Article

Breaking the silence: Unveiling the realities of communicative language teaching in China's business English class

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Abstract: This qualitative study explores the perceptions of Chinese teachers and students regarding the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) in Business English (BE) courses. A total of 24 BE students and 14 teachers from 4 colleges in Sichuan, China, participated in the semi-structured interview. Furthermore, the researcher observed 16 BE courses to investigate the actual implementation of CLT by Chinese teachers and students. The findings indicate that adopting CLT in the context of BE in China remains challenging. While teachers and students generally hold positive views about CLT, classroom practices diverge significantly from CLT principles. Several challenges contribute to this misalignment, including the English proficiency levels of students and teachers, teaching facilities, class sizes, examination systems, textbooks, and teachers' understanding of CLT. These challenges highlight a disconnect between CLT's pedagogical goals and its practicality in the current landscape of Chinese BE education. The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive educational reforms to address these issues, aiming to bridge the gap between CLT's theoretical ideals and effective implementation. Ultimately, this could enhance the communicative effectiveness of BE teaching in China.

Keywords: business English; communicative language teaching; instructional practice; teachers' and students' perceptions

1. Introduction

English teaching in China has undergone several changes in the past decades. After the reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, English was made compulsory for all secondary schools and higher education in China. In the 1980s, China's Ministry of Education (MOE) dedicated efforts to introducing and developing more foreign language teaching resources. In the late 1990s, China began to explore more communicative teaching methods, and it was during this time that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced to China. In 2001, the MOE of China released the College English Curriculum Requirements, which emphasized improving students' language application abilities and highlighted the importance of communicative competence. This signified a formal change in the goals and approaches to English instruction in China.

CLT's primary and ultimate goal is to improve learners' communicative competence, which refers to the ability to use a language accurately and suitably in different communicative situations. The concept of communicative competence was established by Dell Hymes [1] as a reaction to Noam Chomsky's [2] idea of linguistic competence, which only emphasized understanding of language structures. Communicative competence is critically important for Business English (BE) students

for the following reasons. First, in the business environment, the ability to convey information in a concise and impactful manner is of paramount significance. In addition, communicative competence comprises intercultural competence, helping learners comprehend and handle the complexity of cross-cultural communication, therefore avoiding misunderstandings and building appropriate international relations. Furthermore, as an element of communicative competence, strategic competence enables students to efficiently employ language to conquer communication challenges, explain misconceptions, and negotiate fluently. These skills are essential for resolving issues and completing business contracts. Moreover, the atmosphere of the business environment is more than just transactional. Instead, it strongly depends on establishing and sustaining relationships. Communicative competence enables students to effectively participate in social interactions and casual communications, which are essential to creating confidence, developing rapport, and cultivating enduring commercial partnerships. In conclusion, communicative competence encompasses more than simply linguistic precision. It entails using language effectively in practical business environments to accomplish particular objectives, engage with diverse audiences, and manage the complex rules of international trade. BE students have to prioritize the development of communication abilities in order to attain professional success and proficiency in the global business industry.

According to the new curriculum, BE teachers are required to apply CLT in class to train students who can construct knowledge that will positively impact their behavior and enable them to affect their environment. Furthermore, implementing CLT provides students with opportunities to practice their communicative skills and ultimately foster meaningful interactions, helping students acquire critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that will enable them to adapt to the business environment once they graduate from school.

Although CLT has gained significant attention and implementation, there are still obstacles to its successful implementation in some Asian countries. Previous studies regarding BE mainly focus on the contextualized teaching [3], teaching innovation with technology [4,5], teacher professional development [6,7]. There seems to be limited research investigating the teachers' and students' actual perceptions and implementation of CLT in the BE context at the tertiary level in China.

2. Literature review

2.1. Communicative language teaching

The emergence of the CLT was a direct reaction to the perceived constraints of the prevailing structural and grammar-translation methods (GTM) [8]. Educators and linguists noticed that these traditional approaches often yielded learners who grasped a language's structure but could not successfully engage in communication [9].

