

## **Introduction**

In order to mediate reticence in the EFL/ESL classroom, research has identified strategies that promote participation. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is one approach that has been recommended as an answer to the problem of participation (Liu, 2005; Ye, 2007; and Chi, 2008). Ye (2007) states that,

The basic features of CLT are: (1) It focuses on students' active participation, the whole classroom is not the teacher-centered, but students-centered one. The teacher should give students enough time to practice during class. (2) The English teacher should help students to be more independent, active and fluent in using English. In real life situations, students will use the language without [the] teacher's help. (3) When using the CLT, the teacher often organizes pair and group work, the whole classroom setting should be arranged in favor of these activities (p. 31).

CLT offers a framework from which instructors can promote participation and perhaps, is the most widely used model in the EFL/ESL setting. Liu (2005) indicated the extent of the use of CLT in a study related to the challenges facing EFL teachers at Taiwanese universities stating that, "The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach has been common in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs at Taiwanese universities in recent years" (p. 212), despite its detractors including Evans (1999) and Shing (2001) who suggested that CLT is an American culture-based approach contradictory to many values of the Taiwanese culture. The use of CLT task-oriented strategies can be observed in much research recommending task-oriented activities promoting participation.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The literature concerning CLT has focused on strategies promoting participation and on student preferences related to such strategies. Given that the

CLT method is widely employed in Taiwanese universities and research is strategy oriented, further research into the personality traits of teachers that promote participation and the roles of the teacher in a CLT setting to determine what changes are necessary from a traditional teacher-centered to a student-centered approach is warranted. Teacher personality traits that identify and define the roles of a teacher will contribute to a practical understanding of the affects of personality on learning guiding teachers in an adjustment process that will enhance effectiveness. That research needs to be conducted from both the teachers' and the students' perspectives or a possible mismatch of beliefs, values, and practices may result in a failed attempt to implement the CLT approach.

Research into the personality traits and roles of the teacher in most academic settings has identified the elements that comprise the nature of the effective teacher including elements of the teacher's personality, classroom management, and classroom activities. However, such research is not readily available in the EFL/ESL CLT setting. This study identifies the students' and teachers' perspectives of the role of the teacher in the CLT setting. Since the CLT methodology has been employed widely during the past two decades with few studies identifying the perspective of the teacher, this study contributes a unique element to the literature needing further discussion.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to investigate teacher and student perceptions of the role of the teacher in a listening/speaking course employing the CLT approach. Identifying the factors that teachers and students identify as important provides the framework for a practical approach to improving teacher behaviors adaptable by professionals confronted with the dilemma of a lack of participation. By identifying the teacher and student perceptions, teachers can adapt their teaching styles by designing and implementing activities that promote participation and improve classroom behaviors and practices.

An assumption of the study was that teachers and students could best explain their understanding of the role of the teacher based on personal experiences. Furthermore, it was assumed that the relationship between the participants and researchers would encourage the participants to freely express their views. Three keys to this research were the rapport between the researchers and the participants, the perspective of the participants, and the ability of the participants to articulate their ideas. Merriam (1998) expressed the importance of the participants' perspective by stating that, "The key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's" (p. 6).

### **Research Questions**

The over-arching research question guiding this research was "What are the roles of the teacher in a CLT classroom." Three research questions provided the framework for the study. The questions emerged during the planning stages of the research including the review of the literature. The questions provided direction for the semi-structured interviews, and provided a structure for organizing and reporting the data gathered over a 4-month period during fall of 2008 and the spring of 2009. The research questions asked were:

- 1) What are the students' perceptions of the roles of the teacher in a CLT classroom?
- 2) What are teachers' perceptions of role of the teacher in the CLT classroom?
- 3) What teacher personality traits influence the students' willingness to participate in the CLT classroom?

### **Literature Review**

This literature review includes studies related to task strategies, teacher personality traits, and the role of the teacher which are three major components of

the effective CLT classroom.

### **CLT Task Strategies**

CLT task-oriented strategies promote participation and include a wide range of activities including the use of music, roleplays, pair work, small group discussion, game playing, interviewing, and other activities.

Bada and Okan (2000), in a study involving 230 English majors, used a chi-square frequency analysis and t tests to identify the language learning preferences of students as a means of determining activities that promote participation. They found "...that students generally prefer to work either individually, 60.4%, or in pairs, 51.3%" (p. 4), and indicated that students prefer not to work in large groups. Furthermore, these researchers found that the students believed that interaction among the students through small group discussions was most beneficial in terms of the classroom activities. "The results show that learners do not want to adopt a totally passive role in the learning process..." (Bada & Okan, 2000, p. 7).

