CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter consists of five parts. This study shall start the chapter by providing an interpretation of CLT (2.1.), in which the research will highlight the complexity of CLT from a theoretical perspective based on my understanding of different aspects of this approach. In the second section (2.2), the study will discuss CLT from the perspective of appropriate methodology in different cultural settings, examining the theory of CLT also in relation to post-method pedagogy. This will be followed by a discussion of the debates on the appropriateness of CLT in I year B.E./B.Tech students in EFL context. (2.3). In the fourth section (2.4), the research will identify potential gaps which emerge from the literature and suggest how the present study can bridge these gaps. In the fifth and final section (2.5), the study justifies the actual research questions pursued for the present study.

2.1. HOW TO INTERPRET CLT?

In this section, the study attempt to describe CLT from an anti-essentialist perspective on the basis of my understanding of the argument made by Savignon (2002) that CLT has a cross-disciplinary theoretical background. The rich theoretical base of CLT reveals its open and flexible nature as well as the complexity and diversity of ways it can be interpreted. This also explains the difficulty of making a precise description of any typical classroom procedure of CLT implementation. As Richards and Rogers (1986:82) argued, ‘how to implement CLT principles at the level of classroom procedures remains central to discussions of the communicative approach’. The multidisciplinary perspective on CLT indicates the inappropriateness of pinning down CLT as a fixed concept. This implies that it may be important to interpret the approach from an anti-essentialist perspective in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the approach as appropriate methodology in different cultural contexts.

2.1.1. The development of CLT

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (subsequently referred to as ‘CLT’) can be traced back to the late 1960s. Its emergence was a great challenge to the two dominant approaches at the time, namely British Situational Language
Teaching and the American Audio-lingual Method. In line with Chomsky’s criticisms of structural theories of language (Chomsky, 1957), applied linguists and teachers began to question both approaches as merely focusing on the mastery of structures, with mechanical practices such as drilling being considered as insufficient in terms of enhancing the real-life communicative proficiency of language learner (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). This led applied linguists to focus attention on the functional and communicative potential of language and raised the issue of how to articulate learners’ linguistic knowledge and actual communicative performance effectively with a new approach.

Wilkins (1972) was one of the pioneers in this field. He highlighted the significance of understanding of the underlying systems of meanings in communicative uses of language and classified such meanings into two types, namely, notional categories (time, location, sequence, frequency, etc) and communicative functions (requests, offers, complaints, etc). His book entitled Notional Syllabuses (Wilkins 1976) was at that time, and has been subsequently acknowledged as a great contribution to the development of CLT.

Based on the theoretical ground proposed by Wilkins, along with other scholars such as Widdowson, Candlin, Brumfit, Christopher Amala Dasson and Littlewood, work on the theoretical framework of a communicative or functional approach mushroomed, and this work was widely accepted by theorists, teachers, textbook writers and curriculum designers. The rapid acceptance of this work exerted a huge influence on the ELT profession worldwide, and the principles presented became known collectively as the Communicative Approach (widely known as Communicative Language Teaching, or – in the early days – the notional-functional approach or functional approach) (Richards and Rogers, 1986).

2.1.2. A methodological concern – method or approach?

‘Method’ and ‘Approach’ are two basic concepts in the field of methodology. Rodgers (2001) argues that they differ in that methods refer to ‘fixed teaching systems with prescribed techniques and practices’ whereas approaches ‘represent language teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in a variety of different ways in the classroom’. It should be emphasized that misunderstanding the connotations of
the two concepts, and falsely describing CLT as a ‘method’ might cause problems with interpretation of CLT.

CLT is generally recognized as an approach rather than a method, as argued by Mitchell (1988), CLT is an umbrella term characterized by a set of distinctive principles, features and types of classroom activities. Richards and Rogers (1986) claim that CLT is derived from the theory of a communicative model of language teaching, which can be specified at three levels, namely, approach, design and procedure, and that the approach level mainly involves two types of theory – theory of language and theory of learning.

The ‘theory of language’ underlying CLT mainly reflects the relativity and complexity of the concept of ‘communicative competence’ (hereafter referred to as ‘CC’), which is central to CLT. CC was initially expounded by Hymes (1972) and defined as ‘what a speaker needs to know within a speech community’ (Richards and Rogers, 2001:159). Hymes broadened Chomsky’s theory of competence by arguing that linguistic theory should be extended from linguistic competence to what he called ‘communicative competence’, including both linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions. Hymes described CC in terms of systemic potential, appropriateness, occurrence and feasibility (Hinkel, 1999). In his view, being communicatively competent calls for speakers’ competence in producing the language to concern both grammatical and socio-cultural acceptability in a speech community. While Hymes tended to lay the emphasis on the element of speech acts (whether verbal or non-verbal) of CC, other theorists contributed to the linguistic theory of CLT from the perspective of the functional aspect of language. For instance, Halliday (1970) argued that one’s linguistic competence is reflected by his or her performance in using the target language for functional purposes. His standpoint was then deepened by Widdowson (1978), who focused on the relation between linguistic systems and communicative acts. Widdowson laid emphasis on the speaker’s competence in transferring the knowledge of linguistic systems to the ability of producing effective communication by differentiating between ‘usage’ and ‘use’. In his view, ‘usage’ implies learners’ knowledge of linguistic systems and ‘use’ reflects learners’ real ability to produce an effective communication with the application of such knowledge.
Compared with Hymes, Halliday and Widdowson, who tended to perceive CC as a unitary concept, Canale and Swain (1980) broke the notion down into four interdependent dimensions, namely, grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. Sociolinguistic competence was later broadened by Savignon (2002) into the notion of socio-cultural competence, which refers to the interpretation of the social context where language is used for communication with proper cultural knowledge and sensitiveness. She also identified two kinds of processing in discourse competence and considered both as ‘essential’ for CC. These two types of processing are: bottom up-up (a full understanding of the text with the identification of certain sounds or words) and top-down (the recognition of certain sounds or words via the understanding of the theme or purposes of the text).

CC can be interpreted from an intercultural perspective as well, taking into account recognition of the integral relationship between language and culture (Byram, 1989). Cortazzi and Jin (1999) identified intercultural competence as a fifth aspect of CC, which corresponded to the emergence of a concept which is complementary to CC – intercultural communicative competence (hereafter referred to as ‘ICC’). ICC contains the connotations of both sociolinguistic (socio-cultural) competence and strategic competence of CC, while ‘intercultural’ extends the scope of ‘social context’ to recognize the hybridity of source and target cultures.

The theory of language underlying CLT therefore can be seen as constituting three major dimensions, namely, the linguistic or structural dimension (grammatical / discourse competence), the functional dimension (strategic competence) and the intercultural dimension (sociolinguistic / socio-cultural / intercultural competence). It justifies one of the most distinctive features of CLT proposed by Littlewood, which is to ‘pay systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view’ (1981:1).

1. Guiherme (2000:297) defines intercultural competence as ‘the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own’.

2. Byram (1997b:61) defines ICC as ‘the knowledge, skills and abilities to participate in activities where the target language is the primary
communicative code and in situations where it is the common code for those with different preferred languages’.

Another type of theory underlying CLT at approach level is the theory of learning, which relates to the idea that CLT is a ‘learn by using’ approach. Certain principles of this theory of learning may be inferred, according to Richards and Rogers (1986:72), from communicative practices, including the communication principle, the task principle and the meaningfulness principle. The communication principle refers to the idea that ‘activities that involve real communication promote learning’. The task principle refers to the notion that ‘activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning’. The meaningfulness principle refers to the idea that ‘language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process, and learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns)’ (Richards and Rogers, 1986:72).

All the principles focus in a general way on the need for learning activities to be authentic and meaningful in order to facilitate the language learning process (Littlewood, 1981; Christopher Amala Dasson, 1982). However, theorists working on this field hold different opinions on how CC can be developed. For instance, Christopher Amala Dasson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) proposed a skill-learning model of learning, and argued that CC can be acquired through skill development and practice. This viewpoint was not shared by Savignon (1972) and Krashen (1988), who claimed that language proficiency is better developed via using language in a communicative way rather than practising discrete language skills. Savignon (1972) denied the idea that rote memory or mechanical practice can enhance learners’ ability to produce meaningful communication.

2.1.3. Aims and Features of CLT

CLT is considered by Brown (1994) as a practical approach, this being reflected in its aims, features and principles. CC reinforcement and authenticity are two basic goals that CLT aims for. As Brown (1994) argued, the ultimate goals of a CLT classroom are ‘focused on all of the components of CC’, and language teaching techniques are ‘designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purpose’ (p.245). Nevertheless, what needs to be stressed
is that authenticity at this point contains two layers of connotations. Firstly, it means learners’ ability in producing linguistically and socially acceptable language (or learners’ intercultural competence).

Secondly, it refers to the authenticity of the set activities as well as the supporting materials adopted in a CLT classroom in order to familiarize learners with situations of real-life communication and the idiomatic use of target language (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Dublin, 1995; Widdowson, 1996; Canale and Swain, 1980). Importantly, it should be noted that ‘authenticity’ is a relative term, as pointed out by Kramsch and Sullivan (1996): what is authentic to native speakers of English might not be authentic in non-native speaking settings.

The goals of CC reinforcement and authenticity are reflected in some basic features of CLT. For instance, the goal of CC reinforcement is reflected in one of the basic features of CLT known as to ‘pay systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view’ (Littlewood, 1981:1). The goal of authenticity reinforcement is reflected in the feature of being experience-based: as argued by Richards and Rogers (1986), CLT calls for the need to build up an authentic classroom environment for communication purposes.

In addition, learner-centeredness is another distinctive feature of CLT (Richards and Rogers, 1986), as CLT tends to put a particular priority on learners and their communicative needs. Savignon argued that ‘the essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence’ (2002:22), and that ‘learner communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional competence’ (2002:3).