The main objective of CLT is to facilitate students' ability to communicate effectively in the target language within authentic contexts [10,11]. CLT prioritizes the students by acknowledging the significance of their needs, motivations, and the context in which they use language. Unlike traditional methods, teachers' roles in CLT classrooms are more likely to be facilitators, guides, communicators, and organizers [12]. According to the principles of CLT, teachers should implicitly teach grammar

rules to students [13]. Thus, teachers are expected to organize various meaningful communicative activities for students to practice the target language. Furthermore, CLT prioritizes fluency over the accuracy of students' language performance [14]. Therefore, teachers should possess a high tolerance for students' errors unless the meaning of the conversation is significantly affected [15].

2.2. Teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT

Understanding teachers' and students' perceptions of a particular instructional approach is crucial because their perceptions significantly affect the implementation of the teaching approach in the classroom [16,17]. In other words, teachers' and students' perceptions may determine students' ability to receive and engage in educational activities and affect the efficacy of instructional practices. Considerable research has identified the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' and students' favorable perceptions of CLT. For example, Abdullah [18] investigated the perceptions of 40 Kurdish undergraduate students of CLT by conducting a mixed-method study. The results indicated that students possessed favorable perceptions of CLT. Students specifically claimed that involving authentic materials in the classroom raised their level of engagement. Sarfraz et al. [19] found that teachers and students had favorable perceptions of implementing CLT in computer-assisted language learning. Rezalou and Yagiz [20] investigated 40 EFL students' perceptions of communicative activities at Ataturk University, Turkey. The results indicated that students preferred communicative activities, which created a competitive atmosphere in the classroom and generated a significant amount of engagement.

Researches have also identified teachers' and students' unfavorable perceptions of CLT. For instance, Fereidoni et al. [21] investigated 35 Iranian students' perceptions of CLT and GTM. The results revealed that students had favorable views toward GTM and expressed satisfaction with using non-communicative strategies in their classes. In another study, Madani [22] revealed that students did not perceive CLT as effective. Furthermore, the author also found that CLT fails to engage and motivate students effectively. Wu et al. [23] investigated students' and teachers' preferences between GTM and CLT at the secondary level in China. The findings showed that both teachers and students preferred GTM to CLT.

2.3. Implementing CLT in Asian countries

Due to the rapid progress of globalization, there has been a consistent rise in the need for proficiency in foreign language communication, and numerous Asian countries conducted educational system reform in the late 1980s to early 1990s. The concepts of CLT were in accordance with the objectives of these reforms, attracting attention and receiving support from governments and educational institutions and ultimately promoting the spread of CLT in Asia.

Many researchers confirmed the effectiveness of CLT in EFL classrooms in Asian countries. For example, Azizah [24] found that using CLT may help learners enhance their ability to communicate effectively in Indonesia. Another study by Sitorus et al. [25] assessed the efficiency of CLT in essay writing class. The results revealed that implementing CLT significantly improved students' essay-writing ability. Arana [26]

investigated the function of CLT in teaching oral communication in secondary schools in the Philippines. The researcher concluded that engaging in CLT activities may improve the effectiveness of English language instruction. Furthermore, implementing CLT may enhance students' ability to communicate in a target language effectively.

Despite the popularity of CLT, several studies have revealed that various factors hinder the successful implementation of CLT in EFL classrooms in Asian countries. These factors include teachers' lack of CLT knowledge [27], teachers' insufficient English proficiency [28], large class size [29], teachers' heavy workload [30,31], students' low English competence [32], the grammar-oriented exam system [33,34], cultural constraints [35], lack of teaching resources [36], and students' low confidence and motivation [37]. Gaining an in-depth awareness of the challenges encountered while implementing CLT in Asia is essential for improving teaching standards, promoting learner accomplishments, and improving the continuous development of language education. This study aims to explore Chinese Business English teachers' and students' perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching, as well as the practical implementation of Communicative Language Teaching in Chinese Business English classes. The study aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are Chinese Business English teachers' and students' perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching?

