democratic ideas of education, though the phases may be different in each CHC country.

Learner participation and respect for individualities. Though the original Confucian practice stressed caution about over-transmission of knowledge (Shin, 2012), teaching practices in CHC have often been regarded to be teacher-centered knowledge transmission (Biggs, 1998; Pham et al., 2020). Confucian education originally pursued learners’ active participation in the classes and teachers’ focus on the individual learners’ differences. Confucius emphasized teaching students in accordance with their aptitude (Zhang & Watkins, 2007), and argued that education is an act of giving (knowledge or support) depending on the students’ levels and situations, so he himself used different levels of questions (Confucius, 2016; Shin, 2012). This perspective of learner-centeredness which is focused on responding to learner needs is partly observed in current Korean teachers’ pedagogic ideas and practices (Han, 2016b, 2017a). However, given that the aim of Confucian education is to produce intellectuals in action (Shin, 2012), education in CHC seems ultimately intended to produce autonomous learners. Thus, pedagogical effort is often exerted in CHC to let their students be more autonomous, reflective thinkers who enjoy participation, interaction, and feedback exchange (Chen, 2016; Pham et al., 2020). Meanwhile, while admitting different competences of individuals, CHC regards students as having the same potential learning ability. Thus, Asians since Confucius have believed that different outcomes are due to the different amount of the individual learner’s effort (Biggs, 1998). This belief seems to have become the basis of their hard-working and academic ethos.

Repetition for deep comprehension and test preparation. Traditional Confucian education focused on the reading, repetition, and memorization of Chinese characters or Confucian principles, so their teaching and learning method is often defined as passive or rote learning, and simple memorization (Jones, 1999; Kennedy, 2002). The current methods for English language learning in Japan—Yakudoku (Kojima, 2004)—and those of China (Wang & Lam, 2009) still show similar attributes. However, students in CHC are expected to perform deep learning through repetition and memorization, that is, the profound comprehension and internalization of meanings (Biggs, 1998; Kennedy, 2002; Littlewood, 2000; Shin, 2012; Xu, 2019). Nonetheless, in CHC, where an individual’s success is regarded as the family’s success, and achievement of social wealth and status is normally available through the gaining of high test results, repetition or memorization can be seen as essential or convenient for test preparation (Han, 2021; Li & Craig, 2019; Starr, 2012). The negative regard for test preparation lessons is often revealed by the teachers themselves in CHC (Li & Craig, 2019; Nagatomo, 2012; Tran et al., 2010; Van Canh & Barnard, 2009), contrary to their positive expectations of CLT (Han, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2021). This reflects the fact that pedagogical ideals suggested by their curriculum and actual practices are not coherent (Han, 2016b, 2017a, 2021; Duff, 2014; Nagatomo, 2012; Van Canh & Barnard, 2009; Wang & Lam, 2009).

Teacher–student interaction and discussion. In Confucian societies, discussion was valued as a significant teaching and learning strategy for reshaping individuals’ ideas and mental maturity (Shin, 2012). The main teaching method pursued by Confucius was constant conversation (Shin, 2012) and asking various questions that required learners’ deep thought (Biggs, 1998) as Socrates did. These methods are also reflected in whole class teaching conducted in Japan (Hess & Azuma, 1991), where authoritarianism and learner-centeredness operate commensally in the students’ discussion of a single problem with the teacher as a guide. Errors by a student are dealt with through public correction. Japanese students regard this as a chance for everyone to learn and develop. However, Vietnamese students, with their concern for the supremacy of social harmony, seem to regard the avoidance of losing face as more important in the process of learning so they tend to be cautious in exchanging different ideas which may hurt their peers (Pham et al., 2020; Thanh Pham, 2013). Thus, they seem to feel more comfortable when gaining feedback from their teachers who maintain a sufficient power distance from them (Pham et al., 2020). According to Biggs (1998), teaching practices are “part of the culture’s eco-system (p. 733).” Therefore, students’
discussion and interaction in different CHC countries may have their own forms which are congruent with their specific social norms.