However, many theorists question the notion of ‘learner-centeredness’. For instance, Hutchinon and Waters (1984) argued that being ‘learner-centered’ in a simplistic sense can tend to overlook the social context of the learning process and can fail to articulate learning needs with external expectations. In their view, CLT ought to be ‘learning-centered’ rather than ‘learner-centered’. Holliday (1994) also challenged the term ‘learner-centered’ by claiming that the notion is too vague to
transfer, as being ‘learner-centered’ can rest on a stereotyped image of learners, which can hinder teachers from achieving a fair understanding of different learning cultures.

According to Holliday, this confusion accounts for the failure of CLT outside BANA countries. Savignon (2006) also emphasized that ‘the goals of CLT depend on learner needs in a given context’. This shows that CLT can be seen as a context-dependent approach that calls for teachers’ sensitivity in relation to the variable needs of different teaching contexts. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) provide a detailed discussion of the features of CLT, which can be summarized as follows:

1. As it is recognized that language is used for communication, with a view to achieving effective and appropriate communication, learners are expected to develop an awareness of linguistic variation and contextualized language use during the process of language learning;

2. Although ‘meaning’ is the central focus, comprehensible pronunciation and fluency are targeted as well, while accuracy is also evaluated, according to context;

3. CLT encourages teachers to adjust the types of classroom activities and teaching techniques to respond to learners’ needs;

4. Dialogues or drills can be adopted but just for the purpose of ‘communicative-function’ practice rather than memorization; the native language is not totally forbidden in a communicative classroom and translation can be used to clarify misunderstandings; reading and writing do not necessarily need to be deferred till mastery of speech;

5. Teachers are expected to motivate learners and encourage them to learn through collaborative work and by reflecting on mistakes. The features put forward by Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) overlap with the principles which have been previously identified above, namely all-round development of CC (linguistically, functionally and interculturally), being experience-based and learner / learning-centered and encouraging learning-by-doing.
2.1.4. General principles of CLT

The aims and features of CLT identified above correspond to some other descriptions of standard principles of CLT. Mitchell (1988) summarized these principles at three levels, namely, the approach level, the design level, and the procedure level as follows:

1. Approach: FL proficiency should be developed along with FL communicative competence.

2. Design: The syllabus is expected to be notional-functional as well as to be appropriately individualized based on an understanding of learners’ needs and expectations.

3. Procedure: In a communicative language classroom, the target language is supposed to be the only medium for communication through certain cooperative activities such as role play, group or pair work. Mitchell’s interpretation of CLT principles was supplemented by Berns (1990), who proposed:

   i. Foreign language is learnt for the purpose of being able to engage in real-life communication effectively and appropriately in the target language, which is supposed to be linguistically and socioculturally acceptable.

   ii. Linguistic and contextual diversity and variability should be recognized in the process of language acquisition.

   iii. Learners’ competence should be comprehensively enhanced (ideationally, interpersonally and textually).

   iv. There is no standard or fixed model of the methodology or sets of techniques.

   v. Culture plays an instrumental role in developing learners’ communicative competence.

The CLT principles suggested here to a great extent reflect the general aims and features of CLT as described above. However, the ‘English-only’ principle proposed by Mitchell is in contradiction with the argument made by Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) that native language can be used as assisting medium language in a CLT classroom.
The principles suggested here relate to the different levels of approach, design and procedure (Richards and Rogers, 1986). Given that the theories in relation to the approach level have been discussed above (see 2.1.2.), it is worth navigating through the theories in relation to the other two levels as well in order to demonstrate further the complexity of CLT in terms of interpretation.

2.1.5. Curriculum design, communicative activities and roles of teacher and learner in a CLT classroom

According to Richards and Rogers (1986), the design level of CLT touches upon the aspects of objectives, syllabus, learning and teaching activities, instructional materials, and roles of learner and teacher. Piepho (1981:8) summarized five levels of objectives in CLT:

1. An integrative and content level (language as means of expression)
2. A linguistic and instrumental level (language as objective of learning)
3. An affective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct (language as means of expressing values)
4. A level of individual learning needs (remedial learning based on error analysis)
5. An educational level of extra-linguistic goals (language learning within curriculum).

Although these levels were then considered by Richards and Rogers (1986) as umbrella objectives that can be applicable to general teaching as well, nevertheless these objectives do mirror the nature and function of language from a communicative perspective. In addition, these objectives identify the importance of the curriculum being pragmatically tailored to reflect learning needs in given contexts.

Nevertheless, the potentially multi-faceted nature of CLT corresponds to different versions of syllabus models, as Yalden (1983) summarized:

**Type Reference**

1. Structures + functions, notional Wilkins (1976)
2. Functional spiral around a Brumfit (1980) structural core
4. Functional upp and Hodlin (1975)

5. Interactional Widdowson (1979)


7. Learner generated Candlin (1976), Henner-Stanchina and Riley (1978)

These models provide insight into the development of communicative syllabus design, but the last three models (interactional, task-based, and learner-generated) particularly reflect the current tendency of communicative syllabus design. This is because increasing attention has been paid to the communicative process rather than the acquisition of communicative competence as a product. However, although communicative syllabus models vary, Savignon (1983, 1997) proposed five components of a communicative curriculum, and this model was widely accepted and considered as conducive to strengthening the theoretical and practical foundations of CLT (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999, Pham, 2007). These components are:

i. Language arts (which may include exercises used in mother tongue to focus on formal accuracy)

ii. Language for a purpose (use of language for real communication)

iii. Personal English language use (learner's emerging identity in English)

iv. Theatre arts (teach in a way to provide learners with the tools needed to act in new language)

v. Beyond the classroom (enable learner to use language outside classroom) (1983, 1997).

Trends in communicative syllabus design relate to the design of classroom activities. Littlewood (1981) contributed to this area by categorizing two major types of communicative activity, namely, functional communication activities and social interaction activities. Functional communication activities (such as picture description) emphasize learners’ ability in using the target language to work out certain solutions to a problem in a specific situation structured by teachers based on given information.

Social interaction activities (such as role play) lay stress on the social acceptability of language use when performing tasks with social features by building
up a genuine-like classroom environment with the target language as the teaching medium. Both types of activities are intended to be task-based in a general sense.

The design of communicative activities echoes the three ‘communicative principles’ underlying the learning theory of CLT at approach level (see 2.1.2.) which stress on the authenticity and meaningfulness of the chosen activities. It shows that CLT tends to emphasize the process of communication rather than merely focus on the mastery of language form as product, and the approach aims to enable learners to speak the target language in both a linguistically correct and a socio-culturally appropriate and acceptable manner. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that CLT may pose challenges to the teacher’s linguistic competence as well as classroom management skills, as these are extremely important for carrying out social interaction activities smoothly.

In addition, good choice of teaching materials is important as well for maximizing the effectiveness of communicative activities in a CLT-oriented classroom. Richards and Rogers (1986) reported that there are three major types of CLT materials often adopted, namely, text-based (communicative-oriented coursebook), task-based (communicative-oriented activities such as role play), and realia (authentic supporting materials such as newspapers and magazines).

Apart from objectives, syllabus, activities, and instructional materials, the design level of CLT is also concerned with the roles played by learner and teacher. Breen and Candlin (1980) considered the roles of learner as negotiators and contributors, who are supposed to share the responsibility with teachers in terms of the academic input by actively participating in different kinds of communicative activities assigned. They considered that the teacher assumes the roles of facilitator, independent participant, researcher and learner, needs analyst, counselor and group process manager rather than merely knowledge transmitter. In short, both teacher and learner are expected to assume autonomous and independent roles in a CLT classroom.

2.1.6. Implementation procedure of CLT

The flexible nature of CLT and the diversified forms of communicative tasks give rise to difficulty in describing the typical classroom procedures of CLT implementation. Richards and Rogers considered CLT procedures as “evolutionary
rather than revolutionary”, for there are overlaps between CLT and other teaching methods in terms of teaching techniques and classroom management procedures (1986:81). Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:107-8) attempted to suggest a few of standard CLT procedures that are applicable to a secondary school programme. The described procedures mainly include:

a. Presentation or oral practice of dialogue

b. Q-A or discussion based on the dialogue topic that may be in relation to learner’s personal experience

c. Study of basic communicative expressions in the dialogue and the grammatical rules underlying the functional expression or structure

d. Oral practice of freer communication activities as production

e. Sampling of assignments, and evaluation of learning. These procedures to some extent reflect the theoretical framework of the classroom activities proposed by Littlewood (1981), including the pre-communicative activities (structural and quasi-communicative activities) and communicative activities (functional communication activities and social interaction activities).

According to Littlewood, pre-communicative activities serve as the preliminary stage for learners to be equipped with the specific language knowledge or skills through practice. This is because structural activities (such as drill, Q-A, etc) aim at enhancing learners’ grammatical accuracy of language use, and the purpose of quasi-communicative activities is to enable learners to relate the practiced linguistic forms to their potential functional meanings by producing understandable language. Learners are then expected to be able to transfer the acquired linguistic forms and communicative skills into a real ability to produce meaningful and socially acceptable languages through the practice of functional communication and social interaction activities.

The implementation procedure of the four types of activities constitutes a process of upgrading learners’ overall level in terms of communicative competence acquisition. However, there is no fixed sequencing of pre-communicative and communicative activities. Littlewood (1981) argued that teachers can trace learners’ progress more easily by placing pre-communicative activities before communicative
activities, or reversely, communicative activities can be adopted for diagnostic purposes, to enable teachers to develop a more precise understanding of learning needs so that the activities could be more practically tailored in accordance with the particular weaknesses of their students.

Compared with Littlewood, who paid equal attention to the development of the linguistic and communicative skills during the process of communicative competence acquisition, Savignon (1972, 1983) declared that it is possible for learners to carry out communicative activities even before they are linguistically prepared.