Regarding such interaction, Storch (2002) investigated patterns in ESL pair work and identified elements essential to groups finding that pair work promotes the scaffolding of performance. The study included 10 pairs of participants involved in writing a composition, an editing task, and a text reconstruction task. Paired students worked together on all three tasks. Storch (2002) identified four patterns of pair interaction: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice. The collaborative and expert/novice patterns promoted the scaffolding of learning whereas the other two patterns sometimes reinforced learning that was not in the desired direction (p. 146). The importance of this finding relates to the role of the teacher as a guide in building an atmosphere that promotes collaborative learning.

A unique strategy to encourage interaction was suggested by Schneider (2001) who recommended the use of pair taping to increase motivation and achievement

through fluency practice. Schneider (2001) found that the tape recording of pair work is an effective method to increase participation, motivation, fluency, and achievement. Fifty students in two classes were given the option of working in pairs outside of the classroom in lieu of attendance. Students tape recorded assigned topics in an equivalent amount of time to that of the class session. These recordings were evaluated by the teacher. Schneider (2001) continued this activity over a 3-year period. All students involved in the study completed the same questionnaire that students not participating completed. The 10 questions posed in the questionnaire indicated that in 9 out of the 10 questions, the students working in the pair taping activity felt more strongly about the questions. In only one case did the paired taping students feel less strongly than the students who attended the regular class sessions, and that was feeling close to the teacher a concern associated with task strategies employed by teachers.

Courtney (1996) suggested that oral task strategies are "...generally associated with the key notion of negotiation of meaning—in particular, clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and repair and repetition strategies" (p. 323), and that "The strategy of repetition was found to be the most important variable contributing to significant statistical differences between tasks" (p. 323). Not only does meaning need to be negotiated, but task design also needs to be negotiated (Courtney, 1996). Involving students in determining the topics to be used promotes learning through topics of interest because the students know best what they need to learn.

Task design is important in the CLT approach as Murphy (2003) states, "Tasks should therefore involve learners in reflecting on the way in which they carried them out, as well as on the language they used, thereby helping to develop learner autonomy" (p. 354). The study involved the analysis of coping mechanisms employed by eight intermediate level English learners in task oriented activities. Murphy (2003) found that, "...the evidence from this study strongly suggests that the influence of learners on the task can jeopardize the task designer's goals" (p.

358). Therefore, a need for carefully structuring the tasks, monitoring the activities of the learners, and student reflection on their involvement in the task is essential in promoting the desired outcomes.

Other factors influence outcomes, however, as Jenkins (2009) in a study concerning the influence of peer pressure on participation in the CLT classroom indicated. Jenkins (2009) interviewed two second year and two fourth year students three times each and observed student interaction for 6 weeks in the students' conversation class. Jenkins (2009) said:

The participants also indicated that in classes where the students were divided into groups for a discussion, much more discussion was possible depending upon the constituents in the group. When the members of a group are friends and English ability is perceived to be on a par within the group, group discussions can be profitable for these participants (p. 94).

Jenkins (2009) indicated that the participants identified the Chinese culture, self-perceived language ability, student personality, and peer pressure as factors influencing participation. The four mediating factors identified as useful in over-coming the resistance to participate according to the participants included, "...class atmosphere, instructor involvement, group size, and topic of discussion that would encourage or discourage their participation in a classroom discussion" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 93).

Such task strategies are only one dimension of the problem of interaction in the CLT classroom. Teacher personality traits also contribute to the types of interaction occurring in the CLT classroom as seen in the next section of the literature review.

### **Teacher Personality Traits and Beliefs**

Teacher characteristics and personality have been discussed in the literature in terms of what traits contribute to teacher effectiveness for virtually all academic areas while only a few studies are available in the EFL/ESL CLT arena, particularly

in Taiwan. The work of Omaggio-Hadley (2001) suggests that teachers need to be flexible in the way English is taught indicating that teachers need to be open-minded and experiment with different ideas to improve participation.

Mowrer, Love, and Orem (2004) identified ten teacher characteristics in various educational settings in 2 studies in which 466 undergraduate students rated the important characteristics of effective teachers. Teachers who were approachable, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, realistic, encouraging, creative, accessible, flexible, respectful and effective communicators were considered as the most desirable type of instructor. They also found that these teacher characteristics were consistent across student types and rating mechanisms (p. 107). Teachers with these characteristics create a safe-learning environment where students feel at ease participating. Although this study was not directly related to CLT, many of the characteristics of the CLT approach are present in the discussion of effective teachers.

Jenkins (2008), in a qualitative investigation of students' reticence to participate, interviewed 10 second year English majors studying at a private university in Taiwan. In discussing how the personality of the teacher influences participation, Jenkins (2008) reported that the majority of the students were more at ease with native-speakers of English as teachers because, "native English speakers were more humorous, encouraged participation more often, and were more positive in their comments concerning the students' English ability than were native Chinese speaking professors (p. 83) again indicating the importance of personality traits. Jenkins (2008) found these personality traits of the teacher more important than the native language or cultural background of the teacher in creating a classroom atmosphere that promoted participation.