RQ2: To what extent do the instructional practices in Business English classes in China align with Communicative Language Teaching principles?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study was qualitative research. Merriam [38] indicated qualitative research aims to comprehend and interpret phenomena based on the participants' viewpoint. In the current study, the researcher aims to gain an in-depth comprehension of Chinese BE teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT and the actual instructional practice in BE classes.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were 24 BE students and 14 teachers from 4 colleges in Sichuan province, China. The teacher's ages ranged from 25 to 46. The students were first- and second-year students aged from 18 to 20.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. This study was conducted in the spring semester of 2024. The researcher first conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and students to understand their perceptions of CLT. All the interviews were audio recorded upon participants' consent. The researcher took the verbatim transcription of the interview and analyzed the transcription by conducting thematic analysis through NVivo 14. In addition, the researcher observed 16 classes to investigate the instructional practices in the BE classrooms. The observations were non-participant observations in which

the researcher sat behind the classroom to avoid any interruption of the instructions. The researcher adapted the observation checklist from Razmjoo and Riazi [39] and Ibrahim and Ibrahim [40] to investigate to what extent CLT is implemented in the BE classrooms. The observation checklist consists of five vital principles of CLT: the role of the teacher, the role of the student, implicit grammar instruction, implicit error correction, and group activities.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the current study. The researcher first presents Chinese teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT. Then, the researcher presents the actual instructional practices in BE classrooms.

4.1. Chinese BE teachers and students' perceptions of CLT

4.1.1. Improve students' motivation

The results reveal that most Chinese BE teachers and students possess favorable perceptions of CLT. They claim that CLT can improve students' learning motivation, confidence, and CC. For example, as stated by S17, CLT facilitates students and enables them to engage fully in authentic situations.

"I think CLT is quite effective. It encourages students to use the language more actively rather than following traditional teaching approaches. It benefits students and allows them to immerse themselves in real-life contexts. CLT helps improve language skills and boosts students' confidence in speaking the language." (S17)

4.1.2. Improve students' communication and critical thinking abilities

Similarly, T8 indicates that CLT is suitable for use in China because it can effectively improve students' communication and critical thinking abilities by engaging in various activities.

"I think CLT can be used in China. Traditional teaching methods in China, as we can see in classrooms, typically involve a teacher standing at the front while students sit and listen. I think CLT breaks away from this tradition because our goal is communication and interaction. CLT places more emphasis on activities like discussions, pair work, and similar approaches that are beneficial for developing students' communication skills, independent thinking, and critical thinking." (T8)

4.1.3. Teacher's and student's role

In terms of teachers' roles in CLT, Chinese BE teachers understand that in CLT classrooms, they are much more like facilitators, organizers, and communicators who provide students with various communicative activities to improve their CC. Moreover, participants said that teachers need to provide an encouraging and pleasant learning environment, as it can inspire students to develop a tendency towards and exhibit more concentration in classroom engagement. As T14 stated.

"In communicative classrooms, the role of the teacher shifts from being the main authority to that of a facilitator and guide. This change can significantly enhance students' autonomy and interest in learning." (T14)

In terms of students' roles in CLT, most participants express that students are the center of the CLT classroom, and they can take responsibility for their learning. The

teachers argued that it is essential for students to engage in the learning process actively. For example, T7 expressed the role of students in CLT as below:

"I think CLT places more emphasis on proactive learning among students, thus contributing to the enhancement of their learning initiative." (T7)

4.1.4. Promote student's autonomous learning

In the CLT-based BE classroom, participants believed group activities were valuable opportunities for language acquisition, as these activities enabled students to use the target language actively in authentic contexts. Furthermore, the activities students participated in promoted the development of autonomous learning and trained them in collaboration and responsibility when working in groups. As indicated by S14:

"I like group activities because when the teacher assigns us a presentation, I have the opportunity to learn a lot about business knowledge while researching the information. I think participating in practical activities is also a great chance to enhance my execution abilities." (S14)

4.1.5. Implicit grammar instruction and error correction

For the grammar instruction in CLT classrooms, most participants favored the implicit grammar instruction. As they claimed in the interviews, explicitly teaching English grammar is tedious. Instead, implicit grammar in CLT aims to combine grammar instruction with language use, encouraging the internalization of grammatical rules through authentic language contexts and consequently enhancing students' proficiency in using language effectively. S16 expressed her preference for implicit grammar instruction due to its effectiveness as follows:

"I prefer implicit grammar instruction. It's quite effective as it allows me to learn new things effortlessly. In this process, the learning experience is less painful, yet the retention is strong, and the learning pace is rapid. I think that actively absorbing information through engaging in activities is more effective than the feeling of being passively instructed by others." (S16)