Although Savignon’s argument reflects one of the most important aims of CLT, which is to develop CC via communicative activities, inferring from her understanding of CC (see 2.1.2.) and her interpretation of CLT implementation, it could be said that she seems to underestimate the function of linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) that actually serve as a key prerequisite for achieving effective communication for most non-native speakers of English.

### 2.1.7. Versions of the CLT model

Howatt (1984) recognized two versions of the CLT model, namely, the weak version and the strong version. According to Howatt, the weak version ‘stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purpose and characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching’.

The strong version ‘advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself’. Howatt finally concluded that the weak version of CLT can be described as ‘learning to use’ English and the strong version entails ‘using English to learn it’ (1984:279).

It can be inferred that the weak version highlights an integral input of grammatical and functional teaching by setting up communicative activities for the practice of language use, and both the structural and communicative aspects of language are emphasized in this version.

Importantly, it should be emphasized that ‘the practice of language use’ calls for an integral development of the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening
rather than merely focusing on the enhancement of one’s oral / aural abilities, although according to Nunan (1987), one’s oral performance serves as a crucial criterion for CLT. Comparatively, the strong version lays the focus on the discourse level, as it claims that progress in communicative competence acquisition can be facilitated with the text-based tasks. The importance of task-design is particularly highlighted, as all activities are supposed to be problem-solving-oriented. In other words, learners are expected to improve their language proficiency by dealing with different sorts of language problems through practice. Current ‘task-based language teaching’ is very much a ‘strong version’.

This raises the question of whether ‘task-based language teaching’ (which is much-discussed nowadays) represents a strong or a weak version of CLT, since it can be seen as a continuation of communicative approach in the broad sense (Littlewood, 2004). As Littlewood has pinpointed, there are problems in defining a task-based approach similar to those in the case of CLT due to the ambiguity of the term ‘task’. For instance, Williams and Burden consider a task as ‘any activity that learners engage in to further the process of learning a language’ (1997:168). Estaire and Zanon (1994) tend to define the term by making a distinction between ‘communication tasks’ (with the focus on meaning) and ‘enabling tasks’ (with the focus on linguistic aspects) (1994:13-20). Other theorists such as Stern (1992), Willis (1996), and Ellis (2000) take the position of understanding ‘task’ from a communication-oriented perspective, as they consider a key criterion to be whether the adopted tasks can fulfill a communicative purpose. Little wood therefore proposes two dimensions of tasks in order to clarify the conceptual confusion relative to task-based language teaching. These two dimensions are ‘the continuum from focus on forms to focus on meaning’, and ‘the degree of learner-involvement that a task elicits’ (2004: 321). Little wood classifies the first dimension into five individual sections, namely, non-communicative learning (with the focus on language structure); pre-communicative language practice (practising language with some attention to meaning, e.g. Q-A); communicative language practice (practising pre-taught language in a context where it communicates new information, e.g. information-gap); structured communication (using language to communicate in situations which elicit pre-learnt language, with some unpredictability, e.g. role-play); and authentic communication (using language to communicate in unpredictable situations, e.g. discussion) (2004:324). He then
argues that these units correspond well with ‘activity-types’ within the CLT framework, and that the combination of the two dimensions makes a task-based approach oriented towards a learner-centered communication-directed language teaching approach (pp. 324, 326). In addition, he points out that structured and authentic communication activities or ‘tasks’ play essential roles in the task-based framework. In this sense, it can be said that he concurs overall with the idea that task-based language teaching represents a relatively ‘strong’ form of CLT, although, as we have seen, with some qualification.

According to Holliday (1994), the major distinction between the ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ versions of CLT lies in the following three aspects.

- Firstly, the weak version emphasizes the communicative interaction between people (either between teachers and students or between peers) to practice the language use, whereas the strong version focuses on the interaction between learners and the text.

- Secondly, the weak version calls for an integral development of each component of communicative competence, whereas in the strong version, it is one’s discourse and strategic competence that are emphasized most.

- Thirdly, due to the different purpose of the set task in collaborative work, the weak version requires learners to use target language to perform tasks to enhance accuracy and fluency, whereas in the strong version, learners could use mother tongue to assist the learning process to solve the language problems based on the analysis of the given text. It is the weak version of CLT that is prevalent among teachers worldwide (Nunan, 1988), and which is widely interpreted as ‘standard practice’.

2.1.8. Some misunderstandings of CLT

The open nature of CLT has given rise to some fundamental misconceptions about CLT, relating to some extent to stereotyping of what the approach involves. Thompson (1996) summed up four particular aspects that are most misconceived, namely, relating to grammar, speaking, pair work and teachers. In his view, the ongoing development of CLT depends on how well these misconceptions are clarified. To begin with, grammar teaching is by no means trivialized by CLT. This is because effective communication can hardly be achieved without the linguistic forms
that are grammatically acceptable, as grammar is the very basis of communicative competence.

Perhaps the fundamental grammatical concern in CLT is not whether grammar should be taught or not, instead, it is a matter of how and in what ways it is taught. I share the view of Krashen (1988), who declared that grammatical knowledge does not necessarily need to be taught with rules.

In fact, according to the principles of CLT (see above), the grammar taught in CLT may be more inclined to be unconsciously transmitted through exposure to the target language via different kinds of communication-oriented activities. Another common misconception is that CLT tends to over-emphasize oral/aural competence at the expense of reading and writing skills (Faersch, Hastrup and Phillipson, 1984:170).

A superficial interpretation of CC may be one possible reason for this misinterpretation. However, as related before, the aim of CLT as to enhance the learner’s overall repertoire of language skills in an integrated way, and this proves this misconception wrong.

The third misconception of CLT is that the approach requires small group or pair work. This misconception might be attributed to a failure to understand the theory of communicative activities proposed by Littlewood (1981) (see 2.1.5.), in which a diversity of communicative tasks is recognized. It needs to be emphasized that communicative activities can be actually carried out in different forms.

The last misconception is that CLT tends to expect too much from teachers compared with the traditional teaching methods (Medgyes, 1986). In my view, we should perhaps interpret this as a challenge rather than a misconception. Although CLT is often termed a ‘learner-centered’ approach, it undeniably does pose demanding challenges to both native and non-native speaker teacher teachers. The native speaker teachers of CLT can be greatly challenged by a lack of familiarity with the alien learning cultures of their students, while the non-native speaker CLT practitioner might consider his/her own lack of communicative competence in the target language as the biggest obstacle to implementing CLT effectively.

In addition, it is important to be aware of teachers’ important role pedagogic innovation. Although it can be argued that innovation initiatives may depend on
education policy both at national and institutional levels which is beyond the control of teachers, innovation can take place at micro level as well. De Lano et al (1994) considered that teachers, as ‘the main agents of change’, need to have a ‘high degree of motivation to work towards the change’. (p. 487).

Up to this point, the study has discussed a number of key issues in the definition of CLT. The research has attempted to avoid stereotyping the concept by breaking it down into different areas, and this research discussion of the basic theories underlying the approach has been carried out from different angles. This study firstly navigated through the development of CLT, and then looked into the methodological concerns of CLT by differentiating between approach and method. This study then discussed a few key issues of CLT, including its aims and features, general principles, curriculum design, communicative activities and roles of teacher and learner in a CLT classroom, implementation procedures of CLT, versions of the CLT model, and misconceptions.

Therefore the proposed research aimed to provide a holistic interpretation of the approach. In the next section, this study would like to take an in-depth look at CLT from the perspective of appropriate methodology in different cultural contexts.

2.2. CLT AS APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGY IN DIFFERENT CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Under the circumstances of globalization, the ELT profession has witnessed a changing trend in methodology, from the attempts of seeking a best method (Prabhu, 1999), ‘beyond methods’ (Richards, 1990) to the ‘post method condition’ (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), by way of Brown’s declaration of the ‘death of methods’ (2002) (Bell, 2007). Despite the argument made by Kumaravadivelu (2006) that CLT has been replaced by task-based language teaching as a pedagogic shift due to the ‘serious doubts’ about its efficacy in terms of authenticity, acceptability and adaptability’ (p.62), global debates on the appropriateness of CLT in different cultural contexts continue to be heated.

This phenomenon reflects Block’s (2001:72) standpoint that method still plays a dominant role in the thinking of teachers, as he said, ‘while method has been discredited at an ethic level (that is, in the thinking and nomenclature of scholars) it
certainly retains a great deal of vitality at the grass-roots level (that is, it is still part of the nomenclature of lay people and teachers).

In addition, in the view of Jacobs and Farrell (2003:5), the CLT paradigm shift has not yet been fully implemented, stating that to some extent it represents the ‘larger shifts from positivism to post-positivism and from behaviorism to cognitivism’ in second language education. They identified eight changes involved in the CLT paradigm shift, including learner autonomy, the social nature of learning, curricular integration; focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners. They assert that the CLT paradigm shift has only been partially implemented over the past 40 years, and they attribute the reasons to practitioner’s failure to perceive and implement these changes from a holistic perspective.

The arguments made by Block, and by Jacobs and Farrell are insightful when it comes to considering the adoption and adaptation of CLT in different cultural contexts from a post method perspective. They have identified the interrelation between teacher’s beliefs and interpretations and decisions on methodology adoption. This suggests that there are challenges to the expertise of teachers in terms of CLT implementation, as argued by Harmer (2003: 292), ‘the problem is not with the methodology itself, nor with the ideas that it generates, but rather with the way they are amended and adapted to fit the needs of the students who come into contact with them’.

The above arguments provide a general back ground for the layout of this section, in which this study will navigate through theories relating to appropriate methodology and post method pedagogy. This study shall then try to link them with the application of communicative principles and discuss CLT as appropriate methodology in different contexts.