Sowden (2007) in a paper related to culture in the English classroom and the "good teacher" reflects on the process dimension in teaching by suggesting that "While confidence in specific methods has declined, interest in individual learner differences, such as motivation, aptitude, family background, has noticeably

increased,” (p. 304). Appropriate personal qualities, therefore, are what count most in the development of good intercultural communicative competence. In fact, I would argue, they are the key to overall success in the classroom...” (p. 307). Teachers teach who they are, and therefore, integrity and character are essential elements in the role of the teacher (Snowden, 2007).

An aspect of the issue of teacher characteristics and traits has to do with the topic of teacher beliefs. Liao (2007) found that a teacher's beliefs dictate the methods of teaching and techniques used and that a teacher's belief that “the younger the better” in relationship to when to begin learning English was a belief “compatible with some underlying teaching principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)” (p. 56). If such a connection between a teacher's beliefs and the use of the CLT exists, the effectiveness of implementing a CLT approach may be dependent upon other teacher beliefs influencing the role of the teacher in the CLT classroom.

### **The Role of the Teacher**

The development of CLT has had an effect on the roles that learners and teachers are required to adopt in second language learning (Nunan, 1989). In the CLT classroom, learners have an active, negotiative role (Breen & Candlin, 1980). The new learner's role necessitates a mutual change in the traditional role of the teacher. “The teacher no longer plays a role as the sole source of power, authority and control in the classroom; instead, teachers serve as an “adviser, manager, resource person, facilitator, and co-communicator” (Oxford, Lavine, & Crookall, 1989, p. 35). According to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), the faculty does make a difference in the roles they play including “...encouraging cooperation among students, communicating high expectations, encouraging contact between students and faculty, and using active learning techniques” (p. 156). That engagement compels a change in the traditional role of the teacher.

The role of the teacher using the CLT approach has dramatically changed



the traditional teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered classroom. Helterbran (2008) confirms that change by stating that, “The primary teaching role has changed over time from imparter of knowledge to facilitator of learning, something that is important in the information or knowledge society in which we live,” (p. 127). Identifying the varying roles of the teacher as a facilitator is essential to developing quality learning experiences. The goal of providing quality learning experiences is no easy matter, however, as Ezzedeen (2008) indicates in connection to group discussions by stating that, “Leading productive class discussions, ones that challenge students intellectually and engage them affectively, is probably one of the most complex and difficult tasks facing college educators” (p. 230). The role of the teacher is multi-faceted and includes a structural and a process dimension. The structural dimension refers to the way in which materials are presented and students are engaged in activities. The process dimension refers to the interpersonal factors that establish rapport with the students and can be associated with how the teachers perceive their identity.

The identity of the teacher has been defined in the works of Richards and Rodgers (2001) who viewed the instructor as a class facilitator and coordinator preparing students for active learning through interactive, communicative learning tasks and recommended that instructors should guide students in learning activities that capitalize on the learning experiences, knowledge, and abilities of the students. Richards and Rodgers (2001) view the role of the teacher in CLT as quite different from the traditional teacher-centered classroom.

Finally, Goker (2006) discussed the role of the teacher in an EFL setting from a reflective management point of view similar in nature to the language used in describing the CLT method pointing out that “Teachers serve as facilitators of learning, rather than as presenters of information” (p. 193). Goker (2006) also indicates that students are involved in tasks related to real world uses of English while the teacher implements the use of pair and group activities.

There is little doubt that research indicates the classroom setting should be

student-centered. Students must be given the opportunity to participate and be provided with appropriate feedback if students are to make progress in their communicative skills. The role of the teacher in the CLT classroom, therefore, needs to be clearly delineated in order to maximize the learning experience.

### **Methodology**

This study explored teachers' and students' perceptions of the role of the teacher in a CLT classroom. Three individual interviews with four university Applied English Department professors employing CLT and four students participating in a listening/speaking classroom at a private university in Taiwan were conducted to gather in depth information concerning what roles, attitudes, and behaviors of the teacher are important in promoting participation.

### **Faculty Participants**

The professors were selected to participate because these individuals employed the CLT approach. The familiarity of the researchers with the faculty allowed for the selection of professors who were experienced listening/speaking instructors. Since the university employs English teachers with varying backgrounds, the researchers determined that selecting teachers trained in TESOL, or who majored in education, was another important element in selecting the participants. Two native-English speaking and two native-Chinese speaking professors were asked to participate in order to gain insight into the importance of the CLT approach from a cultural perspective. Two female and two male professors assured that the topic would be discussed from the perspective of the gender. Two of the teachers (one native English speaking male and one non-native English speaking female) have more than ten years experience using CLT in an EFL setting at the university level. The other two faculty participants had between three and six years of experience. The experience of these teachers in the CLT classroom lends itself to the credibility of the observations of this faculty.