Regarding error corrections in CLT, most participants claimed that they prefer implicit error correction. They argued that implicit error correction in CLT involves subtly correcting learners' linguistic errors while engaging in communicative tasks. This approach differs from explicit error correction, in which the teacher immediately identifies and corrects students' errors. Students indicated that they have a strong sense of dignity, and directly highlighting their errors in front of the whole class will decrease their confidence and consequently weaken their motivation and desire to participate. For example, S3 prefers the implicit error correction as follows:

"I prefer to have my errors corrected after class. First, if I am interrupted when I am speaking, my mind will get confused, then I will feel nervous, and I might not be able to talk anymore, then I will lose my confidence. Second, if the teacher corrects my errors in front of other classmates, I will feel frustrated and embarrassed." (S3)

4.2. Instructional practice in BE classrooms

This section presents the observation checklist findings to show the actual situation of the BE classrooms in China from five perspectives, namely the role of the teacher, the role of the student, implicit error correction, implicit grammar instruction, and group activities.

4.2.1. Role of teacher

As the researcher observed, none of the teachers used English exclusively throughout the teaching process. Instead, in at least half of the classes, teachers mainly used Chinese as the means of their instruction and frequently code-switched between Chinese and English. Furthermore, in ten classes, teachers failed to address all four skills of the target language. They prioritized the development of students' listening and reading skills while overlooking the cultivation of students' speaking and writing skills.

Furthermore, in most classes (68.75%), teachers did not use everyday language but formal language, whether in Chinese or English, to teach and guide students. The researcher only observed in 3 classes where teachers frequently use everyday language. For example, when T1 was explaining "balance," she referred to Chinese slang, "nosebleed," and introduced a Chinese proverb, "Know the meaning but not the usage." In addition, the researcher observed that most Chinese teachers did not use any authentic materials and highly relied on the assigned textbooks. However, in some BE classes, the researcher noticed that teachers used authentic materials, such as movie clips and pictures, in their instructions.

Most of the time, the teachers dominated the entire class. They did not fulfill their role as facilitators or organizers. Almost all Chinese BE teachers exclusively used GTM during their instruction. They extensively depend on literal Chinese translation to convey the meanings of the text and word. Moreover, teachers rarely proposed inferential questions; many of the questions that teachers asked were relatively simple, such as "What does it mean?". The researcher observed that teachers failed to balance the emphasis on all four CCs (grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence) in most BE classes (87.5%). Chinese teachers devoted much time to merely training students' grammatical competence.

4.2.2. Role of student

Concerning the role of students, a significant number of students exhibited a passive listening style during class. As the researcher observed, in 75% of BE classes, the instructions offered by the teachers did not concentrate on the needs and interests of the students. The students seemed to lack enthusiasm and self-autonomy. Only a small number of students actively participated in classroom activities and interactions. Students seldom shared their points of view voluntarily. They maintained silence during class and only expressed their thoughts when prompted explicitly by the teacher. In addition, the researcher found that in most classes, teachers neglected the practice of real-life scenarios and authentic interaction with students. On the contrary, the primary emphasis of Chinese teachers is often on text translation, vocabulary illustration, and grammatical instruction.

4.2.3. Error correction

Regarding error correction, the researcher noticed that most teachers had a low tolerance of students' errors and corrected them explicitly. They provided immediate feedback upon the students' conclusion of tasks and work. For example, T2 asked students to practice a translation activity. She mainly focused on the pronunciation accuracy of the words and offered detailed corrections for the pronunciation problems raised by students. In most cases, teachers provided feedback in front of the whole

class. CLT prioritizes fluency over accuracy. However, many teachers focus more on students' language expression accuracy during instruction, often neglecting the importance of balancing accuracy with fluency.

4.2.4. Grammar instruction

Regarding grammar instructions, it was observed that all teachers explicitly conducted grammar instruction. The teachers mostly conducted long reading exercises or taught grammatical forms. The instruction of grammar focused on the presentation of tense, voice, narrative, and sentence transformation via the use of memorization exercises that were not related to any specific context. For example, T2 elaborated on grammar rules by discussing the present continuous tense and presenting key grammar elements on the blackboard, including the structure "am/is/are + doing" for present continuous and "was/were + doing" for past continuous. Students did not engage in any authentic context to practice the target language. Furthermore, the Chinese teachers lacked diversity in their usage of language structures throughout their instruction.