2.2.1. Appropriate methodology, post method pedagogy and application of communicative principles

With the increasing attention which has been paid to the cultural influence exerted by the global ELT profession, the term ‘appropriate methodology’ was first introduced to TESOL in 1986 by Bowers and Widdowson (1997), who claimed that ‘appropriate’ indicates the sociocultural applicability of not only a particular
programme but the general curriculum design as well. Holliday (1994, 2005) further developed this idea by identifying three basic types of methodology, namely, methods or approaches, curriculum development and social investigation. They correspond to three major aspects of English language education, namely, teacher beliefs and teaching behavior, syllabus design, and ethnographic action research on a particular social context.

Holliday argued that cultural sensitivity is the prerequisite to an appropriate methodology, consisting of components of a teaching methodology and a process of learning about the classroom. In his view, culture-sensitive methodology develops with a perceptive appreciation of the uniqueness of language classrooms through investigations into the social context of English language education. This includes classroom-based action research (the micro level) as well as ethnographically-oriented research on the culture of particular classrooms (the macro level).

To sum up, with a culture-oriented curriculum, the teaching effectiveness of foreign language education can be largely maximized by adopting culture-sensitive or context-dependent methods or approaches.

Apart from recognizing the social dimension of the language classroom, Holliday tends to conceptualize ‘appropriate methodology’ as ‘becoming-appropriate methodology’. This is because he considers the adaptation of methodology as a continuing process, involving the incorporation of the procedures of ‘how to teach’ and ‘learning about how to teach’ (1994:164).

Teachers are expected to be able to respond promptly to the uncertainty and diversity of their classroom through observation, evaluation and self-reflection in order to adjust teaching plans and techniques.

Compared with Holliday, who tended to build his argument on pinpointing the significance of the cultural dimension of ELT from a method-based perspective, Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001, 2003, 2006) points out that the trend of TESOL methods is toward a ‘post-method pedagogy’ era; as he argued, ‘the L2 profession is faced with an imperative need to construct a post-method pedagogy’ (2001:537). The major underpinnings in relation to the emergence of post-method pedagogy are the work done by Pennycook (1989) and Prabhu (1990), who rejected the notion of ‘neutrality of method’ and ‘best method’, respectively.
Pennycook argued that the concept of method ‘reflects a particular view of the world and is articulated in the interests of unequal power relationship’ (1989:589-590). Prabhu claimed that the ‘teacher needs to learn to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning – with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them’ (1990:172). He called for recognition of a teacher’s ‘sense of plausibility’, signifying teachers’ initiative in justifying and rationalizing one’s way of teaching. Kumaravadivelu described the shift from the concept of method to the concept of post-method as a ‘process of decolonization of ELT method’, with the implication of seeking an ‘alternative to method rather than an alternative method’ (2003:544). He argued that post-method pedagogy contains three principles, namely, particularity, practicality and possibility. Particularity refers to the development of a ‘context-sensitive and location-specific pedagogy based on the understanding of local linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities’.

Practicality refers to the development of teachers’ competence in ‘theorizing from their practice and to practice what they theorize’. Possibility means the investigation of the ‘sociopolitical consciousness that students bring with them to the classroom which functions as a catalyst for identity formation and social transformation’ (2006:69).

The three parameters relate in turn to a macro strategic framework, which contains ten macro strategies:

a. Maximize learning opportunities
b. Facilitate negotiated interaction
c. Minimize perceptual mismatches
d. Activate intuitive heuristics
e. Foster language awareness
f. Contextualize linguistic input
g. Integrate language skills
h. Promote learner autonomy
i. Ensure social relevance, and
j. RAISE cultural consciousness.
The macro strategies serve as guidelines for teachers to work out the micro strategies or activities appropriate for the local EFL context. It can be said that both of the terms ‘appropriate methodology’ and ‘post-method pedagogy’ attempt to pinpoint the key role played by cultural context in EFL teaching. Both terms call for the practitioner’s true understanding of local teaching contexts as well as competence in constructively tailoring and improving one’s way of teaching based on such understanding through exploration and self-reflection. The major difference between the two terms is in the emphasis on the requirement and expectation placed upon teachers.

Holliday’s model of appropriate methodology tends to stress the importance of the development of the teacher’s cultural awareness and sensitivity, whereas Kumaravadivelu’s model of post-method pedagogy pays more attention to teacher’s creativity and capability of theorizing what one creates. Teachers following the framework of post-method pedagogy are expected to assume a more active role in terms of pedagogic innovation as both practitioner and theory builder.

In addition, Holliday’s interpretation of appropriate methodology contains three perspectives – methods or approaches, curriculum development and social investigation. These touch upon both the micro (at classroom level) and macro (at socio-cultural level) levels of the recognition of cultural diversity and uniqueness of EFL context. Comparatively, Kumaravadivelu’s emphasis is more on the micro level, as he tends to lay the focus on rationalizing teacher beliefs and teaching behavior in the language classroom in line with the values of a particular culture.

Thus, the ideas of ‘appropriate methodology’ and ‘postmethod pedagogy’ both reflect concerns about the appropriateness of CLT in different cultural settings. Interestingly, the communicative principles proposed by Holliday (2005) actually echo the general goals and essence of CLT as identified above. Holliday (2005:143) identifies three communicative principles, namely, ‘treat language as communication’, ‘capitalize on students’ existing communication competence’, and ‘communicate with local exigencies’.

He argues that these principles can be applied differently in different social contexts, as the word ‘communicative’ implies the meaning of ‘geared to the competence and expectations of those participating in the learning process’ and
‘negotiation between all the parties concerned’ (Hutchinson and Waters 1984:108, cited by Holliday, 2005:147). Holliday recognizes that the first principle is usually seen as the core element of CLT. However, for him the second and third principles are also important since they lead to CLT becoming appropriate.

The second principle emphasizes the learner’s individual contribution and teacher’s ability to respond to the learner’s ‘expectations’ and ‘changing needs’ (Breen and Candlin, 2001:15, cited by Holliday, 2005:143). The third principle relates to how CLT can be culturally transferable through the interaction between communication and its peripheral environment. Holliday’s interpretation of communicative principles echoes those proposed by Mitchell (1998) and Berns (1990) (see 2.2.2.) by identifying CLT as a sort of approach which calls for accommodation between stakeholders (student, teacher, syllabus designer, and institutional manager, etc) based on an analysis of learning needs through ethnographic action research.

This also echoes Savignon’s (2006) viewpoint of the goal of CLT as being dependent on learner needs in a given context. In addition, his argument seems compatible with the principles of ‘particularity’ and ‘possibility’ in Kumaravadivelu’s (1994, 2001, 2003, 2006) post-method pedagogy model. Holliday’s argument shows the feasibility of interpreting CLT from a postmethod perspective as a context-dependent and context-adjustable approach. On this grounding, I will present a discussion of CLT as appropriate methodology in different cultural settings in the following section.

2.2.2. Discussion of CLT as appropriate methodology in different contexts

Due to the international popularity of CLT, the academic debate on the appropriateness of CLT in peripheral countries has become heated, with increasing attention being paid to the importance of context in terms of methodology application. In company with the prevalence of CLT at a theoretical level is the sharp contrast between governments’ enthusiasm and local teachers’ reluctance and resistance in relation to the approach. For instance, Sakui (2004) argues that despite the Japanese government’s stress on communicative ability in the curriculum, the fact is the grammar-translation method is still dominant in the majority of public schools in Japan.
She argues that in classes led by local teachers, CLT takes up less than 10% of class time in total; in team-teaching classes with a JET programme ALT (Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme Assistant Language Teacher), she found that most so-called CLT activities actually ‘resembled audio-lingual practices’. In mainland China, although CLT has been introduced for more than twenty years and has been required by the government to be implemented in a top-down way, its adaptability and effectiveness remain contentious.

For instance, Hu (2002) claims that CLT has failed to make the expected impact on ELT in China due to being in contradiction with Second language learning culture dominated by Confucianism. Wei and Chen (2004) argue that CLT has failed to take account of the differences between first language acquisition and second language learning. Wei proposes the notion of the integration of a Grammar-Translation method that ‘allows the native language to assist the learners’ cognitive understanding of the target language with CLT that requires using a target language to shape communicative competence in a target language context’ (p.11).

Other examples can be found in countries such as India, Pakistan, South Korea, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. For instance, Shamim (1996) found that her efforts to implement CLT were actually ‘creating psychological barriers to learning’ (p.109). Li (1998) and Kim (2006) identified that despite the attempt made by the South Korean government to promote CLT, CLT actually causes more difficulties than expected. Chowdhury (2003:285) identified that ‘the popular theories from the West are incompatible in Bangladesh because of cultural differences between the West and Bangladesh’. Ellis (1996) suggested that western teachers should mediate between Vietnamese cultural values and CLT in a more careful way. These interpretations have provoked a global debate on the appropriateness of CLT. Holliday (2005) argues that critiques of CLT can be divided into two distinct camps, namely, the political, postmodern, imperialism (hereafter referred to as ‘PPI’) camp, and the instrumental, modernist (hereafter referred to as ‘IM’) camp.
The PPI camp is represented by Canagarajah, who tends to take up a position against the localization of CLT from the perspective of pedagogical imperialism. Canagarajah (1999) argues that pedagogies are ‘not received in their own terms, but appropriated to different degrees in terms of the needs and values of the local communities’ (p.121-122). Whilst Pennycook considers that Western methodologies have been widely packaged and exported to the rest of the world, Canagarajah stresses that the ‘possibility of the potential resistance to such methodologies might be even higher’ (Pennycook, 1999, Canagarajah, 1993, cited by Pennycook, 2001:118).