## **Student Participants**

The student participants were selected from a group of 29 second and third year English major students participating in a listening/speaking class. After an initial interview with the 24 students who volunteered to participate, four students (two females and two males) were selected because of their ability to articulate their ideas in the English or the Chinese language. This was possible because one of the researchers is a native-Chinese speaker. The selection of the student participants permitted the topic to be discussed from the perspective of gender. The students were also known to have participated in CLT classrooms in at least four different semesters at the university level allowing for these students to compare their experiences and to speak with some credibility about those experiences.

## **Interviews**

### ***Initial Interview***

The initial 45 minute interview explained the purpose of the research and allowed the researchers to develop rapport with participants by asking them to share information regarding their background and interest in English. Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that, “Although qualitative interviews are more focused, deeper, and more detailed than normal discussions, they follow many of the rules of ordinary conversation” (p. 122). These researchers attempted to build on an established rapport with the participants to generate a conversational atmosphere during the interviews. By doing so, the researchers probed deeper into the participants’ perspectives of the role of the teacher in a CLT classroom. Fifteen of the students decided not to participate because of time demands, self-perceived levels of English proficiency, or the researchers eliminated them because of attitude. The remaining nine volunteers were told that a random draw of names would identify the four participants who would be contacted by telephone to set a time for

the second interview.

All of the participants (students and professors) were told during the initial interview that their names would not be used in the publication of the research. The participants were also told that no specific personal statements would be used in a way that would identify them. All of the participants included in the interviews expressed an understanding about confidentiality, and signed an agreement to participate.

An adapted Q methodology described by Stephenson (1953) and Brown (1996) was employed to assist the participants in identifying the roles of the teacher. This method was designed for use in the qualitative interviewing "warm-up" phase to stimulate thought. The roles of the teacher identified in the literature were listed, along with their definitions, and placed on index cards (See Appendix A.) The participants were asked to sort a total of 18 cards into three groups of six cards ranking each card in a group from 1st to 6th in terms of the importance of the role of the teacher. For example, participants were asked if the roles of the teacher included concepts related to the teacher being a motivator, facilitator, guide, role model, resource, manager, evaluator, or advisor. Participants were permitted to ask questions, ask for clarifications of the definitions, and even to add additional roles to the Q-Sort cards. Such was done in both the English and Chinese languages to insure the students understood the meaning of each role of the teacher.

### ***Second Interview***

The second 60 minute interview was conducted 2 to 3 weeks after the initial interview. Permission was obtained to tape record this interview. The semi-structured interview began with the researchers asking each participant to describe any past listening/speaking conversation courses in which they had participated, and to explain how the CLT approach was used in the classroom in terms of the activities employed in the classroom. (See appendix B for a list of the questions asked of the teachers and appendix C for a list of the questions asked of

the students.) Next, the participants were asked to describe the role of the teacher in those classrooms based on their actual experiences. Follow-up questions were asked to draw more deeply on the perspectives of the participants.

### ***Member Checking Interview***

The third 30 minute interview was a member checking interview conducted after the tape recordings of the second interviews were transcribed, the data were coded, and the major themes were identified for each participant. Tutty, Rothry, and Grinnell (1996) state that “Member checking: Obtaining feedback from your research participants is an essential credibility technique that is unique to qualitative methods” (p. 113). ). Normally, the issues of reliability and validity are terms reserved for quantitative research whereas credibility in qualitative research is established by independent analysis of the data by multiple researchers involved in the study.

Member checking interviews are also conducted to assure accuracy in understanding the perspective of the participants helping to insure credibility in the findings. Inter-observer/interviewer consistency in this study was established by each interviewer coding the data independently to identify the major themes identified in the interviews. The researchers also developed an independent list of questions to ask during the member checking interview to assure a comprehensive review of the issues of concern after the data were analyzed.

Finally, the participants were asked to make additional comments that they wished concerning the role of the teacher. Participants were also asked to comment on the research process and asked what questions should have been asked that were not asked as a means of assuring that the responses to the topic were thorough.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

After the interviews were transcribed, each of the researchers independently identified themes that emerged during the interviewing process and color-coded the

data according to these themes. The researchers then conducted three meetings with one another to discuss the contents of the interviews, identify themes of importance with which they agreed, and to discuss the reporting procedures for this research. During the meeting, the researchers came to a consensus regarding the themes of importance related to the role of the teacher.

## **Results**

Data analysis continued simultaneously with the gathering of the data through the three interviews spanning a 4-month period resulting in three major themes emerging from the perspective of the student participants and two major themes emerging from the perspective of the faculty participants: These themes are discussed in the following section of this paper

### **Student Participants' Perspective**

#### *Classroom atmosphere*

The role of the teacher the four students identified as important involved teacher behaviors and attitudes. The classroom atmosphere was the crucial element in their willingness to participate despite the fact that two of the student participants rated the personality of the teacher with the Q-Sort cards (11, 15) as relatively unimportant. When the researchers called this to their attention both student participants reassessed their ordering of the cards placing the personality of the teacher as most important in creating a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere.

