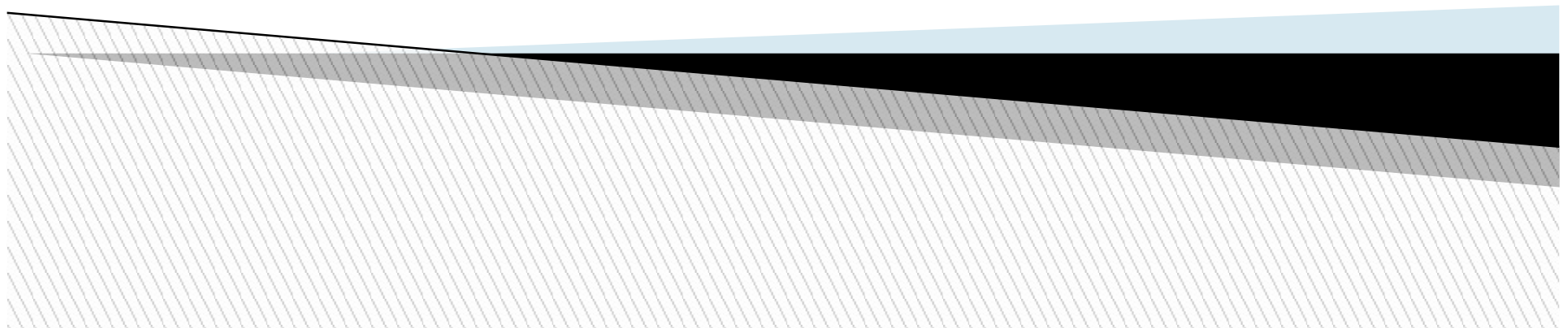


# Communication-oriented language teaching: Which way ahead?

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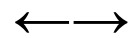


# What is ‘Communicative Language Teaching’?

- ▶ ‘The answer to this question seems to depend on whom you ask.’ (Spada, 2007)
- ▶ ‘The problem with CLT is that the term has always meant a multitude of different things to different people’. (Harmer, 2003)
- ▶ ‘Everyday classroom practices can appear to be quite different when CLT principles are applied in differing social and educational contexts.’ (Hall, 2011)

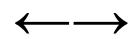
# Two dimensions of learning

## Analytic Dimension



## Experiential Dimension

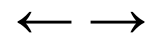
Instruction (main focus:  
form + meaning)



Communication (main focus:  
meaning + message)



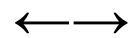
Conscious learning and  
practice



Subconscious learning and  
integration



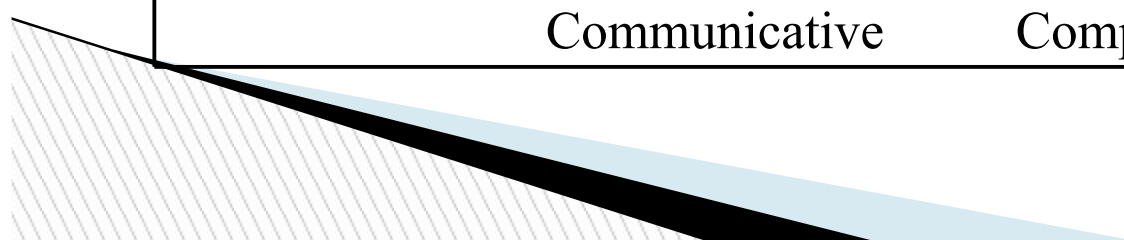
Increasing automaticity of  
correct language



Increasing correctness of  
spontaneous language

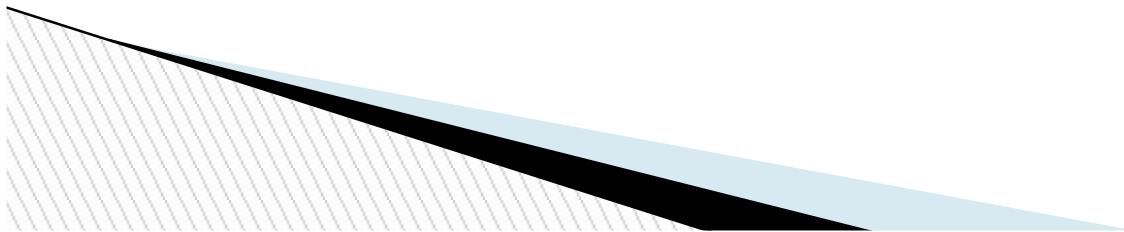


Communicative Competence



# CLT: The 'weak' and 'strong' versions

- ▶ From the beginning there has been confusion from two versions of CLT:
  - A 'weak version' of CLT: we can teach people to 'do things with words' through analytic as well as experiential strategies
  - A 'strong version' of CLT: if people 'learn by communicating', students should communicate all the time



# 'Weak' and 'strong' CLT: some implications for teaching

- ▶ The 'weak' version of CLT presents a more familiar framework for teaching: it allows for controlled, analytic learning, e.g. grammar practice and exercises.
- ▶ Both 'weak' and 'strong' versions attach an important role to creating and organizing communicative activities for experiential learning.
- ▶ They therefore involve new roles for teachers and learners in traditional classrooms.