This viewpoint was then developed by McKay (2003), who argued that ‘CLT, while the most productive method, is not feasible in many countries because the local culture of learning tends to promote mechanical learning and a lack of individualism and creative thinking’ (p.15). Ellis (1996) also feels uncertain about the likelihood of CLT as a globally appropriate approach. The IM camp is represented by Bax (2003), who advocates that CLT should be replaced by a Context Approach, as CLT fundamentally ignores the context in which the language teaching takes place. Bax argues against the message that ‘the communicative approach is the way to do it, no matter where you are, no matter what the context’ (2003:281).
He stresses the importance of analyzing the learning context, including learning needs, expectations, strategies, classroom and institutional culture, national cultural, and so on. Bax’s standpoint was criticized by Harmer (2003), who asserted that methodology still plays a vital role in language teaching. Although Harmer shares Bax’s view about the counter-productiveness of teachers’ insensitivity towards contextual factors in terms of methodological implementation, he points out that Bax tended to build his argument on an assumption about the opposition between methodology and context.

Holliday (2005) then summarized that the arguments made by Canagarajah and Bax only touch upon the first two communicative principles. According to Holliday, they tend to blur the distinction between communicative principles and the ‘specific methodology of the English-speaking Western TESOL ‘learning group ideal’, as they presume CLT is ‘in essence an English-speaking Western construct’ (2005:144).

Holliday denies the idea that the western origin of CLT is the crux of the reason why the approach is ideologically ill-fitting in different cultural contexts. He emphasizes that a perceptive understanding of the third principle (communicate with peripheral surroundings) provides a solid basis for an effective implementation and adaptation of the CLT approach, as, he claims, ‘the presence of native-speakerist elements in the ‘standard’ communicative methodology does not mean that the deeper principles ‘Learning group ideal’ comprises predominant attention to oral skills and group work. (Holliday, 2005:144) from which it springs are also native-speakerist4’ (2005:145).

Holliday’s arguments highlight the risk of essentializing the conception of CLT and stereotyping the cultures of the countries where CLT originated and was imported from and to. Although Nunan (1998) argues it is the weak version of CLT that is prevalent and widely accepted as the standard practice of CLT, the richness of the theoretical background of CLT implies the importance for the approach to be more constructively contextualized in different teaching settings both at a socio-cultural level and at classroom level.

In addition, it is important for the CLT teachers to assume a post-method perspective towards the approach, as argued by Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001:2).
For them, the communicative approach ‘was explicitly a post-method approach to language teaching…in which the principles underlying different classroom procedures were of paramount importance, rather than a package of teaching materials’ (cited by Bell, 2007:140).

This argument reflects the inappropriateness of interpreting CLT as a static and context-free approach. In addition, Canagarajah, McKay, and Bax may have tended to neglect the potential contributions brought by CLT to the importing countries.

This notion is related to the concept of ‘native-speakerism’ that is defined by Holliday as “an established belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology”. (Holliday, 2005:6) emphasized by Larsen-Freeman (2002) who identifies the danger of exaggerating the negative side of imported methodology. She claims that ‘we may fail to understand the cause of the problem and run the risk of overreacting, overacting and losing something valuable in the process’ (p.67).

The results show that despite the identified challenges of CLT promotion (such as subject matter articulation, lack of institutional support, and lack of proficiency in the L2), the participants consider CLT as ‘possible’ and their practices reflect the ‘tendency to use both CLT and traditional teaching aspects’ (p.512). Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood and Son (2004) report that the participants in their research who claim to adopt CLT actually taught eclectically, since her understanding of CLT as shown in her practical theory is ‘an amalgam of many features of CLT approaches and of general 5 LOTE: Teaching of foreign language or Languages Other Than English teaching’ (p.1). Pham (2007) launches a case study on teacher beliefs and use of CLT by three Vietnamese tertiary teachers.

He finds out that although the participants feel ‘ambivalent’ about the techniques to realize the CLT principles, all the participants ‘highlighted the potential usefulness of CLT, stressing that CLT primarily meant teaching students the language meaningful for their future life, and helping to improve the classroom atmosphere’ (p.197). He finally draws the conclusion that CLT is a sort of ‘unity within diversity’ approach, and teachers in Vietnam or elsewhere need to ‘make further efforts to
develop and generate, within the communicative approach, classroom techniques appropriate to their condition’ (p.200).

The above findings suggest that the controversy about CLT does not negate the usefulness of the approach. In addition, they also show that there exists a tendency of eclecticism in teachers’ practice. The eclectic mixing of CLT principles and traditional teaching methods reflects teachers’ quest for context-dependent methodology suitable for local cultures, and such a trend can be interpreted from a post-method perspective.

This is because the above findings coincide with the results shown by the study carried out by Bell (2007), in which he took an in-depth look into teacher’s beliefs on methods. Bell reports that most participants in his study tended to ‘equate post-method with eclecticism’ (p.140), as they interpret a post-method approach as ‘a freedom of combining all and any methods in their most effective combination in the teaching-learning process’ rather than a concrete method (p.139-140).

Moreover, it can be inferred that apart from the contextual element, the success of CLT implementation depends on other factors, such as teacher belief, linguistic competence in L2, national and institutional requirement. All these factors can actually affect practitioner’s decision on their way of teaching in an influential way.

Up to this point, I have discussed CLT as appropriate methodology in different cultural settings by taking an in-depth look at theories of appropriate methodology and post-method pedagogy. I then discussed how these theories influence the application of communicative principles by identifying the interrelation between the two terms. This was followed by a discussion of CLT as appropriate methodology in different cultures, in which the research examined the global effectiveness of CLT based on a number of published studies.

This study identified the importance of developing post-method and anti-essentialist perspectives on understanding the appropriateness of CLT as a context-dependent approach as well as pointing out other influential factors of CLT implementation. In the next section, This study will take an in-depth look at the debates on the appropriateness of CLT Tamilnadu particularly in Engineering colleges. This Study will firstly provide a brief overview of its development in India,
and this will be followed by a discussion in relation to its appropriateness in the Engineering college EFL contexts from an anti-essentialist perspective. This study will end the section by identifying the potential gaps for further research emerging from current debates and the extent to which this study might fill these research gaps.

2.3. CLT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The CLT approach was first introduced to China in 1979 by two Canadian teachers and a Second language teacher working at the Guangzhou (Canton) Foreign Languages Institute (Li, 1984). They assumed the responsibility of designing new materials based on the communicative approach for Technical colleges/ Engineering colleges university English majors, and this project was named Communicative English for Second language Learners (CECL). From then on, great efforts have been made by the Second language government to implement CLT as a reform in the Second language EFL world with the publication of several series of coursebooks incorporating a communicative perspective. A great step in this progression was the establishment of a Sino-British institutional development project – the DFID ELT project (Gu, 2004) – which was supported by the UK Department for International Development and hosted in twenty-seven Chinese higher institutions under the joint administration of the British Council and the Chinese Ministry of Education from the late 1970s to 2001. This project aimed to promote CLT throughout China in the form of ‘on-the-job counterpart training at Master’s level’. The top-down movements gradually generated two contradictory standpoints towards CLT implementation in the Chinese EFL profession, represented by the works of Li (1984), Liao (2004) and Hu (2002, 2005).

Li’s (1984) article entitled ‘In defense of the communicative approach’ is probably the earliest published work containing discussion of the appropriateness of CLT in the Chinese EFL context, in which the author gave a detailed introduction of the CECL project in relation to its feasibility in China. She clarified three principles underlying ‘communicative’ activities:

1. Real situations, real roles
2. Need, purpose, and substance for communication
3. Freedom and unpredictability. She emphasized the importance of authenticity of the situation and roles set up by communicative activities,
as well as learners’ cooperation in being both mentally and verbally active in communication situations.

She identified the common pitfall fallen into by Chinese learners of English as incompetent communicators in responding with ‘lumps of memorized language’ with no sensitivity to the context of communication (p.8). Li also argued that communicative practice is not receptive training; instead, it should take the unpredictability of communication into account.

Based on these principles, Li argued that the CECL project can be distinguished from traditional syllabus design due to the following CLT features: aim to develop learner’s competence in using ‘authentic, global, and appropriate language from the very beginning’ (p.6) via sufficient exposure to target language; learner-oriented and integrated course design with combined development of four skills; and transition of the language-learning process from ‘quantitative increase’ to ‘qualitative change’ (p.11).

In Li’s view, the aim of language education is not only to develop learners’ communicative competence but to develop their potential and cultivate them as ‘intelligent beings’ to enable them to ‘play a really useful role in international communication between cultures, which of course goes far beyond mere linguistic exchange’. In addition, Li pointed out that the ‘knowledge-imparting plus disciplining theory’ in the Chinese learning culture is the deep-rooted reason for resistance to CLT. She finally concluded that ‘effective communication’ is the key criterion for assessing learners’ communicative competence (p.12), which relates to the factors of linguistic accuracy and sociolinguistic appropriacy.

Li shows a very good understanding of the essence of CLT as a learning-by-doing approach and the challenges faced in CLT implementation are well perceived by her as well. She pointed out the urgent needs to change the EFL situation in China, and identified the lack of CC (particularly the lack of language appropriacy) as the major problem of Chinese learners of English in general at that time. Her arguments speak well for her as an advocate and pioneer for CLT promotion in China, playing a central role in initiating a new era for the pedagogic development of Chinese EFL profession. Her work triggered heated debates on the compatibility between CLT and Chinese learning culture among Chinese theorists and teachers with the rapid
promotion of the approach in the nation at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. More recent and the most representative works in this area are those by Liao (2004) and Hu (2002, 2005).

Liao (2004) tends to interpret appropriate methodology as context-free. He asserts that CLT is best for China from an ‘absolutist’ perspective (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:182) and attempts to build on his arguments on the Chinese government’s promotion of the approach. He argues against the importance of contextual factors in terms of the adoption of imported methodology by claiming that what is appropriate in the Chinese teaching context is ‘to teach in accordance with government requirements’ (2004:271). In his view, the Chinese centralized educational system largely restricts the development of teacher autonomy in terms of adoption and adaptation of teaching approach.