The three dimensions of the teacher's behavior and attitudes related to personality that were identified as important in promoting a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere were the teacher's friendliness, use of humor, and patience.

Student participant A described the ideal teacher. She stated, "I want a friendly teacher because that helps me to relax. I'm more comfortable. I'm more willing to participate because the teacher is friendly." Student participant A continued saying, "I hope the teacher will be humorous and friendly, a more active teacher. Teachers

need to be patient and not over-reacting. Be a little more patient, friendly, and humorous.”

Student Participant B reiterated these ideas saying, “My English teacher is like my friend. I can talk about something with her. I want a friendly teacher. Humorous! I want someone easy going and who helps me to relax and be comfortable in class.” When asked about the teacher’s attitude, student participant B commented that, “The teacher’s attitude is important. He should give a lot of information. They should be patient. I want a teacher who can focus on the students’ learning.”

Student participant C said, “During my first year I said a lot because the teacher was happy. The teacher needs to be friendly. The students won’t say something if the teacher’s attitude is bad.” Student participant C elaborated, “I want the teacher to be friendly and talk with me a lot. If the teacher is funny and makes learning fun, it helps me to participate. I always want to learn something, but that teacher who is not friendly doesn’t help me to want to learn. A friendly teacher makes me want to learn.”

The personality of the teacher is so important to participant D that he stated, “I will also ask my friends what the teacher is like before I enroll in a class.” Student participant C stated the same idea by saying, “I choose the teachers I like. I talk to other students about the teachers to find out who is very good.” Three of the four student participants indicated that they talk to their friends about teachers they do not know before enrolling their class reflecting the importance the students place on personality.

The classroom atmosphere dominated the responses of the students as can be observed in their comments concerning the role of the teacher in promoting participation. The commonality of the participants responses accentuate the importance that these students place on the personality of the teacher in creating an atmosphere conducive to participation. The humor, patience, and friendliness of the teacher all contributed to the willingness of the participants to actively engage in activities.

### *Curriculum planner*

The second theme that emerged as important during the interviews related to the teacher as a curriculum planner. Two elements of the curriculum planner that were identified involved the teacher being well-prepared by planning activities that encouraged participation, and the use of a variety of activities.

Student participant D stated that, "I want good teaching methods! I think the teacher should be responsible to teach the students how to use English because I don't want to come to school and waste my money. I want them to use the time well." When asked about what activities he enjoyed participating in during class, he said, "I like discussion groups and get more chance to speak. I also like the songs with the lyrics... The teacher can help us to understand the song."

Student participant A indicated an activity she enjoyed stating, "I liked the interview of the foreign student, but I was really nervous. I interviewed a girl from Vietnam. My English was better than hers so that helped me to relax. At first, I was nervous but doing the interview helped my confidence. I think teachers need to give us more opportunity to use English." When asked about the teacher planning activities, participant A made this observation. She said, "Planning what we do is important. We want to talk about interesting things. Students helping plan is good because students know what interests us." Student participants B and C also thought involving the students in selecting the topics for discussion and activities used was a good idea. Student participant D stated that "...the topics were less important than the activities that promoted classroom participation."

Student B stated that she wanted more conversations and to participate more. She said, "If the activities are interesting, maybe the students can learn more. It is more fun!" Student B indicated that she liked the international student interview and the songs, but made this comment related to what made the class more interesting. She said, "Games. Many students can play and answer questions." Asked what activities student participant C liked, he stated, "I want to talk about



topics like things happening in society. Using the language that I can use everyday, like food and language about school because we don't get much chance to talk about these things.”

The student participants indicated that teachers need to be prepared with interesting activities for the students to participate in during class. Student participant A stated that, “I don't like a teacher who attends class late or dismisses class early. I want them to be prepared and have good activities.” Each of them indicated that the teacher was important to them in learning English, correcting mistakes that they made during the activities, improving their pronunciation, helping them to understand vocabulary, and assisting them in knowing how to use English. The students viewed the teacher as a resource expert and role model, and wanted the teacher to take an active part in group discussions by answering questions and contributing to the discussion. They also indicated that they wanted to emulate the teacher, as student participant C states, “A Taiwanese teacher who speaks good English makes me want to be better than him.” The role model of the teacher has importance both in the use of a second language and the professionalism with which the teacher prepares for and conducts the class. Many of the student responses related to what might be classified as the teacher as a facilitator leading the researchers to conclude that these two roles may have converged in the thinking of the students. Teachers must facilitate the curriculum planning, but this theme seems to have merged with the role of the teacher as a curriculum planner in the discussions of the students.

