

武汉理工大学

硕士学位论文

运用交际教学法备考雅思口语考试的实证研究

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中文摘要

1990年4月,雅思考试正式登陆中国,并在1998年以后逐渐成为中国主要的留学语言类考试。而且随着中国经济的飞速发展,希望出国留学或者移民的人数也随之迅速增加。英国,澳大利亚,新西兰和加拿大的高等院校均将雅思成绩作为评判申请者英语能力的标准。加拿大,澳大利亚和新西兰的移民局更是把雅思成绩作为非英语国家移民申请人的一项不可缺少的语言能力的证明。雅思是近年来非常流行的交际教学法的产物,它最突出的特点是侧重于考察学生运用英语进行交流的能力。它既不考常识,也不考学术知识或者学习技巧,它只是一个考察语言的实际运用能力,力求反映出学生真实的英语应用能力的考试。通过备考雅思口语考试可以帮助大学生克服“哑巴英语”,使他们具有解决口语交际困难的能力。

本论文研究的目的之一是通过详细分析雅思口语考试的内容和要求,将交际教学法与课堂教学活动相结合,测试这种教学法是否能有效地培养学生的应试能力并帮助他们在雅思考试中取得比较好的成绩。研究目的之二是在应用交际教学法指导学生备考雅思口语考试的过程中,切实提高学生的英语口语交际能力以应对学习和生活中遇到的英语交际问题。

本文的研究方法是通过课堂教学实验采集数据,将数据进行分析并将相关数据进行对比来证明交际教学法是否是恰当的教学方式、能否取得积极的教学效果。

本文中实验过程的进展和实验结果都验证了研究方法的可行性,并达到了本文提出的研究目的。

这篇论文不仅仅提供一个有效的方式来指导学生备考雅思,文章对现行大学英语教学也进行了反思。数年来,大学英语教学不断强调阅读和写作,现在也在注意口语交际能力的提高,但是还未找到一个最有效的教学方法和手段来加强大学生的英语使用能力和交际能力。

本论文总共有五章。第一章介绍语言学理论,交际能力理论,以及一些语言学家提出的3个交际能力模型。第二章讨论了英语教学法的发展并着重介绍了交际教学法。第三章则从选题范围,考试形式,评分过程以及评分模式等几个方面对雅思口语考试进行全面的剖析。第四章介绍了一个实证研究的例子,通过在实证中得到的数据来论证交际教学法是否有效。在研究过程中,应用了一些实验方法并介绍了一些典型的交际教学法的课堂活动。第五章是全文总结部分,介绍了

作者对现行大学英语教学的反思以及雅思口语考试对现行大学英语教学的反拨作用。

关键词：交际教学法， 雅思口语考试， 口语能力， 实证研究

Abstract

The IELTS landed in China in April 1990, and has been getting prosperous since 1998. With the rapid growth of economy in China in recent years, the number of people who want to get out of China increases sharply, whether the purpose of them is to study abroad or to migrate. Furthermore, all the colleges and universities in the countries, such as UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada have accepted the IELTS. Even more, the departments of immigration of Canada, Australia and New Zealand have settled the IELTS as an exclusive proof of English ability of non-native English speakers. In light of the activities aforementioned, the IELTS has been boosted to extend to worldwide. IELTS is the product of the Communicative Language Teaching approach, which is very popular recently. The most obvious character of the test is that it tests the students' English-communicative ability. It takes English as a tool. Therefore, IELTS is neither a test used to check the common knowledge nor a test about academic knowledge or studying skill. It is only a language ability testing and it can reflect the students' real English-applied ability. Through the process of preparing for IELTS oral test, the students could find way to overcome "Dumb English" and equip themselves with the communicative ability to solve the communicative problems they would meet in their daily life and study.

One of the purposes of this thesis is to apply the CLTA to the teaching activities to testify whether this approach can effectively cultivate the students' ability to pass the exam and get good results. The other purpose is to improve the students' English oral communicative ability through the preparation process in the hope that they could cope with all the difficulties in their future life and study.

The research method is to collect data during the teaching experiment and then analyze the data. After that, compare the related data to prove that whether or not the approach is suitable or useful and whether active teaching effects could be achieved.

At last, the experiment process and the results confirm that the research method is practical and the research purposes have been achieved.

The aim of this thesis is not only to provide a useful way to help the students prepare for IELTS; it also lays stress on the washback effect and reflection on the college English teaching. After years of reading and writing exercises, much attention

has been put into oral English, but the teachers have not found the most effective teaching method or approach.

This thesis covers five chapters. The first chapter introduces the linguistic theories, and explains the communicative competence theory and several linguists' models in details. The second chapter discusses the development of English teaching methodology and highlights the Communicative Language Teaching approach. The third chapter concerns a throughout and complete analysis of IELTS and the oral part from several aspects, such as topic range, tests format, scoring procedure and marking mode, etc. Chapter Four presents an empirical study with date to testify whether or not the approach is effective. Several treatments have been implemented here and some sample class activities are introduced. Chapter Five is the conclusion which talks about the reflection on the college English teaching.

Key words: Communicative language teaching approach, IELTS, oral English ability, empirical study

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

As in many countries in the world, English is the most important language that is being taught and learned in China, from elementary schools to adult night schools.

Any teaching method is originated from some theory. And it is necessary to review the recent trends on theoretical level. "Of all the concepts in language teaching which have been widely used in recent years, the term 'communication' no doubt top the list." (Stern 1992:6-10)

Viewing language more in terms of the social functions, Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA) had in recent years become a fashionable term to cover a variety of developments in syllabus design and, to a lesser extent, in the methodology of teaching foreign languages. The emphasis has shifted away from mastery of language structure to language use. Compared with the traditional way of teaching, whose strategy works like this: "Present a structure, drill it, and practice it in context...", "the communicative pedagogical mentality has manifested different ways..." It has been accepted for many years that 'communication': is the proper aim for language teaching." (Allwright 2000:168); but the textbooks and national syllabuses, present an analysis of language rather than of communicative skills. To address the problem, Allwright proposes that communication has become fully accepted as an essential and major component of the "product" of language teaching, but it is not treated as an essential and major component of the "Process". Most teachers are puzzled about whether we should give priority to communication or to grammar. To simply put it, we can raise a question as follows to illustrate:

Are we teaching language (for communication)?

Or

Are we teaching communication (Via language)? (Brumfit & Johnson 2000:

168)

Most of the teachers would think that their prime aim is to teach language rather than communication. Or many teachers still believe that students should learn to use the language in communication only after they have learned to master its structures in drills and other mechanical exercises. Therefore they would object to the question. But after careful thought, you will find the two possibilities are compatible. There is logical relationship between them similar to that between linguistic competence and communicative competence. In Allwright's opinion, some areas of linguistic competence are basically unrelated to communicative competence, but in general, linguistic competence is a part of communicative competence. This modified part-whole relationship implies, in turn, that teaching comprehensively for linguistic competence will necessarily leave a large area of communicative competence untouched, while equally comprehensively for communicative competence also miss some area of linguistic competence. Rather than an either-or dichotomy, grammar and communication can be seen within a view of language as social semiotic (Halliday 1978, 1989, 1990). To make the point clear, it is necessary to give the definition of competence.

Noam Chomsky is said to be the first linguist who coined the term—competence and performance in the 1950. His assumption is said to have laid much of modern linguistics: “Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual use.” Competence is defined by Chomsky as the speaker-hearer's knowledge of the rules of his language. Performance is the actual realization of this knowledge in utterance. A speaker's Competence is stable while his performance is often influenced by psychological and social factors. Chomsky thinks that the objection of investigation in linguistics is the ideal speaker's competence, not his performance; and the task of the linguistic is to discover the rules from the speaker's performance. (胡壮麟 2000:28-30). Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory

limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual use. Also, he claims that language is not a social but a psychological phenomenon and it is a genetic endowment in each individual.

Hylliday (1970) added a slightly different perspective to the notion of linguistic competence. He argues that only by closely observing the contexts of the situation are we able to understand the functions of specific grammatical structures. In his eyes, language performs three basic functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Ethnographers of communication also enlarged earlier concepts of competence in language through their discovery of the rules underlying the conversation.

1.2 Previous Studies

1.2.1 Hymes' Proposal of Communicative Competence

Dell Hymes, a famous sociolinguist, makes a particularly powerful and lucid expression of discontent with the transformational view of linguistic study in his paper 'On Communicative Competence'. In this paper, he points to the irrelevance of the Chomskian notion of competence-dealing as it does with the ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous speech community who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.

Hymes (1972: 272) who convinced that the notion of competence proposed by Chomsky was too limited, coined the term "communicative competence". He thought that Chomsky's "rule-governed creativity" couldn't account sufficiently for the social and functional rules of language. While the communicative competence is a better term which refers to that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts, to know this definition better, we should also have a clear understanding of the distinction between "linguistic competence" and "communicative competence". The former refers to the knowledge "about"

language forms while the latter refers to the knowledge that enables a person to communicate functionally and interactively. (H.D.Brown, 2003: 227)

Savignon (1983: 9) notes that "communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved". It is not so much an intrapersonal construct but a dynamic, interpersonal construct that can only be examined by means of the overt performance of two or more individuals in the process of negotiating meanings.

Hymes' theory of communicative competence, linking linguistic theory to a more general theory of communication and culture, involves judgments of four kinds:

1>Possible, gives the forms of expression available. It is concerned with whether a language permits a structure as grammatical.

2>Feasible, gives the means of implementation. A sentence like "the mouse the cat married had a white tail" is grammatically possible, but is hardly feasible.

3>Appropriate (adequate, happy, successful), being in relation to a context. A sentence can be grammatically possible, feasible but inappropriate.

4>Actually performed (and what its performance entails). (C.J.Brumfit, K.Johnson, 2000: 19)

So these judgments give us the essence of communicative competence, whether the students' performance in the class is communicative or whether or not the activities organized by the teachers could develop the students' communicative competence can all be judged through these four standards.

1.2.2 Canale and Swain's model

Canale and Swain (1980) expanded Hymes' notion of communicative competence further to include grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. The model was subsequently updated by Canal (1983), who proposed a four-dimensional model comprising linguistic, sociolinguistic, discoursal and strategic competence as reflected in Figure 1.1.