Cooperative learning. While knowledge growth of individual students through their interactive and collaborative activities is expected in CLT, the operation of cooperation in CHC seems to be rooted in CHC countries’ culture of emphasizing social harmony and integration (Sally, 2006). This is the pursuit of a healthy and prosperous state of reconciliation, that is, harmony from multiplicity, that is, premised on respect for individual differences (Li, 2006). It is observed that CHC students prefer working, and perform better, in groups, particularly, when they have a collectivist orientation (Phuong-Mai et al., 2006). The usefulness of cooperation in foreign language learning is found in China under the provision of necessary academic and social skills for the learners (Zhang, 2010). Li et al. (2014) reveal that Chinese students value group work and actively seek to engage with it. Korean English teachers and students are also reported to prefer and be satisfied with cooperative English language learning (Cheong & Joo, 2005). Their preference for learning in groups is observed in their preference for study groups in which students’ autonomous learning is available (Viete & Peeler, 2007).

However, it was found that Korean middle school students do not prefer cooperative learning (Ho, 2009), and high-achieving female students do not enjoy group work (Han, 2021). Thus, it seems that depending on the students’ levels and needs, the extent of preference for, or the effect of, cooperative learning can be different in CHC countries. In addition, the extent of collectivism and individualism or horizontality and verticality of the society seems also influential on cooperation. As a collectivistic society, Korea has a vertical social structure whereas Japan is horizontal (Kudykunst & Lee, 2002), which can result in different forms of group work. Different levels of preference for public speaking or resilience in each CHC country can also engender different shapes of cooperation and discussion styles (Bao, 2014). Meanwhile, as CHC students tend to feel uncomfortable with opposing and criticizing their peers, and trust their teachers’ comments more than those of their peers (Ma, 2018; Pham et al., 2020; Zhao, 2010), their specific cooperation processes and related talk and task performance may not be in line with those in Western classrooms.

Pedagogic principles of CHC are summarized below, as in Table 2.

Consideration of the Contextualization of CLT in CHC for Context-Sensitive Language Education

Based on a general comprehension of the main pedagogic principles of the CLT and CHC, conceptual common ground between them can be discussed along with the deliberation of negotiated pedagogic forms through contextualization of CLT in CHC. Given that the current CHC societies involve both their traditional values and rather modernized ideas with globalization, neoliberalism, and capitalism or democracy (Acharyulu, 2018; Meyer, 2012; Parr, 2004; Shepard & Hayduk, 2002), the potential for their reconciliation with CLT seems to be increasing.

Education for a Whole Person and the Humanistic Approach

Both CLT and CHC pursue education for a whole person based on the humanistic approach; CLT focusses on developing democratic populations based on horizontal relationships, and in comparison, CHC focusses more on educating people to be harmonised with others based on vertical relationships (but currently this is also mixed with democratic ideas).

Both CLT and CHC pedagogies pursue an individual’s personality development through education. Since 18th-century industrialization, whenever their concern for personality growth was challenged, the West has constantly tried to maintain it as a primary value. Their respect for human beings and personality is expressed in their democracy, teacher–student roles, and also in CLT principles. In CHC, education for the whole person has been reflected in the countries’ national (English) curriculum as an essence of education (Shin, 2012), along with their modern codes including democracy or learner autonomy. This enhances the potential for the pedagogic reconciliation of CHC with the principles of CLT by providing learners with increased opportunities for participating in classroom activities and developing socialites as well as language competence, and simultaneously by letting teachers decrease their authority and power in classrooms; CHC countries where communitism, the tendency toward individualism, or strong collectivism prevails may reveal somewhat different forms of negotiation with CLT.