Liao’s standpoint is then trenchantly criticized by Hu (2005), who argues that Liao’s argument is based on ‘a problematic assumption of CLT’s universal effectiveness / appropriacy that ignores the diverse contexts of ELT in China’ (p.65). Hu argues that maximizing the effectiveness and appropriateness of CLT cannot be achieved without taking cultural aspects into account. He pointed out that Liao’s statements are ‘specious, unconvincing and dogmatic’ and show a poor understanding of what appropriate methodology actually is. Hu then strengthens his arguments by referring to his paper published in 2002 entitled ‘Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: the case of communicative language teaching in China’, in which he contends that CLT has failed to achieve the expected influence on Chinese ELT due to its incompatibility with the nature of Chinese learning culture dominated by Confucian philosophy. He points out that this mismatch can be reflected in three aspects, namely, teacher and teaching, learner and learning, and learning strategies. In terms of the aspect of teacher and teaching, Hu argues that the teacher’s role expected by CLT as ‘facilitator’ or ‘negotiator’ contradicts the traditional image of the Chinese teacher as an authoritative knowledge transmitter and decision-maker with a profound body of knowledge.

In relation to the aspect of learner and learning, Hu argues that the incompatibility mainly lies in learning habits, as CLT emphasizes the learning process as interactive. Therefore, whereas CLT calls for learner’s contribution of being verbally active when performing authentic task-based activities, in the Chinese
learning culture, it is the teacher’s contribution which is appreciated most, as Chinese learners normally position themselves as passive knowledge receivers in conformity with textbook knowledge most of the time. Although Chinese learners might be mentally active in the classroom, they seldom challenge teacher authority in public in order to be respectful. Another major difference lies in the emphasis on the development of learning strategies.

In order to encourage learners to use the target language for the purpose of real-time communication, CLT allows the existence of speculation during the process of learning as it pays less attention to formal errors as long as they do not interfere with meaning. This tolerance for ambiguity is considered to be largely in contradiction with the learning strategies commonly practiced in the Chinese learning culture described by Hu as 4 R’s and 4 M’s. 4 R’s stand for reception (students are expected to receive and retain the knowledge imparted by teachers and textbooks); repetition (repeatedly practice what they do not understand); review (reviewing what has been received and repeated is not only to consolidate learning but to gain new knowledge and to deepen understanding), and reproduction (accurately reproduce the transmitted textual knowledge on demand from the teacher or tests). The four M’s stand for meticulousness (attention to the smallest details of knowledge), memorization (memorize with understanding, which does not mean rote-learning), mental activity (active mental analysis, questioning, discriminating and reflection), and mastery (no approximation to knowledge or pretension to understanding is tolerated).

Nonetheless, Hu does emphasize that some elements of CLT (such as collaborative learning, authentic material use, and so on) can be integrated into Chinese pedagogic practice. Therefore, instead of excluding CLT from Chinese EFL, Hu calls for the emergence of an ‘eclectic approach’ that fundamentally conforms to the Confucian thinking of Chinese education. Although the standpoints of Liao and Hu represent opinions at two opposite extremes on the appropriateness of CLT in the Chinese EFL context, there is a tendency of essentialism in both their arguments, as both of them seem to conceive of CLT and Chinese learning culture as fixed entities. In philosophy, essentialism ‘is the view that, for any specific kind of entity, there is a set of characteristics or properties all of which any entity of that kind must possess’ and ‘a generalization stating that certain properties possessed by a group (e.g. people, thing, ideas) are universal, and not dependent on context’ (Wikipedia, accessed on 10
November, 2008). It presumes that ‘particular things have essences which serve to identify them as the particular things that they are’ (Bullock and Trombley, 1997:283, cited by Holliday, 2005:17). In addition, both Liao’s and Hu’s arguments are not strictly research-based. Instead, their arguments made seem to be grounded on personal assumptions, which to a great extent lower the validity and reliability of what they claim. These points serve as the a major basis for launching the present study.

In terms of stereotyping of CLT, as pointed out by Hu, Liao’s rather dogmatic advocacy of CLT reflects his misinterpretation of appropriate methodology and of a central aspect of CLT – that it is learning-centered and context-dependent. His argument only touches upon Holliday’s (2005) first communicative principle and fails to appreciate that contextual factors (both at broad cultural level and at classroom level) are vital for effective implementation of CLT, overlooking the variables in teaching context. Liao tends to interpret the classroom as a vacuum and considers teaching approaches as immune from cultural differences and complexity.

His statement that ‘in China the educational system is centrally controlled, with government specifying both the content and methodology of teaching…for China it can be argued that what is appropriate is that teachers should adopt CLT’ is too arbitrary to be convincing and persuasive. This attitude reflects a superficial understanding of the interrelation between language teaching and culture, as he is unaware that CLT highly values close cooperation between teacher and learner as co-contributors and the goal of the approach is actually geared to ‘learner needs in a given context’ (Savignon, 2006).

On the other hand, the declaration of an incompatibility between CLT and Chinese learning culture is a major deficiency of Hu’s argument. Although Hu shows a good understanding of the CLT theories in his paper, he fails to interpret CLT from a post-method perspective, as he seems unaware that the approach is in fact not just context-dependent but context-adjustable as well, due to its flexible nature and the goal of being consistent with the learner needs in a particular context. The context not only includes the socio-cultural context at macro level, but more importantly, it includes the classroom context at micro level, as it is the principles underlying the actual classroom practice that reflect whether or not the classroom is CLT-oriented. Moreover, study of teacher’s beliefs underlying the adopted principles can reveal teachers’ own, varied interpretations of CLT. This actually mirrors the very basis of
post-method pedagogy – the development of teachers’ sense of plausibility as well as the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility.

The tendency of essentialism reflected in the interpretations of CLT conveyed by Liao and Hu indicates that both of them fail to understand CLT as an approach with open and flexible nature. In addition, their arguments also indicate the danger of stereotyping this teaching approach as a fixed pedagogic entity. Unlike the concepts of ‘methodology’ and ‘method’ which represent a generalized set of teaching systems and procedures with fixed techniques and practices rationalized by a theoretical framework (Rogers, 2001; Xinmin and Adamson, 2003), an ‘approach’ or ‘pedagogy’ provides teachers with the possibility of tailoring their ways of teaching to the needs of given teaching contexts. This is because ‘approach’ represents a language teaching philosophy that can be various in form during application (Rogers, 2001), and ‘pedagogy’ refers to ‘the teacher’s personal construction of beliefs and practices about teaching and learning’ (Xinmin and Adamson, 2003:323). Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) raise concerns about the problem of stereotyping CLT from a pedagogic perspective.

As they say, ‘appropriate communicative language teaching in Hanoi [Vietnam]…might use the same pedagogic nomenclature as in London, but look very different in classroom practice.’ (p.201). Therefore, it can be inferred that CLT is open to different ways of interpretation and implementation in different teaching contexts. Given the fact that not many studies have been undertaken to investigate how CLT is actually interpreted and implemented by L2 teachers (Karavas-Doukas, 1996, Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999), it is my wish to contribute to this area by looking into how CLT is conceived of and promoted by Chinese tertiary English teachers, based on their understanding of the actual difficulties encountered during its implementation in China.

The second reason for launching this study relates to the problem of stereotyping of Chinese learning culture and fixed images of the Chinese learner. This problem is mainly represented by Hu’s conviction that CLT is culturally ill-fitting in the Chinese EFL context (2002, 2005). This viewpoint actually reflects what Holliday (2005) refers to as ‘culturism6’. It should be noted that Chinese culture differs dramatically in different regions given the geographic complexity of the nation. However, Hu tends to stereotype Chinese culture in relation to Confucianism and fails
to perceive the diversity, richness and dynamism of the changing social atmosphere nowadays under the circumstances of internationalization. Whilst some researchers (like Holliday, 2005 and Ge, 2005) express their concerns that ELT in China might be stereotyped by western educators due to their fixed impressions of Chinese learning culture labeled as involving ‘passive learning’, ‘rote memorization’ and ‘mechanical accumulation of language knowledge’, it is worth noting that Chinese EFL educators themselves might be unable to appreciate the positive side of pedagogic innovation due to their own stereotyped understanding of the local culture.

In addition, Hu’s argument is merely concerned with the macro-level of the social context and ignores the influence exerted by the micro-level elements (regional / classroom culture). Importantly, it needs to be stressed that cultural sensitivity needs to relate not only to teaching methodology but also needs to involve a process of learning about language classroom as well (Holliday, 1994). In other words, the imported methodology cannot be well adapted without a perceptive interpretation of the uniqueness of particular language classrooms. In addition, Hu’s arguments show a tendency of stereotyping Chinese learners as passive knowledge receivers rather than critical and independent thinkers: students should maintain a high level of receptiveness, wholeheartedly embracing the knowledge from their teacher or books…Chinese students tend to feel uneasy in a more egalitarian communicative learning environment and find it difficult to suspend their beliefs to engage in light-hearted learning activities on the one hand and critical self-expression on the other. (2002:100) Hu’s stance regarding Chinese learning culture and Chinese learners can be challenged by some recent studies on the changing climate of Chinese learning culture and the image of Chinese learners of English.

For instance, Kumaravadivelu (2003) questioned the tendency in TESOL to culturally stereotype learners from Asia. Nichol (2003) reported that learners’ cultural identity may lead to teachers’ misunderstanding of their ability in critical thinking.
Chalmers and Volet (1997) criticized some authors for stereotyping students from South-East Asia as ‘rote and passive learners’ who adopt a ‘surface approach to learning’ (p.88, 90). Littlewood (2000) questioned the stereotyped image of Asian students as obedient listeners. Coverdale-Jones (2006) and Clark and Gieve (2006) respectively identified the phenomenon of problematizing Chinese learners as ‘passive, lacking critical thinking, reliant on simplistic rote memorization strategies’ and the frequent attribution of these traits to a Confucian model of learning.