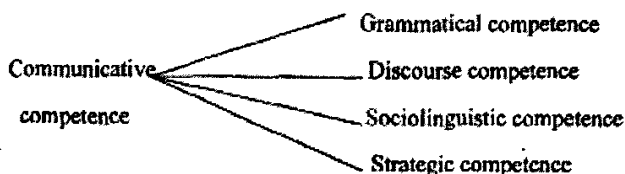


Figure1.1. Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence

Their model provides a useful theoretical framework for developing communicative tests. Linguistic competence is understood to reflect knowledge of vocabulary and rules of word formation, pronunciation/spelling and sentence formation. Such competence focuses directly on the knowledge and skills required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances. Sociolinguistic competence addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts, depending on contextual factors, such as topic, status of participants, and purpose of the interaction. Appropriateness of utterances refers to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form. Discourse competence involves mastery of how to combine grammatical meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres such as narrative, argumentative essay, scientific report or business letter. Unity of a text is achieved through cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. Strategic competence refers to the mastery of communication strategies which may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting factors in actual communication or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other components of communicative competence.

Canale and Swain's theory played an important role in forming a more definite picture of the ability to use language communicatively, and provided an indispensable theoretical basis for communicative testing.

1.2.3 Bachman's Model of Communicative Language Ability

The framework proposed by Bachman (1990:85) is consistent with these earlier definitions of communicative language ability. Bachman's has put forward an account that distinguishes between "communicative language ability" and "language competence". "Communicative language ability" is the broader term in Bachman's model. It comprises language competence, strategic competence (a more general problem-solving ability), and psycho-physiological mechanisms. Of these three, the most important is strategic competence, which drastically differs from Canale and Swain's strategic competence.

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE			
ORGANISATIONAL COMPETENCE		PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE	
GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE	TEXTUAL COMPETENCE	ILLOCUTIONARY COMPETENCE	SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Figure 1.2. the framework of Bachman's communicative competence

In Bachman's model of communicative language ability in communicative language use, the interactions of the components of context and language user's knowledge structures are presented in Figure 1.3.

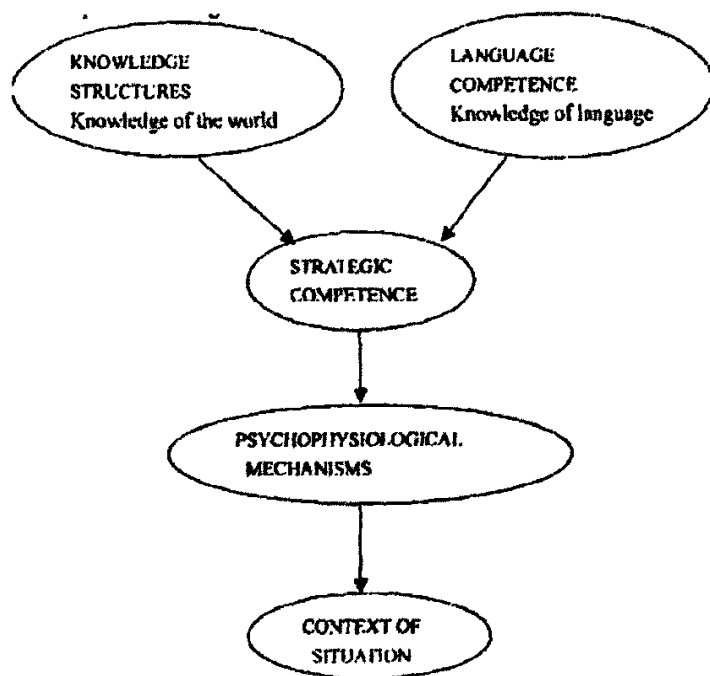


Figure 1.3 Components of communicative language ability in communicative language use (from Bachman 1990: 85)

The model indicates how these components are thought to interact. 'Language competence' as one component of communicative language ability, itself includes organizational competence, which comprises grammatical and textual competence, and pragmatic competence. Language competence is composed of the specific knowledge and skills retired for operating the language system, for establishing the meaning of the utterances, for employing language appropriate to the context and for operating through language beyond the level of sentence. Bachman's strategic competence pertains to general underlying cognitive skills in language use such as assessing, planning, and executing, which are instrumental for achieving communicative goals.

In Bachman's CLA, strategic competence is separated from language competence and assigned nonlinguistic, cognitive functions. The main function of Bachman's strategic competences is to relate language competence to the speaker's knowledge of the world and to the features of the context in which language use

takes place. Thus the shortcomings of Canale and Swain's model regarding the lack of a mechanism responsible for the interaction of their competencies is revolved in Bachman's strategic competence, which represents the mechanism responsible for such interaction.

Models such as provided a potentially useful framework for the design of language tests, but it must be emphasized that they are not still themselves between the various competencies, nor about the way they are integrated into overall communicative competence.

The development of communicative competence theory greatly influences the language teaching and testing which are marked by a shift in emphases from the linguistic mode to the communicative dimension.

Chapter Two Theoretical Exploration

What is English Teaching Methodology? English Teaching Methodology researches English teaching and learning, aims to explore the interior rules of English teaching and learning, thus bring out better, faster and more efficient theories and ways for English teaching and learning. In traditional viewpoints English Teaching Methodology was only the research of English teaching. During the past years, people always held such a viewpoint that the teaching results directly depended on the teacher's teaching methods and the textbook. So researchers focused on looking for an ideal teaching method and an ideal textbook which could suit all the situations, we should say that they really had got great achievements, Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Situational Method, etc., had all played great part in the history of English teaching, and facilitated the development of it, however, the teaching results still couldn't meet the request of people. Gradually they realized that they neglected a fatal factor of English teaching, that is, the learner or the student. During the recent twenty years, researchers shifted their attention to the research of the learner and the learning course. They began to notice] the influence of learners' individual differences and learning strategies. Many scholars think that only when we understand and know how the learners learn English, can we decide how to teach, only when teaching and learning are both emphasized, can the research of English Teaching Methodology go forward along the right way.

Western foreign language teaching has a long history of over 20 centuries. As early as Mid-century in Europe, Latin was a required course in all the schools, as the same as teaching mother language; they adopted a method of teaching "live language".

From the Renaissance to the 18th century, the features of foreign language teaching were: the researchers and scholars were not satisfied with the teaching practice and concentrated on teaching reformation. British scholar Roger Ascham put forward Translation Teaching Method; French scholar Micheal de Montaigne presented Natural approach and John Amos Comenus was the most influential

educator in the 17th century, he was the pioneer of Direct Method.

The 19th century witnessed the wax and wane of Grammar-Translation and a series of teaching reformation and at last formed the Direct Method. Grammar-Translation focus on cultivating learner's reading comprehension and writing ability, grammar explanation and sentence translation are the main class activities, it pays little attention to audio-lingual ability, to mid-19th century, Europeans realized the shortcomings of Grammar-Translation, French researcher Gouin brought out Gouin Series according to his observation and research of how children learn and use their mother tongue. Children learn mother language following the natural order, first listen, then speak, finally read and write, so this method was later called Natural Method.

The development of Foreign Language Teaching Methodology in the 20th century reflected that people more and more concerned the function of language. In 1942, America set up the Army Specialized Training Program, which focused on researching a quick and high efficient way to train the soldiers' listening and speaking ability, many researchers took part in the work, of which were Charles Fries and Lado, they applied structuralism to foreign language teaching, thus formed Audio-Lingual Method, a method with large amount of sentence oral drills. At the same time in Britain, Swit, Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby created a series of teaching principles, including Principles of Selection; Principles of Grading and Principles of Presentation, which constructed the base of British Situational Method.

In the 1960s' American famous linguist N. Chomsky challenged Audio-lingual Method and put forward Cognitive Method, Chomsky thought that language was not a habitual system, but a system controlled by principle, which means that people learn language by feasibly using language not simply by imitation and memorization. Then with the development of second language acquisition theory, western researchers created many new teaching methods, such as James Asher's Total Physical Response, S.Krashen and Tracy Terrell's Natural Approach, G Gattegno's Silent Way and G.lozanov's Suggestopedia, These methods researched foreign language teaching from different aspects and greatly facilitated the development of FLT.

In Britain, applied linguist also doubted Situational Method, but different from Chomsky, they emphasized language's function. Wilkins thought that people should define language from the aspects of function and communication; in 1976 he issued Notional Syllabus in which he demonstrated his views clearly. Then a few linguists such as Widdowson, Candlin, and Christopher Brumfit and so on, took part in the research of Communicative Approach. Communicative Approach regarded language as communicative tool, and language teaching should focus on cultivating students' communicative ability. From 1970s' on, Communicative Approach had gradually been applied to many other countries. In the 1980s' Prabhu brought out Task-based Approach, in which classroom teaching is mainly organized through tasks, and is also driven by tasks. At the same time, many other factors are considered, such as cognitive and emotional factors, therefore tasked-based approach stimulates learner's study. Now Task-based Approach has become a hot research subject of second language acquisition.

As for English teaching in China, traditional teaching methods mainly refer to the Grammar-translation Method, Audio-lingual Method and Oral Approach, while modern teaching methods mainly refer to Communicative Approach and Tasked-based Approach.

2.1 Grammar-translation Method

The Grammar Translation Method was first introduced to teach modern languages in public schools in Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century. The primary goals of this method were to prepare students to read and write classical materials and to pass standardized exams. Then students using the Grammar Translation Method studied literary language samples which used mostly old structures and old-fashioned vocabulary. Students were exposed to a wide literary vocabulary that was selected according to their ability to illustrate grammatical rules, and teachers only taught vocabulary items which illustrated a grammatical rule. When vocabulary difficulties were paid attention to at all, their explanations depended largely on etymology (words origins). The teaching of

vocabulary was based on definition and etymology throughout the nineteenth century. Since the mid-seventeenth century bilingual word lists were organized as instructional tools.

Grammar Translation is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. It hence views language learning as consisting of little more than memorizing rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of a foreign language. "The first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language." (Stern, 1983:455)

2.2 Audio-lingual Method

This method grew indirectly out of a program developed by American linguists and psychologists for the US Army during the Second World War. But it really took shape when American Structural Linguistics and Behaviorists Psychology were adopted as the twin foundations of a "scientific" approach to foreign language teaching in the late 1950s.

Applied to language teaching, the views of structuralists and behaviorists emerge, according to Rivers (1964), in four assumptions:

1. Foreign Language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation.

2. Language skills are learnt more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented in spoken form before written form;

3. Analogy provides a better foundation for foreign language learning than analysis;

4. The meanings which the words of a language have for the native speakers can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context and not in isolation. Teaching a language thus involves teaching aspects of the cultural system of the people who speak the language.