The pursuit of humanistic aspects of learners in both pedagogies brings about similar expectations of teacher roles and standards. English teachers in cooperative communicative lessons are expected to be a guide or a facilitator (Duff, 2014; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Richards, 2006), not limited to a knowledge transmitter. From the perspective of modern Western education, good teachers focus on learners, give positive expectations, praise and respect learners, and care for them through the establishment of a human relationship (Whitaker, 2003). These roles and standards are similarly observed in the English teachers’ and students’ ideas of good English teachers and teaching in Korea (Han, 2016c, 2017b), Vietnam (Nghia, 2015), and China (Chu et al., 2021). Thus, as Volet (1999) argues, the criteria for good (English) teachers and teaching in CLT and CHC may not be opposed. Specific activities reflecting
the negotiated ideas and forms of practice will be outlined in the following sections.

**Participation of Learners and Cooperative Learning**

*Based on respect for interaction and the participation of learners, both use advantages of cooperative learning; CLT is more learner-led, while in comparison cooperation in CHC is relatively teacher-guided.*

The pedagogic principles of CLT and CHC stress interpersonal processes among students or between the teacher and the students, and learner participation is sought. However, while the relationships are based on a horizontal connection within the framework of CLT, those in CHC are vertical in comparison (Li, 2006); the verticality seems to be realized in the pursuit of the teacher-centered group harmony in CHC, while the horizontality seems to be actualized in Western learners’ pursuit of the learner-centered, individual growth through collaboration and overcoming of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Students in CHC are observed to feel more satisfied with the feedback from the teachers than from their peers (Pham et al., 2020; Zhao, 2010). Thus, Western types of group work and student interaction cannot be easily applied in CHC as it is. While the members of a group in CLT share a similar level of power in performing particular roles, the group in CHC comprises a leader and sub-leaders, based on hierarchy, and they expect teachers to lead a lot (Nguyen et al., 2006). That is, the power distance between the members, and between the teacher and the learners operates vertically in terms of cooperation. The extent of individualism and collectivism in the Western and Confucian societies (while the former is close to the individualistic, in comparison, the latter is collectivistic; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) also may affect the form of group dynamics.

Thus, cooperative activities pursued in CLT can be contextualized in CHC, by reducing hierarchical rigidity and using the advantages of collectivism of CHC contexts. Though democracy in education can contribute to increasing students’ regular and equal participation, there is no evidence that the benefits of the Confucian cooperation style are fewer than those of the West. Therefore, it is unnecessary to disregard all the existing teaching and learning styles when implementing cooperative learning in CHC. For the increased and balanced participation of learners, the teacher in CHC can assign more clear roles and give sufficient discretion to each group member, supporting and encouraging them to actively produce their own ideas and express their creativity. In this situation, the value and amount of each student’s role in task completion can be equivalent to those of the group leader, so students can be responsible for learning and reduce their dependency on the leader and the teacher. Teachers’ use of questions which can trigger the exchange of students’

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**Table 2. Pedagogic Principles of CHC.**

| Main features                                      | Attributes                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Personality education and focus on meaning        | Development of a holistic human and whole-person education                |
|                                                   | Finding the ego                                                           |
|                                                   | Moral principles and personality education                                |
|                                                   | Valuing teacher authority                                                 |
|                                                   | Acquisition of practical knowledge                                        |
| Standards of a good teacher                       | Education out of classroom                                               |
|                                                   | Teachers as ethical and intellectual examples                             |
|                                                   | Defocus on knowledge transmission                                        |
|                                                   | Teaching meanings                                                        |
| Learner participation and respect for individualities | Mixed with Western, modern, democratic, and traditional ideas of education |
| Repetition for deep comprehension and test preparation | Deep learning through repetition and memorization                        |
|                                                   | Repetition and memorization for test preparation                         |
|                                                   | Positive expectations of CLT                                              |
| Teacher–student interaction and discussion         | Mental maturing of learners through discussions, conversations, and questions; different acceptance of these in different CHC countries |
| Cooperative learning                              | Cooperative learning based on social harmony                              |
|                                                   | Respect for individual multiplicities                                     |
|                                                   | Different forms of cooperation depending on social verticality and horizontality |
|                                                   | Discomfort with criticizing peers and trust in teachers’ comments         |
opinion, critical thinking, and creativity can help the students learn the meaning of cooperation and reflective thinking skills, which may not be acquired in teacher-centered knowledge transmission (Yun, 2018).