### *Native or non-native English speaking teacher*

The third theme that emerged related to a discussion of native-English speaking and native-Chinese speaking English teachers. When asked about whether they preferred a Chinese speaking English or a native-English speaking teacher, the student participants thought there were advantages in having both native-Chinese

speaking and native-English speaking teachers. The students preferred a native-speaking English teacher for listening/speaking and reading classes, but a native-Chinese speaking English teacher for grammar classes. The advantage the native-Chinese speaking English teacher has in a grammar class is the ability to explain difficult concepts in Chinese. The advantage of the native-English speaking teacher is the modeling of correct English usage, pronunciation, and the cultural insights that they can provide.

Student participant A stated, "I want my grammar lesson to be a Chinese teacher, but reading and listening class must be a foreign teacher." Student participant B, however, did not want teachers to use too much Chinese. She said, "Chinese teachers speak too much Chinese especially in grammar classes." When it came to native-English speaking teachers speaking Chinese she said, "If I don't understand very well, I can use Chinese. When a Western teacher knows Chinese that helps me. A lot of native speakers can speak Chinese, but Western teachers encourage me when they know Chinese." None of the students wanted any teacher to use much Chinese because they thought it hindered their learning English.

Student participant C said, "I like to take the Western teachers class. I always want to learn every culture and different accents. That helps me to listen better. I think what I want from the teacher is to speak English like a native-English speaker. I want to learn how he says some words, how he asks some questions, and how he pronounces words." Student participant D, talking about the advantages of having both native and non-native speakers of English as teachers said, "We can imitate the native-speaking teacher's accent and pronunciation. That is a different way between the Chinese and foreign teacher. The Chinese teacher is good to talk to the students when they don't understand." He also said, "It is good when a foreigner speaks a little Chinese because it encourages us."

The students did indicate other differences between native and non-native English speaking teachers and indicated that teaching methods were different between the teachers. Western teachers were seen to be more encouraging, active,

and humorous. Some Chinese English teachers were more strict, critical, and demanding which made students uncomfortable and less willing to participate, but the students thought the Chinese English teachers' English abilities were good. The students were pleased to have both native and non-native English speaking teachers even though they were selective of the teacher based on the course. These differences may result from differences in the gender, cultural backgrounds, and personality traits.

### **Faculty Participants' Perspectives**

The CLT approach employed by the faculty participants reflected an awareness of the changing roles of the teacher from that of the traditional teacher-centered classroom to that of a student-centered classroom. As would be expected, the faculty participants' perspectives were broader in understanding teacher roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the faculty encountered greater difficulty ranking the roles of the teacher using the Q-Sort cards because they understood the elements of teaching described by the Q-Sort cards. In fact, the faculty participants were able to identify the over-lapping responsibilities described by the cards and discussed these issues combining the over-lapping responsibilities during the interviews. Two themes emerged that dominated the discussions including the role of the teacher as a curriculum planner described as a leader and facilitator of activities, and the teacher's personality.

#### ***Curriculum planners as leaders and facilitators***

All faculty participants identified the importance of curriculum planning as being thoroughly prepared with activities that would engage the students in the practical use of English. Faculty A said, "I use problem solving in my speaking class like teaching students how to open a bank account or survive in a foreign country. They can pretend they are a manager or customer in a situation. Last semester I taught tourism management and they pretended to be a cook, and they taught us how to cook using English." Faculty A involves her students in the

planning of the curriculum and does not depend solely on a textbook. She said, "I have topics for them for each week, but I ask them what they want to learn about each topic. They tell me they want to learn about blood pressure or things they don't know about." Faculty A went on to say, "I give them survey questions at the beginning of the semester. I ask them to write down what they want to learn." Student involvement in curriculum planning is an important dimension of the process for faculty participant A. She also indicated that this approach to teaching requires more planning than simply applying the textbook activities. Preparing the materials, audio-visual equipment, and other teaching aids demands attention, but she indicated that she "talks to them after class to find out information. Sometimes the students will come and tell you what they like to talk about or what they don't like about something that you did."

Similarly, faculty D stated that, "Part of my curriculum planning involves a discussion with the students the first week. I want to find out what topics the students are interested in discussing and what activities that they want me to employ to teach English." When asked why, faculty participant D responded saying that "...involving the students in curriculum planning promotes a sense of ownership for the students and encourages their participation since they helped plan the activity." Faculty D also stated that he does not use a textbook. He said, "Curriculum planning is dependent on the needs of the students and who knows better what the students need than the students." Faculty D viewed his role as creating an environment that encouraged the students to use English, but the students play an important role in creating that environment by their commitment to participate. One comment that faculty D made related to the responsibility of learning was "They can't learn Chinese for me, and I can't learn English for them. Teaching is like a gift. I'm giving it to you. Are you going to open that gift? Are you going to learn? Students have to take responsibility for learning."