They called for the need to reflect on the ‘appropriateness and effectiveness of the conceptual frameworks in which these identities have been created’ (Clark and Gieve, 2006:54). Ha (2004) argued that there can be ‘much more going on under the surface in respect to terms such as ‘rote learning’, or being an ‘authoritarian’ teacher’ (p.52). Cortazzi and Jin (2006:14) argued that there are some ‘new emphases in ELT in China’, which include the following aspects:

1. More learner-centered through the analysis of learning experiences and learning strategies
2. More chances for active participation to develop learner’s team-work spirit and competence in using language for practical purposes
3. Trying to develop learner’s critical and evaluative thinking and keeping learner highly motivated (p.15)
4. Cultivating learner’s intercultural communicative competence and intercultural competence and becoming transnational beings.

They also pointed out that ‘Confucian-heritages learning culture’ as labeled by Biggs (1996), is partially interpreted. This is because apart from emphasizing the teacher’s role as a respectable knowledge transmitter and the hierarchical relationship between teacher and learner, it also contains the ‘strong traditional elements of the student’s own efforts, the need for reflective thinking and independent interpretation, for internalization of understanding, and putting what is learnt into practice’ (p.12).

This point was also emphasized by Shi (2006), who argued that the ‘multi-dimensionality of Confucianism often fails to be recognized’ (p.124). Shi questions Hu’s interpretation of Confucianism by comparing his arguments with those ‘drawing closely on The Analects’ in terms of six aspects, namely, attitude towards education
and learning, how to learn, teacher-student relationship, the model of traditional Chinese education, the focus of teaching and the purpose of learning.

She pinpoints that, different from Hu’s interpretation, Confucianism actually promotes edutainment and encourages learner to think critically and independently through a ‘heuristic’ teaching philosophy. Confucianism values the equal relationship between teacher and learner, and emphasizes the importance of both textbook knowledge and real life experiences. It considers the ultimate goal of learning as being ‘to act virtuously and cultivate a moral character’ (p.126-127). Shi claims that she shares the view that Chinese learners are actually ‘valuing active and reflexive thinking, open-mindedness and a spirit of inquiry (Chan, 1997; Cheng, 2002; Jones, 1999; Lee, 1996; Watkins & Biggs, 2001; cited by Shi, 2006:125).

She reports that the findings of her study suggest Chinese learners are ‘critical of their teachers, learning materials / environment and themselves’. Xinmin and Adamson (2003) launched a study in which they looked into the pedagogy of a ‘traditional’ Chinese secondary school teacher. The findings suggest that the stereotypical image of Chinese teachers of English as ‘transmitters of grammatical knowledge, bound by textbooks’ portrayed in the literature can be challenged due to the efforts made by the participant to ‘reconcile his pedagogy with the innovative methodology in a context constrained by examination requirements and the pressure of time’ (p.323).

They finally drew the conclusion that the stereotyped perception of a particular teaching and learning culture can result in a failure to ‘capture the dynamic nature of pedagogy as a personal construct forged by the interplay of beliefs, experiences and practice, and contextual factors operating at the micro-level (the chalkface) and at the macro-level (state policy)’ (p.323).

The findings of this paper seem to be supported by similar work in other countries such as Vietnam. Ha (2004) reported that he found out the two Vietnamese university teachers of English participating in his research tried hard to incorporate new ideas into their teaching practice, taking account of the cultural context of the classroom. He argued that the ways they taught did not ‘conform to the cultural stereotype’ of being ‘deficient and imposing, didactic and backward, following an
“empty vessel” teaching method’ as reflected in the perceptions of the teaching style of Eastern EFL teachers held by many Westerners (p.50).

The above interpretations show the inappropriateness and judgementalness of attributing the challenges of CLT encountered during its implementation in China to the reason of its being culturally ill-fitting due to Confucianism rooted in Chinese culture. On the contrary, as suggested by Shi, Confucianism can be considered harmonious with the major features of CLT so that Chinese learning culture actually provides sufficient conditions for CLT promotion in the Chinese EFL context. Although Shi’s stance seems to imply the feasibility of CLT implementation in China, nevertheless, the opposition between the arguments made by Hu and Shi itself reflects the possibility of interpreting Confucianism differently.

This point further indicates the inappropriateness of labeling a particular culture without appreciating its diversity and being open to various interpretations. Importantly, it should be stressed that the feasibility of CLT implementation in China does not necessarily mean the approach should be adopted by every Chinese teacher of English in a compulsory way. Although the Chinese government has attached great importance to its promotion from its introduction, and the new emphases of the Chinese EFL profession and the results of some studies indicate that CLT does have a lot of things to offer to China, teachers should be considered to have autonomy to tailor their own lessons and decide the way of teaching based on their understanding of learners’ expectations, needs, and just as importantly, their English proficiency.

This is because a teacher’s beliefs always plays a decisive role in decisions on the way of teaching, as argued by Pajares (1992): ‘beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behavior’ (p.311). Perhaps one key to successful implementation of CLT might fundamentally rest in Chinese teachers’ English proficiency, as it cannot be denied that the CC and IC that CLT aim to develop and enhance greatly challenges the English competence of non-native speakers of English in general in terms of linguistic correctness and socio-cultural acceptability and appropriateness. Hutchinson and Waters (1984:108) also argued that, ‘an essential attribute of the communicative approach is that methodology is geared not only to the competence but also to the ‘expectations of those participating in the learning process’.
The complexity of this issue highlights the importance of carrying out an investigation into the effectiveness of CLT in China at tertiary level to reveal the obstacles encountered during its implementation and explore the extent to which obstacles can be tackled with adjustments made to accommodate CLT with the local needs of Chinese EFL teachers. By studying the reasons underlying any adjustments made by teachers, the study will aim to find out the extent to which the difficulties of CLT implementation are at a cultural level, as well as the actual teaching philosophies held by Chinese EFL teachers at tertiary level. Apart from stereotyping of CLT and Chinese learning culture, the third problem in the arguments made by Liao and Hu is that both of them seem to ignore the endeavours made by Chinese teachers to implement CLT, with resulting overgeneralization in relation to the process of CLT promotion in China.

Both Hu (2002, 2005) and Liao (2005) fail to provide solid evidence for supporting their standpoints, which leave the general impression that their statements seem to be based on personal assumptions, lowering the validity and reliability of the arguments they make. Actually, there have been a number of research studies conducted in this area. For instance, Rao launched case study research in 2002 in which he investigated Chinese university English-major students’ perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classrooms dominated by the CLT approach. He reports the major difficulties perceived by Chinese university learners of English (such as lack of motivation for communicative competence due to the EFL rather than ESL situation in China, teacher-centered learning styles, and lack of funding), and suggests a combination of communicative and non-communicative activities could be an eclectic way to meet the learning needs of Chinese learners. Rao also identifies the importance of clarifying fundamental misconceptions about CLT (such as exclusion of grammar-teaching, overemphasis of oral / aural competence, etc).

This stance is reemphasized by Jin, Singh and Li (2005), who presented a paper entitled ‘Communicative language teaching in China: misconceptions, applications and perceptions’ at the AARE’ 05 Education Research Conference. They report the findings of an empirical study conducted in 2002 in a Chinese college non-English-major reading class using communicative reading AARE: the Australian Association for Research in Education; by Jin, Singh and Li (2005) activities to
facilitate learners’ vocabulary acquisition, and demonstrate the feasibility of adopting a communicative approach in such classes.

Learners are divided into two contrastive groups, and four classes are taught with the communicative approach (C group) and the other four with the grammar-translation method (G group). C group classes are then introduced to three kinds of activities, namely, warm-up activities, reading activities (including predictive and jigsaw activities) and follow-up activities.

After a two-semester experiment, both groups are given the same listening and reading tests, and the findings show that the overall score achieved by C group students is higher than G group students. Compared with the volume of work highlighting incompatibility between CLT and Chinese learning culture, the amount of research defending the appropriateness of CLT may be not substantial enough to demonstrate the positive impact brought by the approach in the Chinese EFL context. Nevertheless, all the efforts made to maximize CLT’s pedagogical effectiveness should by no means be ignored or underestimated despite the fact that the traditional ways of teaching (such as grammar-translation) are still widely adopted and may be considered most productive by the majority of Chinese teachers.

For instance, Rao (1996) reports that there still exists the tendency to perceive communicative activities as divorced from serious learning in China, as most Chinese teachers of English believe ‘only by emphasizing linguistic details can they expect to help their students pass the standard discrete-point, structurally based English examinations’ (p.504). He points out that repetition and reviewing strategies are widely used by Chinese learners at the expense of social strategies and ‘the strategies leading to the improvement of communicative skills’ due to the pressures exerted by the Chinese examination system. He argues that CLT is not appropriate for all Chinese learners and highlights the urgent need to ‘reconcile the Grammar-translation Method with CLT to promote strategies that lead to a greater emphasis on communication’ (p.505).

Ding (2007) reports that text memorization and imitation are valued as the most useful methods of learning English by three winners of nationwide English speaking competitions and debate tournaments in China. Gu and Schweisfurth (2006) claim that although the participants in Sino-British ELT projects (which aim to
promote CLT in China) show positive attitudes towards CLT, traditional approaches still take up a key role in their teaching. However, they emphasize that the exposure to CLT enabled project participants to ‘review critically their traditional teaching approaches as well as the appropriateness of Western innovations’ (p.80). These arguments highlight the significance of seeking an eclectic approach appropriate to particular teaching settings (mainly based on teachers’ understanding of learner’s expectations, needs, and English proficiency), aiming to avoid the tendency for extremeness in terms of pedagogic development in China.

The point emerging here serves as the third reason for launching this study, as it is worth looking at how communicative principles and traditional teaching methods are eclectically and effectively mixed by Second language teachers with a view to discovering extent to which CLT can be conducive to maximizing the overall effectiveness of EFL in the I year B.E./B.Tech class room context in general.

- In this section, the study has critically discussed the situation of CLT in other countries. This study firstly navigated through the development of CLT in various countries from a historical perspective, and followed this by introducing the most representative works in relation to the debate on the appropriateness of CLT in this context.