The possibility of the effective implementation of the negotiated forms of cooperation in CHC is found in several cases. Han’s (2021) study revealed that Korean high school students enjoy English learning in learner-made groups with various audio-visual materials and teacher feedback and through well-structured group activities specifically guided by their teachers; this supports that the way students are perceived and grouped influences their learning (Duff, 2014). The students in that context were let to cooperate for reading activities, answer teacher questions, and solve given quizzes. In Suh’s (2009) study, for cooperative English reading, Korean students organized their own small groups and each was assigned a clear role for jigsaw activities. This formed a non-threatening and supportive learning atmosphere, resulting in students’ increased reading fluency and a positive attitude toward reading. Collaborative reading activities, in which 116 Korean college students participated and which consisted of asking and answering questions, forming main ideas, and understanding word meanings, resulted in a statistical increase in the students’ reading proficiency tests in comparison to learning based on teacher-led instruction (Bang, 2002). These cases imply that text-based learning, which is prevalent in CHC, can be processed in a more learner-centered communicative way through negotiations of pedagogic principles.

CLT does not need to involve face-to-face communication or group work (Duff, 2014). Thus, using online systems can be another method to facilitate more flexible learner interaction and cooperation in CHC, in that it can weaken teacher involvement but increase learner participation by reducing their burden of losing face. Pham et al. (2020) found that Vietnamese students having experienced teacher-guided electronic collaborative peer review activities showed increased motivation for learning, comfort with critique from peers, writing skills, and reflective thinking skills. An online system was used in Taiwan in order to supplement in-classroom cooperation with wireless peer-assistant learning (Lan et al., 2006). The students performed and enjoyed dynamic collaborative reading and social interaction, helped each other through online communication, and made progress in reading compared to those who did not use it.

Learning of Language Structures and Content

Both include students’ learning of language structures as well as content; CLT is more meaning-focused, and in comparison, CHC is form-focused with regard to students’ preparation for their paper-pencil-based national exams.

CLT has been recognized as meaning-focused, as it deals with language meanings that languages produce and the situations where languages are used (Savignon, 2002). However, CLT includes teaching language structures as well as meanings, as communicative competence requires the ability to use and comprehend both (Canale & Swain, 1980). Meanwhile, Confucian education has valued teaching content, expecting learners’ deep comprehension of meanings through repetition and memorization (Biggs, 1998; Kennedy, 2002). However, the current trend for test preparation in CHC tends to drive their practices toward rote learning, as revealed in Japan (Kojima, 2004), Vietnam (Tran et al., 2010), and China (Wang & Lam, 2009). As far as there is such a pedagogic limitation, the achievement of reconciling teaching practices in CHC with CBL or TBL is not easy. Nonetheless, teaching practices and teachers’ pedagogic ideas observed in Guangzhou (Gao, 1996) and Korea (Han, 2016b, 2021) reflect the potential for test preparation lessons to be cognitively interactive, which can lead to the learners’ involvement in meaning-focused deep-thinking processes, through comprehending or forming topics or identifying the gist, for instance, or guessing word meanings by contexts, and answering questions by logical reasoning. These teaching and learning styles, which have been established through negotiations among their traditional styles, test preparation methods, and a communicative approach, seem to gradually account for an aspect of the current pedagogic trend in CHC. This also reflects the evolution of CLT in CHC contexts (Duff, 2014) and the possibility of forming a third pedagogy with increased contextual appropriacy.