Faculty C described the process of curriculum development as a leader who involves the students in the process when he said, "You have to understand that my

opinion on this topic is heavily influenced by my circumstances. Since I teach Taiwanese students, they influence how I think about teaching and what I do in the classroom. I know that my students only speak English for the 50 minutes in class. They don't use English outside of class so it is very important for me to get them to speak in class. That weighs heavily on leadership." Making sure there is a good environment for talking that gets the students involved is important. Without a leader, nothing happens. The teacher has to make things happen so the teacher is a leader." Faculty C also stated, however, that "I generally follow the book. But I use a lot of the book exercises to get the students to participate. I use pair work and I model language use." When asked why, faculty participant C indicated the curriculum and many activities were already planned in the textbook. He viewed his role from this perspective when he said, "What I try to do is get many students talking so everyone can feel more comfortable when they do participate. Students who are shy will then become part of the norm and begin to participate."

Faculty B commented that "my tip is to keep everyone busy in class. While students work in a small group, I try to encourage each of the group members to share different responsibilities and to complete the assigned work in accordance with their comfort and readiness, but they are required to rotate roles in different activities to make sure opportunities are equalized." Faculty B continued by saying that the "students are not independent learners, so the role of the teacher is very important in planning activities that show the students what I want them to learn." Faculty B outlines the class objectives and activities at the beginning of each semester, but says "...it can be changed in the future." She welcomes the students suggestions regarding the curriculum and activities used to involve the students. Faculty B does follow the textbook, but believes the curriculum should to be adaptable. Throughout the course, faculty B asks students about what activities they enjoy and what topics they want to discuss. In curriculum planning, "I am also learning," faculty B indicated, "...which means I need to be a manager of classroom activities. I have to find a way to involve students in classroom

activities.”

### ***Personality***

The faculty participants were aware that the students placed much emphasis upon teacher personality, but not to the extent of the students. Faculty A said the following concerning personality. “They must be enthusiastic. They must be willing to help the students to find their interest in English and try to find the way to make students want to learn in class.” She continued by saying, “...one thought is that the teacher has a higher motivation and personality is important. They really want to teach, they really want to help students, and they have a positive side to see everything. They are willing to help and are active when they are teaching. They will do things for them the students never think they will do.” Faculty A defined the role of the teacher's personality as caring, helpful, active, and encouraging.

Faculty C said, “Some teachers have charisma that promotes speaking. There are some personality characteristics that invite participation. Teachers can't frighten the students or they won't participate.” Regarding the specific personality characteristics that faculty C thought was important, faculty C said, “Teachers need to be gentle and patient. For Taiwanese students, I would have to say they need to be humorous. It is like a buffer zone for these students. Humor takes away tension. Seriousness creates tension.” This faculty participant was keenly aware of the impact of the teacher's personality on the students' emotion state and takes great care in creating an atmosphere conducive to participation.

Faculty B, however, stated that, “I am a little surprised at how much importance the students place on personality, but if my students regard me as a friend, I believe that relationship helps the students to participate.” “As a role model, if I show them as a teacher that I am responsible, they will be more responsible. I try to be a professional. I try to model good English to encourage them to learn,” she said. Faculty B was aware of who she was and how her personality, attitudes, and behaviors influence the students. She described herself as

“...an easy going teacher, but I am a serious teacher.” Faculty B continued by saying, “Teacher behaviors influence the students so I have to be on time to class, be prepared for class, and I have to provide feedback for them.” She said, “I want students to learn something, but I think it is important to be patient. Teachers and students should be friendly and close to one another.”

Faculty D stated that he continually struggles with the issue of personality because balancing personality and responsibility as a teacher is sometimes in conflict when students are not responsible. He said, “Being serious and being humorous are difficult emotions to balance in a way that encourages the students to participate.” Faculty D is sensitive to the classroom atmosphere he creates, but said, “I want my students to learn. I know they can learn, but sometimes they are just too immature to recognize the opportunities they have. I have to be like a father sometimes, and that means being strict at times.” Faculty D said he “...tries to maintain a friendly relationship with the students, smile a lot, and use humor” knowing that many students are responsive to this approach. He said, “Who we are as teachers is an important issue in how students respond to us.” One of the most interesting observations that faculty D expressed was, “There are a lot of different roles we fall into and a lot of it depends on our own personality. Teaching is an art, and you might take the same paint and brushes and make a very good copy of a masterpiece, but you will never be able to put the passion and personality of the original artist into the copy. That’s why personality is so important in teaching.”

### **Discussion**

The role of the teacher is a complex array of teacher attitudes, characteristics, knowledge of the course content, and knowledge of teaching methodology which the faculty participants in this study are aware of, and as Nunan’s (1989) research described. In fact, the teacher plays many roles some of which depart from the traditional classroom directed toward the presentation of information as Helderbran (2008) indicated and with which these researchers concur as a result of the insights

gained through the interviews with the participants in this study. Teachers using CLT take on the roles of facilitator, manager, leader, curriculum planner, curriculum evaluator, and other roles described in this study and comparable to Hardin and Crosby (2000). As could be assumed, students have a narrower understanding of the role of the teacher than do the teachers. These researchers recommend that teacher attitudes, characteristics, knowledge of the course content, and knowledge of teaching methodology should be investigated to determine how effective teacher training institutions or in-service training activities are equipping teachers for the CLT oriented classroom. Furthermore, these researchers recommend that an instrument be developed identifying the roles of the teacher in the CLT classroom that could measure a larger sample quantitatively so that the findings are generalizable.