4.2.5. Group activities

Regarding group activities, the researcher observed that in most BE classes, teachers did not organize meaningful group activities. In almost every class, it was observed that only particular sections of the textbooks were read aloud by students, and the collaborative elements of the text, like group work, were neglected. Teachers spend much time explaining the text, facilitating translation, and conveying grammatical knowledge. In some classes, teachers only organized independent activities for students to practice their writing or speaking skills. For example, T13 instructed the students to open their English textbook to page 79 and create an inquiry letter related to the book's subject within 10 minutes. Teacher Liao ordered students to review one another's letters for mistakes. In writing activities, the majority of students worked individually, with only a very small number engaging in interactions, and they typically used Chinese in their communication.

5. Discussion

The first research question was about Chinese BE teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT. The result showed that almost all participants favored the principles of CLT. They believed CLT is a practical approach to improve students' CC. The majority of participants believed that CLT can be suitably adapted in China. They agreed that CLT is student-centered and that students should take responsibility for their learning. As stated by Da Luz [41], students in CLT classrooms can suggest the content of the class. Teachers should listen to students' views and create a good relationship with them. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that Chinese teachers and students acknowledged that teachers' role in CLT classrooms is facilitator, guide, organizer, or communicator, which primarily aligned with the results of the studies of Azizah [24], Daar and Ndorang [42], and Hà [43]. Chinese BE teachers and students understood that the teacher's role in the CLT classroom had undergone significant changes compared to the traditional teaching method, such as GTM.

Regarding grammar instruction, the findings revealed that Chinese BE teachers

and students highly advocated implicit grammar instruction, which echoes the studies of Graus and Coppen [44] and Guci et al. [45], who also found teachers and students possess favorable perceptions of implicit grammar instruction. Chinese BE teachers and students believed that implicit grammar instruction was much more effective than explicit grammar instruction because this approach prioritizes students' natural acquisition of grammar rules through the application of target language in authentic contexts. In addition, the participants claimed that implicit grammar instruction leaves a more profound impression on students and overcomes the boredom and dullness of traditional grammar teaching.

In addition, regarding error correction, the majority of participants understood the value of implicit error correction. This finding aligned with Nhac [46] and Syakira and Sahril [47], who believe implicit error correction provides students more time to engage in self-correction and may serve as a means for them to comprehend and fix the errors they have made. Regarding group activities, Chinese BE teachers and students claimed that group activities can create a harmonious learning environment and ultimately improve students' learning motivation, self-autonomy, collaborative abilities, and communicative competence. This finding was consistent with the effectiveness of group activities identified by Juhansar [48], Rohmah et al. [49], and Sakina [50].

The second research question was about how CLT was implemented in BE classes. The finding indicated that though Chinese BE teachers and students possessed favorable perceptions of CLT, their instructional practices were significantly discrepant from CLT principles, which echoes the previous studies of Alkhirbash [51], Burri [52], Daba et al. [53], Mangaleswaran and Aziz [54], Xie and Ziebart [55], and Yoon and Yoo [35]. As the researcher observed, in most classes, the nature of all BE classes was teacher-centered. Teachers exclusively applied GTM, which is the conventional technique used in English lessons, and they spent much time on text translation, vocabulary illustration, and grammar explanation. Many teachers highly relied on the word-for-word Chinese translation and explicitly taught grammar rules in the class, which is not consistent with the principle of CLT. The emphasis on grammar-based exams in the BE curriculum may have contributed to teachers focusing on teaching grammatical rules and adopting GTM. This finding is consistent with the study of Basok [34], Hamza [31], Nuby et al. [28], and Ramasivam and Nair [33], who also identified that the inconsistency between curriculum and exam system hindered the successful implementation of CLT in EFL class. Since various significant exams, such as the final exam, College English Test Band 4 (CET-4), and CET-6, do not assess students' communication skills but focus on writing, reading, and grammar knowledge. As a result, Chinese teachers emphasize the accuracy of students' grammar rules and explicitly transmit grammatical rules to them. Therefore, relevant policymakers should consider reforming the Business English examination system to incorporate speaking and listening skills more significantly into the Business English exams.