Two of the main activities of the Audio-lingual Method are dialogue

repetition and memorization, and substitution drilling. In this method, the starting point was grammar or structure. The structure of language involves its basic sentence patterns and fundamental grammatical structures. The language was thus taught through drawing systematic attention to pronunciation and through intensive oral drilling of those basic sentence patterns. Pattern practice was a basic classroom technique. "It is these basic patterns that constitute the learner's task. They require drill, drill, and more drill, and only enough vocabulary to make such drills possible" (Hockett, 1969).

The supporters hold that since the structure is what is important and unique about a language, early practice is to focus on mastery of phonological and grammatical structures rather than on mastery of vocabulary. Moreover, learning too much vocabulary early in the language learning process gives students a false sense of security. So vocabulary items were then selected according to their simplicity and familiarity. New words are introduced through drills, but only enough words are introduced to make the drills possible. It seems that learners could fill the structural frames when they reach a higher learning phase and are surer of their lexical needs. Audio-lingual methods also promote practice of structured collections of multi-word items so that the learner might abstract structural regularities from them.

Audio-lingualism claimed to have transformed language teaching from an art to a science, which would enable the learners to achieve mastery of a foreign language effectively and efficiently. Its principles formed the basis of such widely used series as the Lado English series and English 900. Although the method began to fall from favor in the late sixties, audio-lingualism and materials based on audio-lingual principles continue to be widely used today.

2.3 Situational Language Teaching

The theory of language underlying Situational Language Teaching can be characterized as a type of British "structuralism." Speech is regarded as the basis of language, and structure is viewed as being at the heart of speaking ability. The theory that knowledge of structure must be linked to situations in which they can be

used gives Situational Language Teaching one of its distinctive features.

The theory of learning underlying Situational Language Teaching is a type of behaviorist habit-learning theory. Teaching adopts an inductive approach to teaching of grammar. The meanings of words or structures are not to be given through explanation in either the native tongue or the target language, but are to be induced from the way the form is used in a situation. Learners are expected to deduce the meaning of a particular structure or vocabulary item from the situation in which it is presented. Extending structures and vocabulary to new situations take place by generalization. This approach tries to link language structures with the context in which they are used by means of 'meaningful' oral language pattern drills.

The impact of the Oral Approach has been long lasting, and it has shaped the design of many widely used EFL/ESL textbooks and courses, including many still being used today. One of the most successful ESL courses of recent times, *Kemal Lessons plus* (O'Neill, 1973), and many of L.G Alexander's widely used textbooks, e.g. Alexander 1967, reflects the classic principles of Situational Language Teaching. As a recent British methodology text states, "This method is widely used at the time of writing and on which a very large number of textbooks are based."

In the Situational Language Teaching Method, language teaching begins with the spoken language. The material used is taught orally before it is presented in written form. The target language is the language of classroom. Just as the name indicates, new language points are introduced and practiced situationally. Items of grammar are graded following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones. Reading and writing will come once a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established.

2.4 The Theory of Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA)

2.4.1 An Introduction of the CLTA

(1) The Background of the Appearance of the CLTA

Without doubt, the most pervasive changes to teaching practice over the last century are those that can be described as Communicative Language Teaching Approach. The origins of Communicative Language Teaching Approach are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. By the end of the sixties it was clear that the situational approach (the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language in which language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities)...had run its course. There was no future in continuing to pursue the chimera of predicting language on the basis of situational events. What was required was a closer study of the language itself and a return to the traditional concept that utterances carried meaning in themselves and expressed the meanings and intentions of the speakers and writers who carried them (Howatt 1984, 280). British applied linguists emphasized another fundamental dimension of language that was inadequately addressed in current approaches to language teaching at that time—the functional and communicative potential of language. They saw the need to focus on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of certain structures in language teaching. Since the mid-1970s the scope of Communicative Language Teaching had expanded. Both American and British proponents now see it as an approach that aims to (a) make communicative competence become the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. Littlewood (1981, 1) states, "One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language".

(2) The Principles of the CLTA

Theory of Language

The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes referred to as "communicative competence" which we have mentioned in the second part of this thesis. Another linguistic theory of communication favored in Communicative Language Teaching is Halliday's functional account of language use. "Linguistics...is concerned...with the description of speech acts of or texts,

since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus" (Halliday 1970, 145). Another theorist frequently cited for his view on communicative nature of language is Henry Widdowson. In his book *Teaching Language as Communication* (1978, 124), Widdowson presented a view of the relationship between linguistic systems and their communicative value in text and discourse. He focused on the communicative acts underlying the ability to use language for different purposes.

Theory of Learning

Elements of an underlying learning theory can be discerned in some Communicative Language Teaching practices. The first one is activities that involve real communication promote learning. A second element is the task principle: Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. A third element is the meaningfulness principle: language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. (Jack.C.Richards, Theodore.S.Rodgers, 2000, 72)

2.4.2 Roles of the Interactive Teacher

Teachers can play many roles in the course of teaching. Just as parents are called upon to be many things to their children, neither can teachers be satisfied with one role. Following is a spectrum of possibilities, some of which are more conducive to creating an interactive classroom and others less so.

(1) The Teacher as Controller

A role that is sometimes expected in traditional institutions is that of "master" controller, always in charge of every moment in the classroom. Master controllers determine what the students do, when they should speak, and what language forms they should use. They can often predict virtually all student responses because everything is mapped out ahead of time, with no leeway for going on tangents. In some respects, such control may be some admirable. But for interaction to take place, the teacher must create a climate in which spontaneity can thrive, in which unrehearsed language can be performed, and in which the freedom

of expression give over to students makes it impossible to predict everything that they will say and do.

Nevertheless, some control on your part is actually an important element of successfully carrying out interactive techniques. In the planning phase especially, a wise controller will carefully project how a technique will proceed, map out the initial input to students, specify directions to be given, and gauge the timing of a technique. So granted the allowing for spontaneity of expression involves yielding certain elements of control over to students, nevertheless, even in the most cooperative of interactive classrooms, the teacher maintain some control simply to organize the class hour.

(2) The Teacher as Director

Some interactive classroom time can legitimately be structured in such a way that the teacher is like a conductor of an orchestra or a director of a drama. As students engage in either rehearsed or spontaneous language performance, it is your job to keep the process flowing smoothly and efficiently. The ultimate motive of such direction, of course, must always be to enable students eventually to engage in the real-life drama of improvisation as each communicative even brings its own uniqueness.

(3) The Teacher as Manager

This metaphor captures your role as one who plans lessons and modules and courses, one who structures the larger, longer segments of classroom time, but who then allows each individual player to be creative within those parameters. Managers of successful corporations, for example, retain control of certain larger objectives of the company, keep employees pointed toward goals, engage in ongoing evaluation and feedback but give freedom to each person to work in their own individual areas of expertise. A language class should not be markedly different.

(4) The Teacher as Facilitator

A less directive role might be described as facilitating the process of learning, of making learning easier for students, helping them to clear away roadblocks, to find shortcuts, to negotiate rough terrain. The facilitating role requires that you step away from the managerial or directive role and allow students, with your guidance and gentle prodding here and there, to find their own pathways

to success. A facilitator capitalizes on the principle of intrinsic motivation by allowing students to discover language through using it pragmatically rather than telling them about language.

(5) The Teacher as Resource

Here you take the least directive role. In fact, the implication of the resource role is that the student takes the initiative to come to you. You are "there" for advice and counsel when the student seeks it. It is of course not practical to push this metaphor to an extreme where you would simply walk into a classroom and say something like "Well, what do you want to learn today?" Some degree of control, of planning, of managing the classroom is essential. But there are appropriate times when you can literally take a back seat and allow the students to proceed with their own linguistic development.

As an interactive teacher, you should be able to assume five of the above roles on this continuum of directive to nondirective teaching. But the key to interactive teaching is to play toward the upper, nondirective end of the continuum, gradually enabling your students to move from their roles of total dependence to relatively total independence.

2.4.3 The Learner' Roles

As we know, in Communicative Language Teaching, emphasis is put on the processes of communication but not the mastery of language forms. So the learners' roles are different from those found in more traditional second language classroom. Breen and Candlin describe the learners' roles as followings: The role of the learners as negotiators-between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning-emerge from and interact with the role of joint negotiators within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learners is that they should contribute as much as they gain, and thereby learn in an interdependent way. (1990:110)

The students are expected to interact primarily with each other rather than with the teachers, and correction of errors may be absent or infrequent. The cooperative (rather than individualistic) approach to learning stressed in CLTA may

likewise be familiar to the learners. CLTA methodologists consequently recommend that the learners learn to see that failed communication is a joint responsibility and not the fault of the speakers or the listeners. Similarly, successful communication is an accomplishment jointly achieved and acknowledged.

Compared with the former teaching method, CLTA is indeed a big progress. From the respective role of the teachers and the learners, we can see it embodies more humanism. Whether it is totally suitable for the language teaching in our country or in present college English teaching, there is a need to verify it through empirical experiment.

Chapter Three Introduction and Analyses of IELTS Oral Test

3.1 Introduction of IELTS and IELTS Oral Test

As this thesis is an empirical study of applying communicative teaching approach to the practical use, specifically to help the students prepare for the oral part of IELTS; it is necessary to give an overall and detailed introduction of IELTS and IELTS oral test.

3.1.1 Background

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) superseded the English Language Testing System (ELTS) in 1990. The test is jointly assessed and it provides an assessment if candidates are ready to study and train in the medium of English. IELTS tests the complete range of English language skills, which will commonly be encountered by students when studying or training in the medium of English. All candidates take the same listening and speaking modules. It is recognized widely as a language requirement for entry to all courses in further and higher education. Over 40,000 candidates sit for the IELTS test worldwide every year. The IELTS is not meant to be a 'pass or fail' test. Instead, it indicates the candidate's English language weaknesses and strengths and thus it is prognostic in nature.

The IELTS oral test is a structured interview with an emphasis on general speaking skill. It assesses whether candidates have the necessary knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with native speakers of English. The test is designed to encourage candidates to demonstrate their ability to speak English with emphasis on general speaking skills, rather than those related to candidates' own field of study. Examiners work from a set of performance assessment criteria and guidelines. Assessment takes into account evidence of the use of communicative strategies, and appropriate and flexible use of grammar and vocabulary. The interviewer is a qualified teacher and certified examiner appointed by the test center

and approved by UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate). All interviews are recorded (see UCLES BC and IDP Education Australia 1995:24).