To teach both meanings and forms in a balanced way in CHC, the range of meanings and forms to teach in CHC English classrooms needs to be discussed again with consideration of contextual particularities (Duff, 2014). According to Littlewood (2000), the extent of focus on meaning or form in pedagogic decisions is on a continuum. This continuum suggests five levels of transformability or adaptability of CLT related to the pedagogic tasks, from mainly dealing with language forms to maximized authentic communication. Thus, the teachers in CHC can determine the appropriate extent of focus on forms or content to teach, founded on learner and situation analysis combined with comprehension of the social and curricular expectations, and the practicality of the target language in their current and future society. Learners’ age and learning styles are also significant factors to be considered with regard to teaching language forms. For example, adult learners deal more easily with abstract information than the young (Brown, 2001), so they can be taught grammar effectively using deductive methods (Adi Ana & Ratminingsih, 2012). Then, teachers’ use of their L1 does not need to be avoided if it contributes to the effective learning of form and content (Spada, 2007). In order to accomplish more meaning-focused lessons, including students’ lives and interests in learning content is helpful (Han, 2021; Gong & Holliday, 2013) as this can lead students to concentrate better on learning while feeling ownership (Zhang & Head, 2010).
Simultaneously, CHC countries need to make their national curriculum and exams coherent. They can support their curriculum designers or educators to develop diverse assessment tools to more comprehensively measure communicative competence both involving content comprehension and linguistic knowledge. In the non-coherent system, teachers and students cannot be sure of what the appropriate pedagogies are, and their pedagogic decision or preference can easily be affected by the washback effect of the test (Han, 2017a; Duff, 2014). Along with curriculum reform, the teachers can be allowed to build up more culturally and contextually appropriate pedagogies, thus moving flexibly on Littlewood’s (2000) communicative continuum, differentiating the extent of forms and meanings to teach.

Teaching language structures within the context of texts and through communicative and interactive methods can be one of the methods to balance teaching language forms and meanings in CHC. Larsen-Freeman (2003) and Lee et al. (2008) suggest three dimensions to be considered in language learning: (a) form (what), (b) meaning (why), and (c) use (how). Focusing on these simultaneously, students can comprehensively concentrate on how a sentence or a phrase is formed, what it means, and when/why it is used. These aspects can be considered in the teaching of the passive voice (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Larsen-Freeman suggests teaching the auxiliary verbs “be” or “get,” focusing on them being followed by a past participle, the addition of “by” before the agent (form), the defocused agent (meaning), and the situation when the agent is unknown or redundant (use). This is an example of balanced teaching.

Grammar teaching can be activated through the contextualization of CLT, that is, by adapting its principles and integrating these with the existing grammar teaching, methods for the teaching of both forms and meanings, as in the Japanese context (Kojima, 2004). Kojima’s (2004) study implies that acquisition of language form can be facilitated by the students’ inductive and deductive learning of language structure through inferring grammatical rules from examples, comparing and observing different uses—in other words, through grammatical consciousness-raising. In addition, performing text translation activities with group work and teacher assistance can be effective for balanced teaching and increasing students’ interaction, concentration, and interest in English language learning in Korea (Han, 2021). Reading online articles and writing an English journal interacting with the texts or authors can also be communicative activities (Duff, 2014) both requiring a focus on the language structures and meanings as well as interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meanings (Savignon, 1991).

**Task Completion Orientation**

*Both value task completions; CLT focuses on completing tasks related to communicative activities, while tasks for exam preparation are mainly dealt with in CHC.*

In CLT, the pursuit of learning through experience led to the origin of TBL, and a task revolves around any piece of classroom work involving learner comprehension, interaction, and a focus on meaning (Nunan, 1989). Meanwhile, current education in CHC, in particular, of ELT, is focused on the task performance of test preparation with students’ high extrinsic motivation for social mobility (Li & Craig, 2019). The students in CHC are sensitive and responsive to the requirement of the test forms, which demonstrates their diligence and superiority in task completion (Volet, 1999). This attribute increases the potential of CHC to be reconciled with CLT through TBL.