# CLT: Some interpretations

- ▶ Common interpretations (Thompson, 1996):
  - using pair or group work
  - teaching only speaking
  - not teaching grammar
  - a lot of hard work for the teacher
- ▶ In East Asia, it means mainly (Ho & Wong, 2004):
  - ‘giving learners the opportunity in class to practise the language skills taught’ and
  - ‘providing the teachers with communicative activities in their repertoire of teaching skills

# CLT: Some practical challenges

- ▶ Teachers in China (and elsewhere) have faced challenges such as:
  - new organizational skills e.g. for group activities
  - unfamiliar roles in the classroom e.g. 'facilitator' not only 'knowledge transmitter'
  - classroom management esp. with large classes
  - students resorting to the mother tongue in tasks
  - students performing tasks with minimal use of language
  - excessive demands on language competence
  - conflict with educational traditions and conceptions of learning
  - incompatibility with public examinations

(e.g. Butler, 2011, Littlewood, 2007, Wang, 2007)

# ‘The spirit of CLT’

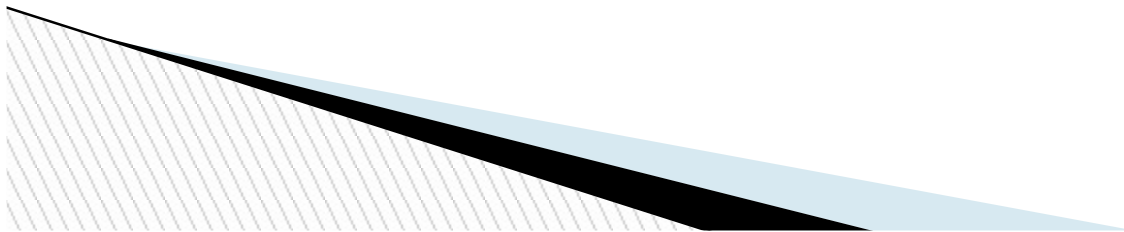
- ▶ Many teachers may not welcome CLT as a package of techniques but accept the *spirit* of CLT, in particular:
  - We need to focus on *learners and learning*.
  - We need to help learners to use the language effectively *for their own communicative needs*.
  - This is most likely to happen when classroom activities are *real and meaningful to learners*.

(Hiep, 2007)



# How can the ‘spirit of CLT’ be implemented in specific contexts?

- ▶ Integrate CLT ideas and techniques into a traditional approach
- ▶ Develop a new framework of principles for developing a ‘context-sensitive’ approach
- ▶ Teachers and researchers together explore key specific issues for communication-oriented language teaching



# Integrate CLT ideas and techniques into a traditional approach (1)

- ▶ Zheng & Adamson (2003) describe how a teacher in Beijing maintains his traditional role as a knowledge transmitter by e.g.:
  - Providing grammatical explanations
  - Using pattern drills and memorization techniques
- ▶ However, he integrates new ideas by e.g.:
  - Organizing more interaction in his classes
  - Eliciting more creative responses from students
  - Relating the language not only to contexts provided by the textbook but also to students' personal experience'

# Integrate CLT ideas and techniques into a traditional approach (2)

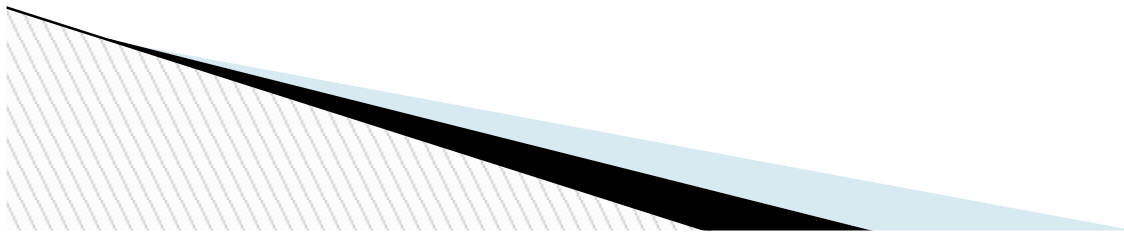
- ▶ Carless (2004) observes that many HK teachers organize ‘contextualized practice’ rather than communicative activities in which learners use language creatively
- ▶ Carless (2007): Hong Kong needs a ‘situated task-based approach’ in which e.g.:
  - The role of grammar instruction is better clarified
  - There are clearer links with examination requirements
  - The balance between oral and other types of task is given more consideration