3.1.2 General Introduction

The IELTS oral test takes fifteen minutes. It consists of a structured oral interview between the candidate and an examiner on a 1:1 basis. The interviewer is a certified examiner appointed by the test center and approved by UCLES. There are mainly three sections which could be further divided into five sections, including an introduction; extended discourse on some familiar topic; a phrase where candidates are given a task card and encouraged to take the initiative and ask questions to elicit information; speculation and discussion about future plans; and a conclusion. The following is the detail description:

Phase 1:

(1) Introduction

The examiner and candidate introduce themselves. The candidate is made to feel comfortable and encouraged to take briefly about his life, home, work and interests.

(2) Extended Discourse

The candidate is encouraged to speak at length about some very familiar topic either of general interests or of relevance to his culture, place of living, or country of origin. This will involve explanation, description or narration.

Phase 2:

(3) Elicitation

The candidate is given a task card with some information on it and is encouraged to take the initiative and ask questions either to elicit information or to solve a problem.

(4) Speculation and Attitude

The candidate is encouraged to talk about future plans and proposed course if study or the examiner may choose or return to the topic raised earlier to further discuss it with the candidate.

Phase 3:

(5) Conclusions

The interview is concluded. The assessment centers on communicative competence, fluency and grammatical control.

In the IELTS Oral; the first section contains mainly information-gap activities as the candidate is encouraged to talk about his life---social, interactional or transactional, which the examiner does not know and is supposed to be interested in. This is mainly information-type activities coupled with jigsaw ones. In section Two the candidate is required to engage in opinion-exchange and information-gap activities by taking about a particular topic at length, e.g. public transport. During the talk, the examiner will ask the candidate questions from a prepared list from time to time. Section Three requires the candidate to participate in jigsaw, information-gap, and problem-solving activities simultaneously. In this section, the candidate is provided with cues on a card to initiate three questions and answers with the examiner in order to solve a problem where tasks of jigsaw, information-gap, problem solving, opinion exchange and decision making types tends to be called for at the same time as they often do in real communication contexts. Section Four certainly involves opinion exchange and may engage decision-making task type when the candidate talks about future commitment. Section Five usually suggests decision-making, which in turn involves opinion exchange as a prerequisite step.

3.2. A Qualitative Analyses of IELTS Oral Test

3.2.1 Topic Range

Besides the above-categorized topics, topics like One-China policy, China is a rising power in the world and what changes do you think China will see in the next few years? etc. were also raised. The following possible questions studies by IELTS schools may appear on the text. They are as follows:

Are you traditional sexual roles within the family changing?

Is it acceptable for couples to live together without marrying?

Why is the divorce rate increasing so rapidly? Is it a problem?

- Do women still have too heavy a burden in their day-to-day life?
- What according to you has been the greatest change in recent year?
- What changes do you think China will see in the next few years?
- What can be done to improve education in rural areas?

The topics of IELTS can be classified in Table 3.1.

Topic category	Topic representations
Introduction	Are you a student or are you working?
Current work	What made you decide on that kind of work?
Current studies	What made you decide on that course?
Travel	Do you think you'll have problems? What kind of problems do you think you will have?
Language learning	Is English the only foreign language?
Future prospects	What difficulties do you expect?
Interests	What new activities or hobbies would you like to take up?

Figure3.1 the discussion topics of IELTS Oral

From the table above, we can see that the topic range of IELTS varies from study to work, from personal trifle to international affairs, from private opinion to public policies. All the aspects of the life or of the society are included, which makes the interview interesting and interacting.

But the disadvantages are also obvious. Although the topics are variable, they can be divided into several categories, such as family, building, pet, country, etc. And the topics are selected from the database of exercises; as a result, the topics in the exam are predicable. It means that to some extent, IELTS loses some reliability.

3.2.2 Test Format

Focusing on concrete practices of oral tests, the formats can be classified into three: I. Warm up II. Role play/Presentation III. Discussion

(1) Warm-up phase

In IELTS oral test, the examiner and candidate introduce themselves first, and then the candidate is made to feel comfortable and encouraged to talk some familiar or interesting topic.

(2) Role play/ Presentation phase

In elicitation part of IELTS, the candidate is given a task card with some information on it and is encouraged to take the roles of different participants in a situation and act out what might typically happen in that situation.

Candidates will have to speak two minutes in his turn; the examiner will not ask him anything during the time.

(3) Discussion

In the part after presentation, the examiner will ask some questions about the topics mentioned in the presentation part and elicit a further discussion around the topics with the candidates. Examiner here just put out some questions and give some necessary response to the candidates that he has got his meaning to ensure the discussion could go on smoothly.

3.2.3 The Interactive Mode Analyses

The direct oral test is the common and most authentic type of oral test normal purposes; there is no script and no preparation on the learner's part for any special activity. Obviously, the candidate of IELTS will be well prepared, but not so rigidly as to control exactly what the learner says. This flexibility means that there will be a considerable divergence between what different learners' say, which makes such a test more difficult to assess with consistency and reliability. As well as an assessor training program to allow for this, there should be adequate opportunity to discuss and practice the skills of interviewing so the interviewer can get the best out of the learner in the shortest possible time.

Interview is the typical type of the direct oral testing. It is a direct, face-to-face exchange between candidate and examiner. It follows a pre-determined structure, but still allows both people a degree of freedom to say what they genuinely think. Compared with Discussion/Conversation, an interview is

structured. The interviewer sets out to find out certain things about the learner and to get answers to certain questions. He maintains firm control, and keeps the initiative as well; whatever the learner says is in more or less direct response to his questions or statements. However, the learner still has the freedom to answer as he likes, or to develop his comments and opinions. When he has finished his answer or his comment, it is then up to the interviewer to make the next move, to develop the topic further or raise a new one.

Compared with Question and Answer, however, an interview is more authentic; it has a relevance that stretches over more than one question or comment. There are several types. The following is IELTS interview mode:

IELTS MODE



Figure3.2 IELTS oral interview type

The mode above is sometimes used to identify the different components involved in communication by speech. The arrows indicate the direction of speech. They point in both directions; at one moment, candidate is listening to interlocutor's speaking, and the next moment. The roles may be reversed. The interlocutor becomes the listener, and the candidate becomes the speaker. These switches from one role to another often happen very fast in conversation. Speech is normally a two-way system of communication: situations where only one person speaks and the others only listen, such as an academic lecture or a political address, are comparatively rare.

IELTS type is economical but it does require examiner to carry out two roles (assessor or interlocutor) at the same time, and this can be difficult to do. It is difficult for one person to concentrate on assessing effectively while at the same time trying to appear interested in what the learners is saying and involved in serious communication with him. This dual role is particularly tiring, and frequently test breaks are necessary.

3.2.4 Scoring Procedure

According to different test aim, oral tests could be divided in to two categories: criterion-referenced oral test and norm-referenced oral test.

The purpose of norm-referenced is to compare the level of performance of an individual with the general standard of performance shown by the total group that he or she belongs to and can be compared with. A Norm-referenced test compares the behavior of the individual with the behavior of others. A Criterion-referenced test describes the behavior of individual with reference to externally predetermined and specified objectives. The criterion is some externally defined object.

In norm-referenced tests, the scores are interpreted relatively to a norm. In other words, the scores are placed along a scale based on either the performance of a group of people to whom the test has been administered during the developing phase; or the performance of the group of students being tested. The results of such tests, therefore, are given in percentiles, rather than in absolute values. The scores are statistically calculated on the basis of certain characteristics of a normal distribution. In a normal distribution the frequency of scores follows a "bell-shaped" curve, where the most scores are concentrated near the middle, and only few scores are found near the extremities. If we know the mean (average) and the standard deviation of the norm, it is possible, through certain calculation, to determine the position of each score along the curve. In criterion-based tests, the scores are interpreted in absolute terms according to the amount of knowledge each student has shown to attain. The criterion is the course content or the course objectives.

The table below adapted from: Popham, J. W. (1975) summarizes the differences between NRT and CRT.

Dimension	Criterion-Referenced Tests	Norm-Referenced Tests
Purpose	<p>To determine whether each student has achieved specific skills or concepts.</p> <p>To find out how much students know before instruction begins and after it has finished.</p>	<p>To rank each student with respect to the achievement of others in broad areas of knowledge.</p> <p>To discriminate between high and low achievers.</p>
Content	<p>Measures specific skills which make up a designated curriculum. These skills are identified by teachers and curriculum experts.</p> <p>Each skill is expressed as an instructional objective.</p>	<p>Measures broad skill areas sampled from a variety of textbooks, syllabi, and the judgments of curriculum experts.</p>
Item Characteristics	<p>Each skill is tested by at least four items in order to obtain an adequate sample of student performance and to minimize the effect of guessing.</p> <p>The items which test any given skill are parallel in difficulty.</p>	<p>Each skill is usually tested by less than four items.</p> <p>Items vary in difficulty.</p> <p>Items are selected that discriminate between high and low achievers.</p>
Score Interpretation	<p>Each individual is compared with a preset standard for</p>	<p>Each individual is compared with other examinees and assigned a</p>
	<p>acceptable achievement. The performance of other examinees is irrelevant.</p> <p>A student's score is usually expressed as a percentage.</p> <p>Student achievement is reported for individual skills.</p>	<p>score—usually expressed as a percentile, a grade equivalent score, or a stanine.</p> <p>Student achievement is reported for broad skill areas, although some norm-referenced tests do report student achievement for individual skills.</p>

Figure3.3 The comparison between Norm-referenced and Criterion-referenced tests (from the website:<http://www.teflchina.com>)

The distinction between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment is getting ever-greater emphases on the assessment literature. Norm-referenced assessment provides a broad indication of relative standing, while criterion-referenced assessment produces information that is more descriptive and addresses absolute decisions with respect to the instructional goal. The norm-referenced approach results in an overall estimate of ability in the general field of knowledge or skill relative to other students or examinees.

IELTS perfectly exemplifies the definition of criterion-referenced oral test. All IELTS Oral interviews are recorded so that the ratings given by interviews can be monitored on a regular basis. The test is rated according to a global proficiency nine-band scale (See the table below). Each band corresponds to a descriptive statement of summary of the English of a candidate classified at that level. These bands indicate a candidate's particular strength or weakness of spoken English.