In order to achieve the realization of TBL in CHC, the teachers’ active efforts to develop specific procedures for task performance is essential. Thus, teacher-led culture in CHC can give teachers familiar motivation in preparing TBL tailored to the CHC students who may lack learner autonomy which is equivalent to that of Western students; in fact, English teachers in CHC countries seem to endeavor to develop their TBL skills and various materials and activities through professional learning or pedagogical experimentations (Han, 2021; Hu, 2013; Littlewood, 2007). However, according to Volet (1999), there is no evidence that CHC students prefer a teacher-led style. Some Hong Kong students preferred a student-centered approach (McKay & Kember, 1997), and Chinese (Hu, 2013) and Korean (Han, 2016a, 2017a; Han & Jo, 2010) teachers and students are also reported to be positive about learner-centered TBL and CLT. Therefore, in order to maximize the adaptability and contextualization of CLT through task completion-oriented lessons, the extent of the teachers’ lead in lessons and students’ involvement in lesson planning can be determined again based on discussion among the stakeholders in CHC countries.

Korean secondary students learning English through learner-centered cooperative TBL in a program consisting of a series of task completions centering around a topic of learner-interests revealed their active and dynamic interaction, thus lowering the affective barrier in learning English (Han & Jo, 2010). Controlled CLT is also available in contexts where learners lack autonomy in task completion (Gorsuch, 2001). Hu and He’s (2013) model of “3+1+x” presents a successful TBL program in China. A unit of the program lasts 2 weeks, in which intensive reading classes take 3 hours a day, speaking and listening activities take 1 hour a day, and the students perform autonomous writing tasks for x-hours using university facilities. This represents a transition from the past traditional program, in which vocabulary and grammar learning took 60% of the whole, to 85% consisting of listening, speaking, and reading leaving only 5% for vocabulary and grammar. It is a case that shows the possibility of contextualization of CLT through the combination of the state’s test reform, the institute’s reformulation of the syllabus, and the cooperation of the quality teachers.
A comparison of the pedagogic principles of CLT and CHC is summarized below, as in Table 3.

**Table 3. Comparison of the Pedagogic Principles of CLT and CHC and Consideration of Negotiated Pedagogic Forms.**

| Common ground | Attributes of CLT                                                                 | Attributes of CHC                                                                 | Negotiated pedagogic forms                                                                 |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Education for a whole person and humanistic approach | • Developing democratic populations based on horizontal relationships                | • Educating people to be harmonized with others based on relatively vertical relationships | • Specifying pedagogic forms in the following items                                        |
| Participation of learners and cooperative learning  | • More learner-led, based on horizontal relationships                               | • More teacher-guided, based on relatively vertical relationships               | • Decreasing teacher authority                                                            |
| Learning of language structures and content          | • Shared power among the group members                                            | • Teachers’ active engagement                                                   | • Letting students organize their groups                                                  |
|                                                         | • Group dynamics generally affected by individualism                              | • Group members comprised of a leader and team members                          | • Distributing equivalent roles and responsibilities for group work to every student     |
|                                                         |                                                                                   | • Group dynamics generally affected by collectivism                             | • Encouraging students’ speech, participation, and creative thinking                    |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Providing cooperative activities for text reading, translation, and solving problems   |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Diversifying teacher questions                                                        |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Letting test-preparation lessons to be cognitively interactive                         |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Balancing the extent of teaching meanings and forms                                   |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Considering learner analysis, situation analysis, social and curricular expectations, practicality of English, learner age, and learning styles |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Using content related to students’ life and interest for practicing meaning-focused lessons |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Developing assessment tools to measure both meaning comprehensiveness and knowledge of forms |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Making coherent curriculum                                                            |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Applying text translation by group work                                                |
| Task completion orientation                            | • Completing tasks related to communicative activities                            | • Completing tasks related to exam preparation                                   | • Letting students read online articles and write English journals                        |
|                                                         |                                                                                   | • Students’ sensitivity to the requirements of the test forms                     | • Designing precise procedures of TBL with consideration of insufficiency of learner autonomy |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Determining the extent of teacher lead and learner lead through negotiations          |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Forming cooperative TBL that consists of a series of tasks related to students’ concern |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Constructing programs and tasks full of listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Reconciling test forms, syllabus reformulation, and teacher qualities                  |
|                                                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                   | • Performing controlled CLT                                                              |