- The study then identified three major problems existing in the arguments of these works, namely, stereotyping of CLT, stereotyping of learning a second language, and the tendency to over generalize regarding the process of CLT promotion in I year B.E./B.Tech Students EFL Class rooms.

- This study discussed the extent to which CLT could possibly contribute to Second language learners (I year B.E./B.Tech Students) EFL, and argued that CLT and the Confucianism rooted in the second language learning culture were fundamentally harmonious with each other.

- This study also argued that the pragmatic difficulties of CLT implementation were more likely to be at cognitive and technical levels (e.g. teacher’s beliefs, teachers’ English proficiency, and learners’ preference for traditional learning strategies) rather than at a cultural level.

Given that the traditional teaching and learning habits still persist, the researcher agreed with the view of Hu (2002) that it is of paramount importance for
second language learners to develop an eclectic awareness of EFL teaching in order to accommodate the changing climate of Second language teaching / learning EFL nowadays and the particular learning needs of given contexts.

This research also expressed its agreement with Hu’s (2002) idea about the necessity for the I year B.E./ B.Tech students’ EFL profession to seek an eclectic approach that is culturally appropriate and adaptable. Nevertheless, it is also assumed the starting assumption that CLT can have its place in second language teaching, as this study argued that the approach can be more constructively reinterpreted and tailored from a post-method and anti-essentialist perspective.

This study identified three major problems that lead the researcher to undertake this study, namely,

- Stereotyping of CLT
- Stereotyping of English language learning and
- Overgeneralization regarding the process of CLT promotion in Engineering colleges.

2.4. CURRENT RESEARCH GAPS

Apart from the above-mentioned reasons, there exists a research gap in this field, as few studies have been carried out to take an in-depth look into the appropriateness of CLT from teachers’ perspective through an investigation of teachers’ beliefs about CLT and actual teaching practice in the I year B.E./B.Tech. students’ teaching /learning EFL context. It needs to be emphasized that teacher beliefs can significantly affect practice, as argued by Tsui (2003): ‘teachers’ disciplinary knowledge often has a decisive influence on the process, content and quality of their instruction’ (p.55). In addition, as argued by Kumaravadivelu (2003:540), ‘adequate attention has not been given to a pedagogic area that matters most: classroom methodology’, and he called for a ‘systematic attempt to explore possible methodological means to decolonize English language teaching’. In addition, Richards and Rogers (1986:82) identified that ‘how to implement CLT principles at the level of classroom procedures remains central to discussions of the communicative approach’. The earliest work done in this field was the research carried out by Mitchell (1988), who looked into the perceptions of CC held by 59
foreign language teachers. She finally concluded that the teaching philosophy regarding second language acquisition was different from the general CLT principles.

It was not until mid-90s that this issue regained the attention. Karavas-Doukas (1996) and Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) both pointed out that few studies have been undertaken to look into how well CLT is perceived and adopted. But from then on, this research gap has been paid increasing attention by some theorists and teachers in different countries. Mangubhai, Dashwood, Berthold, Flores, and Dale (1998) launched a study in Australia to look into the perceptions and beliefs about CLT of 39 LOTE teachers via questionnaire and follow-up interviews. The findings suggest that the participants’ understanding of CLT were incompatible with the CLT theories in the literature. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) carried out research exploring the conceptions of CLT possessed by 10 Japanese primary teachers working in Queensland via interview and observation.

The findings suggest that the participants’ perception of CLT largely reflect the misunderstandings of CLT as identified by Thompson (1996) and their actual practice is grammar-teaching-oriented and failed to reflect CLT principles. Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, Son (2004) carried out an exploratory study in Australia to take an in-depth look into the practical theory of one teacher who claimed to adopt CLT approach in her class, via interviews. The findings suggest that the basic CLT principles are well incorporated into the informant’s teaching practice, and the conveyed interpretation of CLT is found to be largely consistent with those appearing in the literature on CLT.

A more recent work in this field is the research carried out by Pham. Pham (2007) launched a case study on teachers’ beliefs and use of CLT at a university in Vietnam. Based on the findings gained from interviews and observations, Pham concludes that the participants actually embraced CLT as they ‘espouse firmly the primary goal of CLT – to teach students to be able to use the language’ (p.200). He also identifies that despite the efforts made to apply CLT principles to their teaching, the participants encounter a number of difficulties such as traditional examinations, large class sizes, classroom relationship between teacher and learner, learners’ low motivation and incompetence in independent learning, and teacher’s incompetence in creating communicative activities. Nevertheless, Pham’s study is comparatively small-scale, as the research is carried out at one university with the number of
participants totaling three. In addition, Pham does not make clear in his paper what sort of adjustments were made by the teachers to tailor CLT to be more appropriate in the local context, nor does he specify how the teachers actually encountered the identified difficulties and the extent to which CLT can be conducive to enhancing teaching effectiveness in particular contexts.

The present research aims to uncover more insights in these areas. In short, given the fact that studies on teachers’ understanding and knowledge in relation to CLT are not substantial and few studies in this field have yet been carried out in the I year B.E./B.Tech students’ EFL context Engineering College level, This study decided to launch a research to investigate these areas an exploratory fashion, from the bottom up. The researcher intention was to elicit Second Language Teaching teachers’ and students voices, exploring their opinions on the effectiveness and appropriateness of CLT in the Engineering College EFL context through an investigation of their understandings of CLT and their actual teaching practice.

In addition, it was decided that the participants of this study should all be Engineering College teachers of English with the experience of second language teaching. It was interested in finding out the extent to which these teachers consider their intercultural experience conducive to enhancing their teaching proficiency and effectiveness in terms of CLT implementation.

This is because comparing with Second language teachers with no intercultural experience and expatriate teachers of English teaching in Engineering Colleges, this group of teachers is likely to understand the appropriateness of CLT from both sides.

In support of this opinion, Jin (2005) identified in her paper entitled ‘Which is better in China, a local or a native English-speaking teacher?’ that native-speaker norms are no longer accepted by Chinese university students as the only criterion for choosing teachers. She argues that Chinese students nowadays tend to pay more attention to teachers’ knowledge of target language both at linguistic and cultural levels despite the fact that native-speaker teachers are still greatly preferred due to ‘more reliable linguistic knowledge and a better model of standard pronunciation’ (p.45). Jin concludes that the best solution to get rid of Chinese learners’ ‘blind adoration of native-speaker norms’ is to ‘raise learners’ awareness of the existence of
a whole range of local varieties of English worldwide’ (p.45). In addition, Jin identifies that teacher professional development is of paramount importance in China.

As she argues, ‘educating non native second language teacher is more important and more realistic than seeking native-speaker teachers from outside…exposing such teachers [Non – native second language teachers] to updated research in ELT and World English is a necessity to enhance their awareness of their own value’ (p.45).

Additionally, Gu (2004) argues that intercultural experience can exert significant influence on Chinese EFL teachers in terms of professional enhancement. She identifies that being exposed to different cultures can considerably raise a teacher’s awareness of the vital role played by cultural and contextual factors from a pedagogic perspective. In addition, she claims that intercultural experience can ‘induce a more rational view of teaching and learning practice, and a more balanced attitude towards tradition versus innovation’ (p.13). The arguments made by both Jin and Gu pinpoint the urgency and necessity of teacher education overseas.

However, there is a lack of studies in the literature that systematically look into the teaching effectiveness of non native second language teachers of English with years of second language teaching experience through an investigation of their teaching philosophy and actual teaching practice.

As argued by Fullan (1982:107), ‘educational change depends on what teachers think and do – it is as simple and as complex as that’.

Finally, the effectiveness of CLT implementation specifically at Engineering College is very much under-researched in Tamilandu given the fact that the approach is not as popular with the Engineering College teachers as with primary teachers.

With a general interest in the role of CLT as appropriate methodology in the engineering college context (and with specific concerns regarding tendencies to stereotype CLT, second language learning , and the process of CLT implementation in Engineering Colleges as detailed above), This study therefore intend to take an in-depth look into the extent to which Engineering college Language Teachers consider their language teaching experience has actually changed their teaching methods and has been conducive to enhancing their teaching performance in terms of CLT implementation. The study aims to find out how these teachers with intercultural
experience interpret CLT as appropriate methodology in the Engineering College context.

2.5. JUSTIFICATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overall research problem is broken down into the following three research questions, and this study will provide a brief rationale for these questions in this final section.

RQ.1. ‘What are the conceptions of CLT held by Engineering College teachers of English with second language teaching experience?’

This question aims to find out the extent to which their second language teaching experience enabled teachers to develop a thorough understanding of CLT from a pedagogic perspective. It aims to find out how CLT is described as a working definition in a Engineering College EFL context and the extent to which the conveyed interpretations of CLT reflect the problems of stereotyping and misinterpretation as identified in the current literature.

RQ.2. ‘To what extent do these teachers perceive CLT as appropriate in the Engineering College EFL context?’

This question intends to discover teachers’ general attitudes towards CLT application in the Engineering EFL context based on their understanding of appropriate methodology, and in the light of their intercultural experience. This will also lead to an exploration of the underlying reasons beneath their explanations, revealing the most encountered difficulties during the process of CLT implementation.

RQ.3. ‘Do the Engineering College teachers of English with second language teaching experience attempt to adopt or adapt CLT? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?’

This question aims to investigate the extent to which teachers with intercultural experience change their teaching practice in relation to CLT implementation and adjustment. It aims to find out how the difficulties identified in the RQ2 are technically challenged, how teaching is therefore geared towards helping learners to develop their communicative competence, and the extent to which the applied techniques reflect the general CLT principles and are considered as effective
and useful. The findings for this question will, it is hoped, provide a general basis for the development of a framework for a context-dependent Indian culture-oriented CLT version of CLT. In the next chapter, this study turn to the methodology of this study.