IELTS Oral adopts 9 bands.

The detailed descriptions are listed below:

9 .Expert speaker: Speakers with authority on a variety of topics. Can initiate, expand and develop a theme.

8. Very good non-native speaker: Maintains effectively his own Part of a discussion. Initiates, maintains and elaborates as necessary. Reveals humor where needed and responds to attitudinal tones.

7 .Good speaker: Presents case clearly and logically and can develop the dialogue coherently and constructively. Rather less flexible and fluent than Band 8 performer but can respond to main changes of tone or topic. Some hesitation and repetition due to a measure of language restriction but interacts effectively

6 .Competent speaker: is able to maintain theme of dialogue, to follow topic switches and to use and appreciate main attitude markers. Stumbles and hesitates at times but is reasonably fluent otherwise. Some errors and inappropriate language but these will not impede exchange of views. Show some independence in discussion with ability to initiate.

5 .Modest speaker: Although the gist of dialogue is relevant and can be basically understood, there are noticeable deficiencies in mastery of language patterns and style. Need to ask for repetition or clarification and similarly to be

asked for them. Lacks of flexibility and initiative. The interviewer often has to speak rather deliberately. Cope but not with great style or interest.

4 .Marginal speaker: Can maintain dialogue but in rather Passive manner. Rarely taking initiative or guiding the discussion. Has difficulty in following English at normal speed; lacks fluency and probably accuracy in speaking. The dialogue is therefore neither easy nor flowing. Nevertheless, gives the impression that he is in touch with the gist of the dialogue even if does not wholly master it.

3 .Extremely limited speaker: Dialogue is a drawn-out affair Punctuated with hesitations and misunderstandings. Only catches part of normal speech and unable to produce continuous and accurate discourse. Basic merit is just hanging on to discussion gist, without making major contribution to it.

2. Intermittent speaker: No working facility; occasional, sporadic communication.

1/0 . No-speaker: Not able to understand and/or speak. (UCLES. 1997:34):

The band descriptions are the only thing that the examiner has access to when rating. The examiner has an easier job to do given that he has only one candidate to rate at a time. The lack of reliability measures taken during the test procedures seems to be offset by the possibility of rating quality monitor derived from the test recording. This makes test procedures less complicated and easy to handle.

Compared with the other English oral test, the simultaneous conduct of the live administration of the IELTS ORAL and test recording actually help solve the artificiality problem associated with the oral test taking semi-direct format. Semi-direct or even indirect oral tests (e.g., multiple choice tests used to measure candidate's oral ability) are utilized when the reliability and logistical problems become seemingly insurmountable. But these tests are extremely subject to artificiality-related criticism, i.e. there is little correspondence between what is tested and what is really used outside the test context. It needs to be pointed that face-to-face interview format adopted by the IELTS Oral, on the one hand, captures and incorporates the variables of real-life use of language into the test; and the test recording made at the same time, on the other hand, insures scoring reliability to a certain extent.

3.2.5 Marking Mode

Generally speaking, there are mainly two marking modes: analytic marking and holistic marking, or to say, impression marking. Analytic marking is according to the concrete scoring criterion, giving scores to every subordinate item. For example, there could be some sub-items, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and fluency. And for each sub-item, there are several grades. The examiners should give scores for each item. The holistic marking (impression marking) is to give an overall score according to the candidate's whole performance.

IELTS oral test has 9 bands and we have mentioned the detailed description in the above part. There is a much more detailed description about the criterion for each band from 4 respects: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy and pronunciation. (Because the table is too large, it is attached to the end of the thesis).

In accordance with the definitions and judging from the nature of the marking mode of IELTS oral test, it is obvious that IELTS oral test is a combination of the two modes. It does not only include the description of sub-item criterion but also involves the whole impression criterion explanation.

From the discussion above, it can be easily concluded that IELTS oral test is very scientific and reliable for its concentration on communicative ability which has been proved by some respected experts.

However, there is still space for IELTS oral test to improve. For example, during an interview, there is only one interviewer there, carrying out dual roles.

This arrangement sometimes passively affects the interview itself. Another problem lies in that, when the candidates face and communicate with the interviewer, they can't help feeling nervous. If IELTS oral test could adopt the format of BEC (Business English test of Cambridge), arranging 2 interviewers at a time, one in charge of interviewing and the other one in charge of scoring, it will be much better. Furthermore, BEC divides the candidates in pairs to test their communicative ability, which could make the candidates feel a little relax. IELTS oral test could refer to some BEC format to do its self-improvement.

Chapter Four Design and Implementation of an Empirical Study

The thesis is about an empirical study of the application of Communicative Language Teaching Approach to the practical use. This empirical study chose the CLTA because the IELTS itself is the production of CLTA. Now using CLTA to prepare for IELTS, we could see clearly the internal connection and interaction between these two. This chapter, concerning the teaching procedure and the test data, is the key part of the whole composition.

4.1 Purposes of the Study

The purpose of the study relies on combining the Communicative Language Teaching Approach and the practical teaching activities together in a very special class. The problems to be detected in the study are given below:

1. Whether or not the approach is appropriate or effective to these certain group of students.
2. Through the data based on the teaching effect, whether or not the fashionable CLTA is better than the traditional college English teaching

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Subjects

The subjects under survey are 20 non- English major students in Wuhan University of Technology. All of them are second-year college students who just only been taught under traditional English teaching methods, of which the most commonly used one is grammar-translation method. They are selected from Material Department that is the best department of the university and their average NMET score is above 120. They are selected out because they have built very solid academic foundation, especially in English, and they will be sent to Australia to finish their further study. Therefore, they must take part in the IELTS and get at least 6 in that examination while their scores of oral part should not below 6. So, a conclusion could be drawn that they are a group of students with solid English

foundation and very strong study motivation.

4.2.2 Methods

The instruments used in this study are self-test and the test given by teachers. The self-evaluation is about in the four parts of oral English test, that is, fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, which one they think is the most important one and which one is the most difficult one for them. The teachers' test consists of two sections. Section 1 is the teachers' evaluation of the students' ability according to the score standard before experimental classes. After some experimental classes, section 2 will be put into practice, that is, a simulation test of IELTS and the teachers will give their scores based on the students' performance in the examination.

4.2.3 Data Collection

Before beginning the interview, several points are made clear to guarantee the sincere and serious attitudes in the course of doing a study.

A brief introduction of the thesis is provided to let the subjects have a clear and preliminary view of this thesis.

The self-evaluation score has nothing to do with the teacher's evaluation or the final term English exams so that the subjects are able to offer their truly answers.

All the classes will be given in English to make the students get familiar and used to the IELTS Oral environment.

All the teachers who take part in the data collection should be trained to guarantee the equality, validity and reliability.

4.3 Sample Class Activities

Because IELTS itself is the product of Communicative Language Teaching Approach, the CLTA naturally becomes the best approach being used to guide the preparation for IELTS, especially the output part—oral test.

As we have mentioned in the third chapter, the topic range of IELTS varies in all the aspects of a person's life in the English-speaking countries, so it is impossible to give a certain sample class performance according to the topic. Whereas the test format and scoring procedure are certain, it is practicable to design the class activities in accordance with these two aspects. The test format includes self-presentation and communication with the interviewer as a problem-solver, as a result, the class guided by communicative approach should pay attention to the communicative ability cultivation. While the scoring procedure is implemented from four respects: fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, the class activities could be carried out also from these aspects.

4.3.1 Pronunciation-based Activities

Everybody knows that pronunciation is very important for a language speaker. Poor pronunciation would result in misunderstandings and the break off of communication. Except imitation, there is no way could lead to a good pronunciation to clearly and effectively express one's opinions. Therefore, in the class, the students are asked to read after the tape and then talk about their opinions related to the topics. After one student does that, the others should give their corrections and suggestions or sample performances.

4.3.2 Accuracy-based Activities

Vocabulary and grammar could be categorized into the same class—accuracy. The former one is the accuracy of words and the latter one is the accuracy of the grammatical rules. And furthermore, the accuracy even includes the right way to express the right thing. So, the communicative classroom will need to expose learners to input which they can attend to, and opportunities to produce output in more controlled activities. Controlled activities can focus on a number of things, and what they have in common is a conscious focus on language and a high degree of control over student output. Various labels have been suggested for this type of activity and perhaps the best known are: pre-communicative, skill-getting accuracy-based, and form-based.

If the purpose of form-based work in speaking activities is to equip the learner with the knowledge and skills needed for communication, teachers should consider precisely what learners need as preparation and what implications their needs have for activity design.

a. Contextualized Activity

The first is contextualized activity, which aims to make clear the link between linguistic form and communicative function. This means finding a situation in which a structure is commonly used.

b. Personalizing Language

The second need is to personalize the language in activities which enable students to express their own ideas, feelings, preferences, and opinions. Personalized activity makes language more memorable and it can certainly be motivating, helping learners to see the ways in which they can make use of language resources in interpersonal situations. The implication is that such an activity must allow students some degree of choice in what they say.

c. Building Awareness of the Social Use of Language

The third need is to build awareness of the social use of language and to practice essential features of this. This aims to achieve an understanding of what is appropriate social behavior and the language that accompanies it.

d. Building Confidence

The fourth need is to build ease and confidence in students so that eventually they are able to produce language quickly and automatically.

Controlled activities can be exploited usefully to build cohesiveness in a class of students as they try out the language together. The teacher can create a positive climate for classroom communication by standing back whenever possible and using cross-class questioning or pair-work activities. This will facilitate the more difficult, risk-taking encounters of fluency work..

4.3.3 Fluency-based Activities

There is a wide range of fluency-based activities available to the teacher. For this part three basic types are considered.

a. Free Discussion

Free discussion can provide important opportunities for developing certain aspects of fluency. Ideally, over a period of time, free discussion activities will involve students in talking about a range of topics which engage their interests, opinions, histories, and experiences. Free discussion can also encourage students to use the language needed to sustain conversation over a period of time by drawing in other speakers. This is the opportunity it provides for students to practice the strategies required in interpersonal communication, for example, taking and holding turns, introducing a topic, and encouraging responses and other contributions.

However, teachers often worry about less structured fluency activities because there are problems to overcome. For example, free discussion, even if it takes place in small groups, does not ensure participation from all members. For these reasons, discussion usually needs support or structure of some kind.