Students do, however, have an acute awareness of the affects of teacher personality on the interactions that occurs and are sensitive to the behavior of the teacher just as Sowden (2007) discussed in term of intercultural communication and the importance of knowing and understanding students as an element in creating an effective classroom. The student participants were concerned with the personality of the teacher because personality either encourages or discourages participation. Teachers need to become sensitive to the importance students place on personality, but as observed in the comments of the faculty participants, these teachers are oriented toward an understanding of the importance of personality because they recognize they “teach who they are” as Banner and Cannon (1997) stated. The friendliness of the teacher, humor, and non-critical nature of the teacher appears to promote participation in the CLT classroom in the minds of these students. These researchers recommend that an instrument be developed oriented to identifying the personality characteristics important in the roles of the teacher.

However, the students also recognized the importance of their involvement in the learning process, and appear to be willing to assume responsibility for their learning. The students maintain certain expectations of the teacher including the



ideas that teachers need to be well-prepared, model the appropriate use of English, and facilitate the activities many characteristics of which are similar to the findings of Mowrer, Love, and Orem (2004). Students are not just passive participants, but also want to be involved in the selection of the activities used as well as the topics to be discussed. This element of curriculum planning enhances the students “owning” a responsibility which encourages their participation and level of satisfaction in the activities. In turn, the students use higher levels of cognitive thinking skills during the activities. The students want teachers who promote an environment and atmosphere where they can improve their English which is linked to the teacher personality, the activities employed, and the shared responsibility of teachers and students.

The faculty demonstrated a keen sense of responsibility that reflected a student-oriented approach to teaching seen through their discussion of the teacher as a role model both in the sense of modeling correct English usage, and in the sense of the example that they provided related to who they were as people reflecting the importance of personality in agreement with the research of Banner and Cannon (1997). They recognized the impact of their personalities. They viewed themselves as leaders in the classroom, facilitators of activities in accordance with the findings of Bada and Okan (2000), and as curriculum planners who involved the students in the planning stages of the curriculum according to the work of Hardin and Crosby (2000). They were also concerned with issues related to motivation which they addressed through the involvement of the students in curriculum planning which encouraged students to risk involvement. The faculty demonstrated concern for their students and an interest in assisting them in developing English skills that would enhance the students’ proficiency. Although their approaches to teaching differed, the element of commonality for the faculty was an understanding of the importance of students assuming responsibility for their learning, being involved in communicative activities, and being aware of the impact of their personalities. The faculty is successful in involving students in the

learning process because the students recognize the professional, efforts of, and student-oriented caring nature of these professionals. One issue not defined as a dimension of this study related to the advantages and disadvantages of having native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teacher. These researchers recommend that studies be conducted to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages, and the effectiveness of native-English speakers and non-native English speakers employing the CLT approach.

Teachers must adapt their style of teaching in CLT by changing from a traditional teacher-centered to a student-centered classroom while simultaneously assuming a more humanistic approach where the teacher is seen as a caring individual. These characteristics do not undermine the authority of the teacher, but do enhance the responsiveness of the students to that authority.

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## Appendix A

### Q-Sort Cards

1. Assessor -- An assessor evaluates the needs of, performance of, and quality of the interaction.
2. Coach – The coach provides feedback on performance and creates opportunities to practice skills that enhance the abilities of the students.
3. Curriculum Planner – A curriculum planner determines the content of the course and the methodology employed.
4. Curriculum Evaluator – A curriculum evaluator provides a quality control mechanism that allows for adjustments to the curriculum plan.
5. Discussion Leader – A discussion leader determines the questions to be asked, asks questions, and promotes the interaction of the group.
6. Guide – A guide provides instruction and directions and shows the way by leading.
7. Facilitator – A facilitator creates an environment that promotes learning.
8. Leader – A leader provides a vision for the classroom and delineates the objectives that are to be accomplished.
9. Lecturer – A lecturer presents new information as a monologue.
10. Manager – A manager controls resources and expenditures. As an organizer the manager prepares materials, equipment, and arranges the structure of group interaction.
11. Mentor – A mentor serves as an advisor and trusted counselor.
12. Monitor – A monitor supervises and provides a warning so that mistakes can be corrected or avoided.
13. Motivator – A motivator provide incentive for action.
14. Observer – An observer screens the events and interactions as they occur and sometimes makes comments as an expert.

15. Personal Characteristics – The qualities of the teacher's personality characteristics.
16. Resource Expert – A resource expert provides information necessary for the completion of an activity.
17. Role Model – A role model provides an example.
18. Student – A student is one who learns.