Brown and Lee [9] and Savignon [56] stated that teachers should use the target language to communicate in the class. However, Chinese teachers did not use English throughout their instruction. Instead, they frequently code-switched between Chinese and English. According to Al Kalbani et al. [57], Yoon and Yoo [35], and Yoshihara et al. [32], teachers' and students' insufficient English proficiency could be the reason

that hinders the use of English in the classroom. Chinese teachers and students are non-native English speakers who typically lack fluency in spoken English. Utilizing native Chinese might assist students in comprehending teachers' instruction and consequently improve their confidence. Therefore, teachers and students mostly used Chinese during the lecture and discussion. To improve the English proficiency of teachers and students, institutions should provide more opportunities for exposure to English. This could include sending teachers for exchange visits or further studies in English-speaking countries, organizing speaking corners for students, or encouraging participation in various English speech competitions to enhance students' communicative competence.

The researcher observed that teachers rarely organized group activities in BE classes. Several factors could explain this phenomenon. First, the class size is too large. As the researcher observed, there were about 40 students in each BE class. Under such circumstances, the teaching time is insufficient for all students to participate in group activities. This finding is consistent with the study of Lin and Zhao [29] and Rahmawati [30], who also found the large class size hindered the implementation of CLT. Furthermore, Chinese teachers lack CLT-related training. Though colleges provide some training for teachers, they mostly emphasize curriculum ideology and politics and project application rather than CLT, leading to teachers' lack of knowledge on how to apply CLT in BE classes. This finding aligns with studies by Armnzai and Alakrash [58] and Nguyen [59], who also identified teachers' lack of CLT training and knowledge hinders their effective implementation of CLT in other contexts. In addition, the assigned textbooks also restrict teachers from organizing group activities. This finding is consistent with studies by Dharmawardene [60] and O Alharbi [61]. The textbooks used in most BE classes primarily emphasize grammar, vocabulary, translation, and reading and lack authentic materials and meaningful group activities. To address this issue, institutions should encourage teachers to create their own materials based on Communicative Language Teaching principles and provide rewards for those who make significant contributions. Alternatively, institutions could also introduce established communicative language textbooks suitable for Business English courses from Western countries. Furthermore, the traditional classroom layout is another factor. The arrangement of students' seats in BE classrooms is in rows, which significantly limits teachers' ability to coordinate group activities. Therefore, the relevant departments of the higher education institutions should purchase more movable desks and chairs to facilitate teachers in conducting communicative activities.

Regarding students' roles, the researcher observed that most students acted as passive learners in BE classes, which significantly diverged from the principles of CLT that students are the center of the class. Generally, Chinese students remained silent, quietly digesting the teachers' instructions and writing notes. They barely raised questions and interacted with teachers, only talking when teachers addressed their names. Students' preference for a passive learning style could explain this phenomenon, which echoes the study of Al Kalbani et al. [57] and Pitikornpuangpetch and Suwanarak [62]. Due to the strong influence of traditional Confucian culture in China, teachers are seen as absolute authorities, and their statements are considered unquestionably correct. Students experience a mostly teacher-centered approach from an early age, resulting in deficient critical thinking skills and a lack of an inventive

mindset [63,64]. Therefore, teachers should help students shift away from traditional learning mindsets and provide a relaxed and enjoyable classroom environment.

6. Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, the sample of the current study only consists of 24 BE students and 14 teachers from four colleges in Sichuan province, China. Future research can expand the sample size and investigate the perceptions of Business English teachers and students regarding CLT in more higher education institutions in China. Second, this study is purely qualitative, with the research data consisting only of interviews and classroom observations. It does not validate the actual impact of CLT on students' communicative competence. Future research can conduct teaching experiments to explore the actual impact of CLT on students' communicative competence.

7. Conclusion

This study explored Chinese Business English (BE) teachers' and students' perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its implementation in BE classrooms. While participants generally held favorable views of CLT, classroom observations revealed a significant gap between actual practices and CLT principles, with teachers dominating the classroom and students adopting passive roles. Many teachers relied on the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and code-switching, neglecting group activities and displaying low tolerance for student errors. Factors such as insufficient English proficiency, lack of CLT training, large class sizes, grammar-focused exams, and inappropriate textbooks hindered effective CLT implementation. The study highlights the need for adapting CLT to align with Chinese culture and BE contexts, providing insights for curriculum designers, policymakers, and educators to improve instructional practices and enhance students' communicative competence.

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