One kind of support comes from the amount of information given by the teacher or materials. Another kind of support comes from phasing the activity with careful instructions. For example, the teacher may add a quiet time as a first stage for individual brainstorming of a topic. Alternatively, the teacher could need to decide whether or not there is to be a reporting stage when students hear about the decisions and ideas of other groups, which can be done by re-forming groups. This has the advantage of making it necessary for students to follow the arguments of their group to report these accurately, and may encourage strategies for negotiation of meaning. It also provides practice in the 'reporting' style of monologue.

A third kind of support comes from structuring interactions with suggestions for group roles, such as chairman or secretary. Teachers need to realize what is gained and what is lost if they suggest the appointment of roles.

A fourth kind of support comes from establishing goals for the discussion. The procedures involved provide motivation to speak and to use communication strategies in trying to comprehend points made by other speakers. For this kind of support, teachers may have a particular concern to set a co-operative goal rather than a competitive goal.

To summarize the view of discussion activities, the teacher will be involved in decision-making of the following kinds:

- how much support to give for content and how this is presented
- how much to structure the activity with phases and group roles
- whether to establish a goal and what kind of goal to set
- how to organize feedback
- how to encourage as much participation as possible and as much negotiation of meaning as possible.

b. Role-play

The term 'role-play' refers to a number of different activities, ranging from simple dialogues prompted by specific information on role cards to more complex simulations which pass through a number of stages. What they have in common is that the setting, the situation, and the roles are constrained by the teacher or materials but students choose the language they use.

A number of advantages have been claimed for role-play as fluency activity if it is performed in pairs or groups rather than one group acting in front of the class. It encourages participation from a large number of students. Moreover, as students take on a variety of roles during a program of role-plays they will practice language which varies according to the setting, the formality of the situation, and the function required for the particular role.

However, the success of role-play depends on overcoming some of its limitations. Perhaps the main limitation is to do with asking students to take on roles, and whether or not they are able to empathize with the role they play. It will depend on the willingness and motivation of students to exchange persona, and this is an individual matter.

c. 'Gap' Activities

This involves each learner in a pair or group possessing information which the other learners do not have. The learners' information must be shared in order to achieve an outcome. With an activity which has a requirement for information exchange, students would engage in more negotiation of meaning than with activities where such modification is optional, as in free discussion, or in activities with more participants. Another value of this kind of task is the

motivation engendered by bridging the information gap to solve a problem.

Teachers may design information-gap, reasoning-gap, or opinion-gap activities in accordance with the materials or the subject. What deserves attention is the size of the group- whether it should be pair-work or group-work with three or more participants. The analysis of the investigation in the proceeding chapter indicates that the majority of students (about 70% of them) chose group-work activities. Their preference may be attributed to students' lack of confidence in keeping the activity on with only two of them and their assumption that more participants might create a more interesting activity. However, just as is mentioned in the previous chapter, pair-work entailing negotiation of meaning promotes students' interactive language use. Therefore, teachers had better design gap activities for pair-work to ensure that participants have more opportunity to develop their ability to use the language competently in real communication.

4.4 Results and Discussion

4.4.1 Evaluations Before Teaching

4.4.1.1 Students' Self-evaluation Before Teaching

Before the sample classes begin, the teacher asked the students to evaluate their oral English ability. The results were listed below:

Name	Fluency	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciation	Whole	Total
	1-9	1-9	1-9	1-9	36	1-9
1.Hong Peng	5	4	6	5	20	5
2.JiangLianshan	5	5	5	5	20	5
3.Dai Chao	5	4	6	5	20	5
4.Chen Feng	4	4	5	5	18	4
5.Zhang Fang	4	4	5	5	18	4
6.Jiang Lan	3	3	3	5	14	3
7.Li Qin	4	5	5	6	20	5
8.Li Yuan	5	4	5	6	20	5
9.Xiang Ye	6	6	5	6	23	6
10.Li Yuanyuan	4	4	4	5	17	4
11.Yao Bin	5	6	6	6	23	6
12.Hu Ze	6	6	5	5	22	5
13.ZhangYuan	5	5	4	5	19	5
14.Wang Peipeng	6	5	6	5	22	5
15.Shen Guofang	5	4	4	5	18	4
16.Wu Haibo	4	4	5	4	17	4
17.Fang Xing	4	4	4	5	17	4

18.Zhang Ming	5	4	5	4	18	4
19.Kong Qingxin	4	3	5	5	17	4
20.Qiang Jing	5	5	5	5	20	5

Figure4.1 Students' self-evaluation

From the table, it could be analyzed that

1. Fluency

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	1	5%
4	6	30%
5	9	45%
6	3	15%

Figure4.2 The situation of fluency in students' self-evaluation

Most students thought that they could achieve 4 or 5 in the fluency part, which meant that they could maintain flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction or slow speech to keep going. They could use connectives or some discourse markers although sometimes not so appropriate. Only small part of the students thought it was hard to go on the talk, meanwhile, only 15% students had the confidence that it was easy to go on the talk without unnatural stops.

2. Vocabulary

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	2	10%
4	10	50%
5	5	25%
6	3	15%

Figure4.3 The situation of vocabulary in students' self-evaluation

Half of the students thought they could only achieve 4 in the vocabulary part.

That meant students always were able to talk about familiar topics but could only convey basic meaning, on unfamiliar topics, they made frequent errors in word choice. From overall respect, almost students could fulfill the task though with some difficulties.

3. Grammar

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	1	5%
4	4	20%
5	11	55%
6	4	20%

Figure4.4 The situation of grammar in students' self-evaluation

After several years' systematic study and with so much attention to the grammar part, over half of the students thought they could do well in the grammar part. They thought they could produce basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy and could use a limited range of more complex structures although sometimes contained errors and may cause some comprehension problems. About the rest of the students, half of them thought they did much better while the other half of the students did not have so much confidence in themselves.

4. Pronunciation

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	0	0
4	2	10%
5	14	70%
6	4	20%

Figure4.5 The situation of pronunciation in students' self-evaluation

90% of all the students thought they could at least get 5 in the pronunciation

part, that was, the students could be understood throughout, though mispronunciation may occasionally cause momentary strain for the listener.

5. Overall Score

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	1	5%
4	8	40%
5	9	45%
6	2	10%

Figure4.6 The situation of overall score in students' self-evaluation

Totally speaking, the table indicated that the students believed that most of them got 4 or 5 in the speaking test. The score of 4 meant the interviewees could maintain dialogue but in rather passive manner. They rarely took initiative or guided the discussion. The interviewees had difficulty in following English at normal speed; lacked fluency and probably accuracy in speaking. The dialogue was therefore neither easy nor flowing. Nevertheless, the exam-takers gave the impression that they were in touch with the gist of the dialogue even if they did not wholly master it. The other half students could get 5. That was although the gist of dialogue was relevant and could be basically understood, there were noticeable deficiencies in mastery of language patterns and style. The exam-takers needed to ask for repetition or clarification and similarly to be asked for them. The speech lacked of flexibility and initiative. The interviewers often had to speak rather deliberately.

4.4.1.2 Teachers' Evaluation Before Teaching

Before the classes began, some teachers took part in the exam training to get the information about scoring procedure. After that, the teachers were invited to come to the classroom to give their judgments about the students' oral English ability. The teachers' scoring results were listed below:

Name	Fluency	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciation	Whole	Total
	1-9	1-9	1-9	1-9	36	1-9
1.Hong Peng	6	5	6	5	22	5
2.JiangLiانشا	5	5	5	5	20	5
3.Dai Chao	6	6	5	5	22	5
4.Chen Feng	6	5	5	4	20	5
5.Zhang Fang	5	5	4	4	18	5
6.Jiang Lan	5	5	4	5	19	5
7.Li Qin	6	5	5	5	21	5
8.Li Yuan	5	5	4	5	19	5
9.Xiang Ye	6	6	6	6	24	6
10.Li Yuanyuan	5	5	5	5	20	5
11. Yao Bin	6	5	5	5	21	5
12.Hu Ze	6	6	5	6	23	6
13.ZhangYuan	6	5	5	5	21	5
14.Wang Peipeng	6	5	6	5	22	5
15.Shen Guofang	6	5	6	6	23	6
16.Wu Haibo	5	5	5	5	20	5
17.Fang Xing	5	5	5	4	19	5
18.Zhang Ming	4	5	4	4	17	4
19.Kong Qingxin	5	5	5	4	19	5
20.Qiang Jing	5	5	4	5	19	5

Figure4.7 Teachers' evaluation before teaching

From the table, it could be analyzed that

1. Fluency

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	0	0
4	1	5%
5	9	45%
6	10	50%

Figure4.8 The situation of fluency in Teachers' evaluation

The teachers thought that almost all the students could get at least 5 points in the fluency and half of the students could get 6. So, in the teachers' opinion, most of the students were willing to talk at length, though they may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation. The students could use a range of connectives and discourse markers to make their speech integrated but not always appropriately.

2. Vocabulary

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	17	85%
6	3	15%

Figure4.9 The situation of vocabulary in Teachers' evaluation

The teachers considered that all the students could pass the band 5, and 15% of the students could get 6, which meant that the students could have a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies and they could generally paraphrase successfully. The interviewees had obtained the ability to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics with the interviews.

3. Grammar

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	0	0
4	5	25%
5	11	55%
6	4	20%

Figure4.10 The situation of grammar in Teachers' evaluation

In the third part—grammar, teachers gave fairly good evaluation in this part. 75% of the students could pass 5 and even get 6, which implied that most students used a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility. Sometimes, there would be some mistakes but these rarely caused comprehension problems.

4. Pronunciation

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	0	0
4	5	25%
5	12	60%
6	3	15%

Figure4.11 The situation of pronunciation in Teachers' evaluation

More than half of the class could get more than 5 in the part of pronunciation. In the teachers' judgment, the students could do very well in this part because they could pronounce very clearly and some of them could imitate very good American accent. Most of the students' speech could be understood throughout, though some mispronunciation may occasionally cause momentary strain for the listener.

5. Overall Score

Score	Number of People	Percentage
3	0	0
4	2	10%
5	15	75%
6	3	15%

Figure4.12 The situation of overall score in Teachers' evaluation

Generally speaking, from the table above, it could be easily found that 75% of the students of this class could get 5 in the oral exam. Most of the students were able to talk about the topics and express their opinions effectively. 15% of the interviewees even could get 6. This score stands for that the exam-takers were able to maintain theme of dialogue, to follow topic switches and to use and appreciate main attitude markers. Some stumbles and hesitates occurred at times but the interviewees were reasonably fluent otherwise. There were some errors and inappropriate language but these would not impede exchange of views. The students showed some independence in discussion with ability to initiate.