**Conclusion**

The original aim of pedagogic decision and development is to establish the most effective teaching practice that maximizes learning. Teaching that does not generate learning is meaningless (Oh, 2011). Thus, in the center of education are students and their learning, and endeavor for pedagogical contextualization through negotiations of pedagogic principles is ultimately for the realization of learner-centeredness in CHC as well as in the West. Different conceptualizations of and practices for learner-centeredness and the attempts for pedagogical contextualization should be respected, as they are all the efforts for promoting pedagogies with cultural and contextual sensitivity and flexibility (Klemenčič & Hoidn, 2020). It is socially and pedagogically ethical in that any single pedagogic concept or method, including CLT (and academic principles of CHC as well), cannot satisfy every
learner of different backgrounds (Duff, 2014; Ellis et al., 2020; Kim, 2006). In addition, some learners in CHC countries may expect and welcome diverse or innovative practices but harmonized with their existing academic culture. Contextualization of CLT can contribute to satisfying those learners in pursuit of pedagogical change or development.

The current study deliberated over the advantages of the pedagogic principles of CLT and CHC accompanied by considerations and discussions of the practicality and possibility of their pedagogical negotiations. It was a pedagogically meaningful attempt, as it let the teachers and curriculum designers speculate as to contextually appropriate pedagogic forms for the improvement of English teaching and learning in CHC or intercultural classrooms. This was a pedagogically constructive process, contrary to many other studies that focus on emphasizing pedagogical differences between CLT and CHC while arguing the difficulties of applying CLT in CHC.

In addition, the current study, which is an active pursuit of pedagogical practicality through the contextualization of CLT, can motivate foreign language teachers and curriculum designers in the countries of languages other than English to actuate their agency in the process of determining their teaching practices and forming pedagogical guidelines in their curriculum. Based on the current study, they can identify and comprehend the feasibility of the contextualized forms of CLT and specifically consider how to realize their education for a whole person using CLT, to balance teaching content and forms, to lead cooperative learning adding more learner participation, and to relate their task completion orientation to students’ performance of task-based learning. In this way, they can learn to address newly introduced pedagogies (other new pedagogies might be introduced later or be already coming in the face of the fourth industrial era) and to determine the extent of pedagogic adoption, adaptation, and negotiation.

Considering that the current and forthcoming era requires workforces with various competencies in communication, collaboration, negotiation, critical thinking, and creativity (Duff, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2016), adherence to the existing pedagogy may not be sufficient and beneficial in educating language learners. When those that do not normally belong together are put together, a new insight can be generated (Koestler, 1989), and this new insight should be acceptable within the domain where it occurs (Maley, 2018). In this sense, speculating contextualization of CLT in CHC probably gave English educators in CHC chances to consider or produce a third, innovative pedagogic framework for their improved language education, responding to their changing social and educational needs. For the success of the establishment of such a pedagogic framework, teachers’ formation of a positive attitude toward pedagogic negotiations and active experimentations of these seem necessary with their professional autonomy as well as institutional support activated. This is because teachers play a pivotal role in planning and implementing reasonable pedagogies (Duff, 2014) and in forming student-centered ecosystems (Klemenčič & Hoidn, 2020).

Deliberation about the negotiated pedagogy in the current study was based on the comprehensive understanding of different pedagogies and the focus on the similarities and particularities of their teaching and learning contexts with an examination of the social, cultural, and political expectations related to the pedagogies. Given that social, political, and economic changes in CHC countries continuously require the transformation of the standards of quality teachers and teaching (as well as in the West), the stakeholders’ endeavor for pedagogic contextualization through meaning negotiations and accompanied curriculum reform will be a limitless, iterative, reflective process in the quest for effective language education.

Author Note

Insuk Han studied curriculum internationalization in higher education at Monash University, Australia and English teachers’ professional identity at Leeds Metropolitan University, UK, to draw out implications for successful curriculum reform. She is interested in comprehending teachers’ pedagogical problem-solving processes in relation to their PI and metacognition, and developing socio-culturally appropriate and context-sensitive professional standards and pedagogies.

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