4.4.2 Evaluations After Teaching

After applying some Communicative Language Teaching approach to the class teaching activities for some period, it was obvious that the students became more and more active in the class activities with their speech getting much more fluent.

In the end of the semester, 10 teachers were organized together to give a final exam to the students to testify whether the Communicative Language Teaching Approach was useful or effective.

4.4.2.1 Preparation

Still in the same class, the teachers divided the 20 students into 5 groups. For each group, 2 examiners were assigned to take charge of the whole test process. The examination was carried out according to the standard IELTS Oral test format.

Before the start of the examination, all the teachers had been trained to get familiar with IELTS. Such things should be done in advance:

Time schedule. The whole test should be no longer than 15 minutes per person. The first part, warm-up phase would take about 4 minutes to make the examinees not so nervous or anxious, the teachers could ask some questions such as the family, the sports, the life in college, ect. Then, the students could talk about their future plan or something like that. The second part, role-play or presentation could occupy 3 minutes, 1 minutes used for preparation for talk and presentation itself should take on at least 2 minutes without interruption. And last, the discussion part would cost about 4 or 5 minutes to make sure that the students could have enough time to express their oral ability and for the teachers' concern, they could get enough material to make their judge.

Topic arrangement. In order to make the exam reliable, 10 topics from the IELTS examination question bank had been selected. So that, it was easy for the teachers to give score and it was also very fair for the students to get a score which could really reflect their oral ability.

Scoring procedure. 10 detailed explanations of band descriptions had been handed out to the teachers respectively to ensure that they could refer to them to

their convenience.

Scoring table. 10 scoring tables were handed over to make sure the teachers could give their scores in the same standard pattern.

4.4.2.2 Teachers' Evaluation After Teaching

After the sample classes and data collection, the students' final examination scores were listed below:

Name	Fluency	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciation	Whole	Total
	1-9	1-9	1-9	1-9	36	1-9
1.Hong Peng	6	5	6	6	23	6
2.JiangLianshan	6	5	6	5	22	5
3.Dai Chao	6	6	6	6	24	6
4.Chen Feng	5	4	5	5	19	5
5.Zhang Fang	5	5	4	5	19	5
6.Jiang Lan	5	5	5	5	20	5
7.Li Qin	6	5	5	6	22	5
8.Li Yuan	5	4	5	5	19	5
9.Xiang Ye	7	6	7	7	27	7
10.Li Yuanyuan	6	5	5	6	22	5
11. Yao Bin	6	5	6	5	22	5
12.Hu Ze	7	7	6	7	27	7
13.Zhang Yuan	6	6	5	5	22	5
14.Wang Peipeng	6	5	6	6	23	6
15.Shen Guofang	6	5	6	6	23	6
16. Wu Haibo	5	4	4	5	18	4
17.Fang Xing	5	5	5	4	19	5
18.Zhang Ming	5	5	4	5	19	5
19.Kong Qingxin	5	5	5	6	21	5
20.Qiang Jing	6	4	5	5	20	5

Figure 4.13 Teachers' evaluation after teaching

After collection and putting the results in order, we could analyze the above

table from the following aspects:

1. Fluency

Score	Number of People	Percentage
4	0	0
5	8	40%
6	10	50%
7	2	10%

Figure4.14 The situation of fluency in teacher' evaluation after teaching

From this table, we could see that all the class had got at least 5, 90% of the students got 5 or 6 in this part. It meant that the whole class could communicate with the interviewers fluently. And 2 students even got 7 in fluency. This score indicated that the interviewers could speak at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence. They could use a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility. Even more, these two students may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction. This was a huge progress.

2. Vocabulary

Score	Number of People	Percentage
4	4	20%
5	12	60%
6	3	15%
7	1	5%

Figure4.15 The situation of vocabulary in teacher' evaluation after teaching

The table told us that more than 80% students could get at least 5 to ensure that they could continue their talk with sufficient word resource. This time, 1 student achieved band 7. This student could use vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics and use some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and

showed awareness of style and collocation with some inappropriate choices. And the last, this student could use paraphrase effectively.

3. Grammar

Score	Number of People	Percentage
4	3	15%
5	9	45%
6	7	35%
7	1	5%

Figure4.16 The situation of grammar in teacher' evaluation after teaching

85% of the class passed band 5, and 80% students got 5 or 6 in this part. 1 student did well and got 7, which meant that he/she could use a range of complex structures with some flexibility, and frequently produce error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persisted.

4. Pronunciation

Score	Number of People	Percentage
4	1	5%
5	10	50%
6	7	35%
7	2	10%

Figure4.17 The situation of pronunciation in teacher' evaluation after teaching

Pronunciation part also witnessed a good result. 95% of the students achieved at least band 5. Half of the students got 5 and 35% got 6. And 2 students got 7 to demonstrate their progress. Band 7 pointed out that the two students were easy to understand throughout, with the first language accent having minimal effect on intelligibility. They could use a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively.

5. Overall Score

Score	Number of People	Percentage
4	1	5%
5	13	65%
6	4	20%
7	2	10%

Figure4.18 The situation of total score in teacher' evaluation after teaching

The total score result was very pleasing. 95% of the students passed 5 to make sure that they could communicate with the English speakers and survive in an English-speaking country. They had the ability to cope with all the situations in their study and daily life. Two students got an overall score 7 in the exam. The score demonstrated that they were good speakers who presented case clearly and logically and could develop the dialogue coherently and constructively. They were rather less flexible and fluent than Band 8 performer, but they could respond to main changes of tone or topic. Some hesitation and repetition appeared due to a measure of language restriction but they could interact with the interviewers effectively.

4.4.3 A Comparison Between the Teachers' Evaluations Before Teaching and After Teaching

In order to figure out the comparison between these two evaluations given by teachers, histograms were used for its direct effect.

1. Fluency

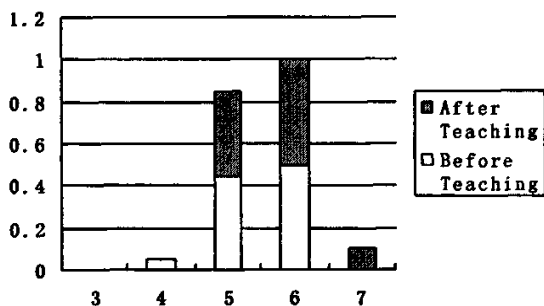


Figure 4.19

It could be seen clearly that before the sample classes, 5% students got 4 while after classes, nobody got less than 4. Before classes, 45% students got 5 and 50% got 6, the situation after classes showed little difference. But it was obvious that 10% of the students got 7, a higher degree. The key secret of getting a higher score in fluency part was to talk without stop. It meant that the interviewees should obtain sufficient materials to talk about and they knew the connective skills to make their speech go on smoothly.

2. Vocabulary

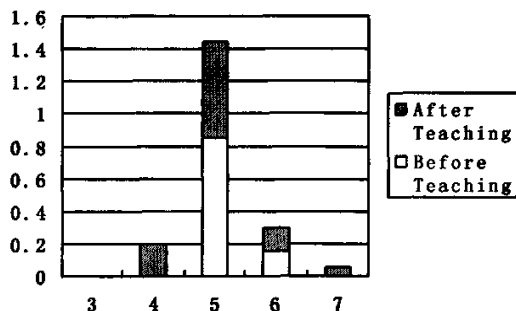


Figure 4.20

There was a dramatic change in vocabulary evaluations. Before classes, all the class could get at least 5 in this part but after the classes, 20% of the students got only 4. The percentage of the students of band 5 decreased from 85% to 60%. The students of the band 6 underwent no change, still making up 15% of the whole class.

What made the interviewers happier was that 5% of the students got 7 in this part. This situation implied that some students enlarged their vocabulary and fulfilled their vocabulary storage to ensure they could finish the communication task with flexible resource. And the students became aware of style and collocation with some inappropriate choices.

3. Grammar

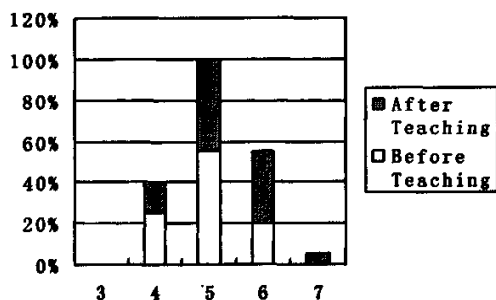


Figure 4.21

Grammar part also encountered various changes. For the band 4, the percentage decreased from 25% to 15% indicating a progress. The ratio of band 5 also dropped from 55% to 45% showing the same situation of band 4. The proportion of people of band 6 rose from 20% to 35% which showed that more and more students had paid much attention to grammar although they already had done well in this part. 5% students showed their extraordinary mastery of grammar that they had achieved band 7. This was a good signal that the students had got the idea that rather than correct sentences, the complex and flexible sentence structures were indispensable to get a higher degree.

4. Pronunciation

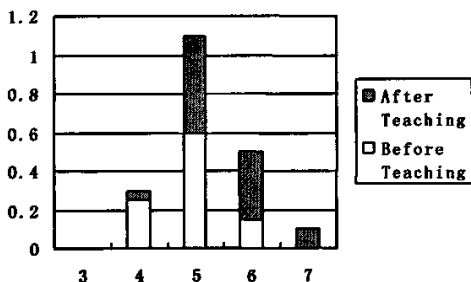


Figure 4.22

Pronunciation part also witnessed an overall rising tendency. The percentage of students who got only 4 reduces from 25% to only 5%. The ratio of band 5 underwent a slight decrease from 60% to 50% which still occupied the main part of the class. Band 6 recruited a lot of students, with the proportion coming from 15% to 35%. 10% of the students enrolled in the band 7 which meant that they were easy to understand throughout, with the first language accent having minimal effect on intelligibility. They could use a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively.

5. Total Score

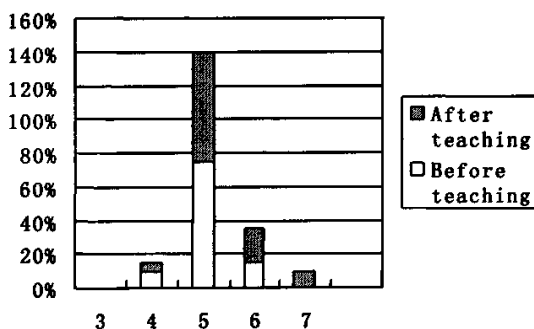


Figure 4.23

The total score experienced a steady rise. The percentage of students who got only 4 reduced from 10% to 5%. The ratio of band 5 underwent slight decrease from 75% to 65% which still occupied the main part of the class. Band 6 recruited new members, with the proportion coming from 15% to 20%. The last but not least,

10% of the students finally achieved 7. The score demonstrated that they were good speakers who presented case clearly and logically and could develop the dialogue coherently and constructively. They were rather less flexible and fluent than Band 8 performer, but they could respond to main changes of tone or topic. Some hesitation and repetition appeared due to a measure of language restriction but they could interact with the interviewers effectively.

6. Overall Analyses

As it has been mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the students should get at least 6 in the oral test. The situations before teaching and after teaching were shown as following.

Before Teaching

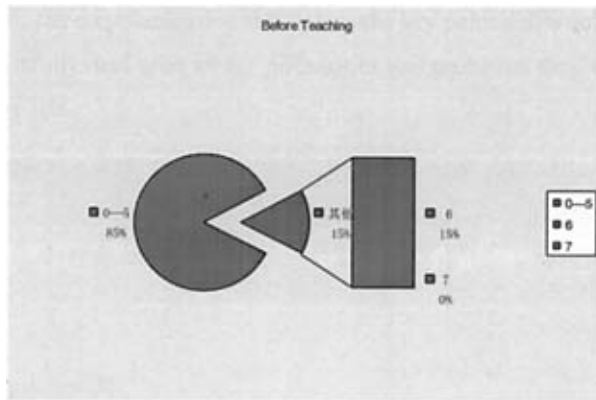


Figure 4.24

After Teaching

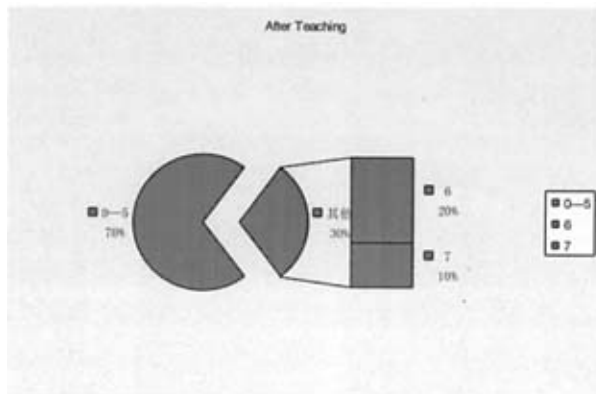


Figure 4.25

From these two pie charts, it could be easily found that before the classes, only 15% of the students could get at least 6 in the test, that is to say, only 15% of the whole class could meet the oral English requirement of the foreign university. While after class activities, 30% students could achieve the oral English ability requirement, which doubled the original number.

From what we have discussed above, the comparison of the results before the class and after that obviously showed the progress the students had made, as a result, it could be easily concluded that the sample class activities were useful and effective. The role transformation of the teachers and the students gave the students more creativity, initiatives and the time of participation. Rather than teachers, students were the center of the classroom activities. Rather than logically right sentences, the communicative ability was the key point that would help the students to successfully deal with all the difficulties and problems they would encounter in the future life.

Chapter Five Conclusion

English is spoken by a large number of native speakers of other languages and serves as a language of wider communication. As a result, much of the very considerable momentum of present-day English language teaching as a second/foreign language may be seen as a response to a problem of the students who may be structurally competent, but cannot communicate appropriately.

What is important is that the aim of this essay is not only doing some research on the preparation for IELTS but also in the hope of finding a suitable way to promote the present college English teaching in China. College English, an integral part of higher education, is a required basic course for non-English majors. With China's entering into the World Trade Organization and Beijing's winning the bid to hold the Olympics in 2008, it is increasingly important for higher education to provide qualified personnel with high proficiency in using English to communicate with people in the world. With a view to deepening teaching reform, improving teaching quality, and meeting the needs of the country and society for qualified personnel in the new era, College English Teaching Reform is being implemented at colleges and universities throughout China with the objective of College English as "to develop students' ability to use English in an all-round way, especially in listening and speaking so that in their future work and social interactions they will be able to exchange information effectively through both spoken and written channels."(College English Curriculum Requirements, 2004:24)

If we then reformulate our aims at the 'teaching of use', then it would seem equally natural that the methodology employed should also reflect such a principle. Now we feel it urgent that the existing Teaching English as a Foreign Language methodology should be complemented since it failed to help students develop communicative competence to meet the needs of the society and the time. Therefore, many professionals and researchers in the field of second/foreign language teaching would agree that implication as learner-centered Communicative Language Teaching, which aims at developing students' communicative

competence, seems to be the norm nowadays.

The understanding of the theoretical background of CLTA is the first thing language teachers have to acquire. Meanwhile, as classroom practitioners, teachers should clearly understand the characteristics of CLTA and the implications for a communicative classroom and why these very characteristics can help students achieve the optimal learning outcome they are targeting at. Such theoretical knowledge will help us build a commitment to CLTA. However, strict adherence to any teaching method will not necessarily yield satisfactory language teaching and learning. College English teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the effective teaching methods and approaches and then apply them to their own teaching practice so as to design the optimal classroom activities to help students develop the ability to use the language in an all-round way.

As a result, teachers, concerned as they are with student responses, must convert theoretical knowledge into learning practice, and they cannot afford to ignore either learning theories or successful classroom experience. In this thesis, the author explores the ways of designing communicative classroom activities acquired through her own experience and research during her teaching practice as well as discussions with students and other teachers. These activities reflect the implications to help students develop communicative competence concerning such language skills as listening, speaking, reading as well as writing respectively. However, the arguments that have been presented in this thesis lead us to the conclusion that the effective teaching of language as communication calls for an integrated approach which represents different skills and abilities as aspects of a singly underlying activity. Through the author's own experiment, we find that students' communicative competence can be achieved through relevant classroom activities in which they are active participants receiving, processing and creating language in their own way

Of course the design of communicative activities proposed in this thesis is not perfect. However, we should not, and can not afford to, wait until everything in this area is ready and clear. The author hopes that such a thesis may be of some use to promote the implementation of the ongoing College English Teaching Reform and help to improve the teaching quality of College English so as to meet the needs

of our country and society for qualified personnel with the ability to use English to communicate in an all-round way.

Through the application of CLTA to the teaching practice, it is not difficult for College English teachers to find that CLTA places higher requirements on them and therefore teachers should strengthen their theoretical foundation and develop their teaching skills to improve the teaching quality. It is also shown through the author's teaching practice that communicative classroom activities may help students develop communicative competence and at the same time inspire learner-autonomy and arouse their motivation to learn English independently, which deserves further exploration in this field.

To sum up, as a College English teacher, our tasks are not only to impart knowledge to students, but also to educate them and help them develop the ability necessary for their future work. If we are willing to do so, we will occasionally find ourselves catching breath along with our students. Finally, teachers employing CLTA in their teaching practice had better bear in mind that learning, after all, is to be performed by students, and therefore, teachers should work as nobody but a guide. That may be the very reason why Massachusetts Institute of Technology advocates the teaching motto "Less is More".

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Appendix 1 IELTS ORAL TEST SAMPLE

Phase 1

Hello, how are you today? Can I see your passport please? and your CV?

Thanks. My name is (interviewer's name) what would you like me to call you?

Where are you from exactly?

Can you tell me a little about your family background?

How long have you been in Australia and why did you come here?

What were your first impressions of Australia?

Have your impressions of Australia changed in the time you have been here? And why?

I'm going to ask you to talk about a particular-Let's see-err, public transport.

How does the public transport system in this city compare with that in (your hometown)?

What kind of Public transport do you use most often and why?

Is there anything that annoys you about the public transport system in your country?

How do you think the system could be improved?

If public transport is inadequate in a large city, what problems might this cause?

What measures should be taken to encourage city commuters to use public transport?

What about long-distance travel? Do you prefer to travel by bus or train? Why?

Can you describe a long journey you have taken by bus or train in Australia?

Phase 2

Thank you. Now I'm going to give you the chance to ask me some questions. I want you to imagine that you and some friends wish to rent a holiday house.

Take this role-play card. You can ask me a question you wish. The topics on the card will give you some ideas.

HOLIDAY HOUSE RENTAL

You and a group of friends wish to rent a holiday house for a week on the north coast. The examiner is a real estate agent in charge of rental property. There are a number of regulations that apply. Find out as much as you can about how to rent a house and the regulations that apply.

Suggested topics that may help you:

Areas available	properties available	property description
Deposit required	rental cost per week	discount for groups
High/low season rates	penalty for rental failure	special conditions

Phase 3

Thank you very much. Now I'd like you to give me back the card and talk in some detail about your plans for the immediate and short-term future.

What do you intend to do after that?

If you are unable to pursue your goal in that particular direction what will you do?

How likely do you think it is that you will succeed in the future?

Will it worry you very much if you are not able to achieve financial success?

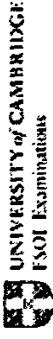
Do you think your country's economic position in the next few years will assist you with or prevent you from achieving your aim?

Are there any other goals you have or things you would like to do?

Before you go, is there anything else you would like to say?

Fine. Goodbye and thank you very much for talking to me.

IELTS Speaking band descriptors (public version)



Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features develops topics fully and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is easy to understand throughout, with L1 accent having minimal effect on intelligibility uses a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language develops topics coherently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully with occasional inaccuracies uses paraphrase effectively as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures flexibly produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is easy to understand throughout, with L1 accent having minimal effect on intelligibility uses a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation with some inappropriate choices uses paraphrase effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can be understood throughout, though mispronunciation may occasionally cause momentary strain for the listener
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies generally paraphrases successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can be understood throughout, though mispronunciation may occasionally cause momentary strain for the listener

IELTS Speaking band descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice rarely attempts paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces some acceptable features of English pronunciation but overall control is limited and there can be severe strain for the listener
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks with long pauses has limited ability to link simple sentences gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pauses lengthily before most words little communication possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only produces isolated words or memorised utterances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot produce basic sentence forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speech is often unintelligible
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no communication possible no rateable language 			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend 			

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