# Integrate CLT ideas and techniques into a traditional approach (3)

- ▶ Mitchell & Lee (2003) observe how a Korean teacher focuses on ‘teacher-led interaction’ and ‘mastery of correct language models’ rather than the fluent language use usually associated with CLT
- ▶ Jeon & Paek (2009) call for a contextualized CLT that suits the Korean context: ‘it is time ... to seek a Korean way to develop communicative competence in English’ (Jeon, 2009)

# Does the CLT / traditional still distinction make sense today?

- ▶ Does the distinction between ‘CLT’ and ‘traditional’ still make sense or does it ‘inhibit methodological development’ (Beaumont & Chang, 2011)?
- ▶ Why not view ideas and techniques from *all* sources – ‘traditional’, ‘CLT’ and others – as constituting one common repertoire to support successful language learning?



# Finding a principled basis for integrating the new with the familiar

- ▶ We need a broader, non-prescriptive conceptual framework which will orient us in creating experiences that are ‘real and meaningful’ to learners and help them to fulfil their communicative needs
- ▶ This broader approach will here be called not ‘CLT’ but ‘COLT’:

## Communication-oriented language teaching

# Developing a framework for communication-oriented language teaching

- ▶ Three approaches:
  - Derive ‘principles of effective instructed language learning’ from what we know about second language acquisition (Ellis, 2005)
  - Develop ‘macrostrategies for language teaching’ based on teachers’ experience and ‘sense of plausibility’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006)
  - Design a framework for methodology based on accumulated experience of classroom learning and the nature of the goal of communicative competence (Littlewood, 2004, 2011)

# 'Principles of instructed language learning' (Ellis) 1

- ▶ Provide extensive L2 input from listening and reading.
- ▶ Provide also opportunities for output.
- ▶ Ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning.
- ▶ Ensure that learners also focus on form.
- ▶ The opportunity to interact in the L2 is essential to developing L2 proficiency.

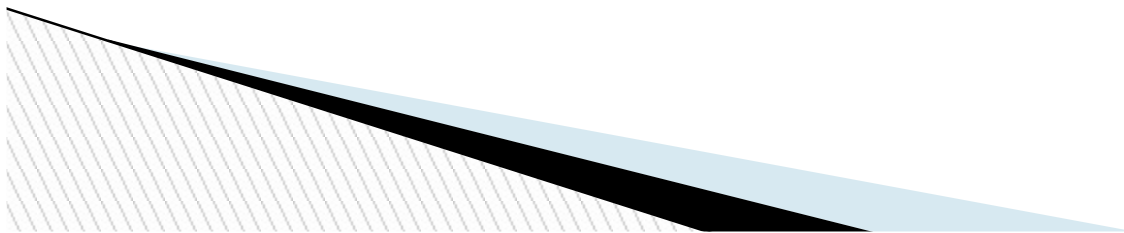


# ‘Principles of effective instructed language learning’ (Ellis) 2

- ▶ Respect learners’ natural sequences of learning.
- ▶ Focus mainly on developing subconscious, automatic knowledge of the L2 but do not neglect conscious knowledge.
- ▶ Take account of individual differences.
- ▶ Ensure that learners develop not only rules but also fixed, formulaic expressions.
- ▶ In assessing proficiency, examine free as well as controlled production.

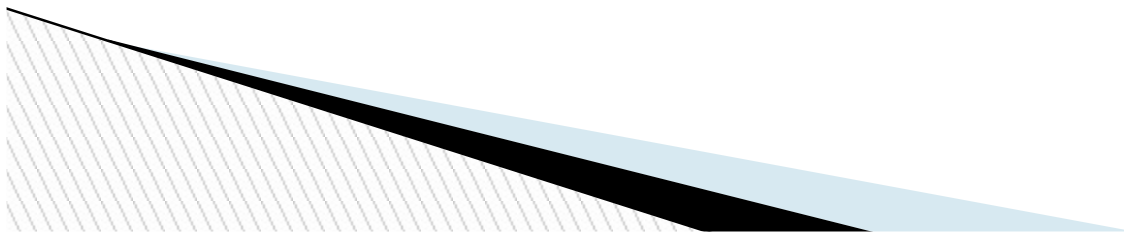
# ‘Macro–strategies for language teaching’ (Kumaravadivelu) 1

- ▶ Maximize learning opportunities
- ▶ Minimize perceptual mismatches
- ▶ Facilitate negotiated interaction
- ▶ Contextualize linguistic input
- ▶ Integrate language skills



# ‘Macro–strategies for language teaching’ (Kumaravadivelu) 2

- ▶ Activate intuitive heuristics
- ▶ Promote learner autonomy
- ▶ Foster language awareness
- ▶ Raise cultural consciousness
- ▶ Ensure social relevance



# A framework for methodology: the ‘communicative continuum (Littlewood)’

• Analytic strategies		•★	✱	Experiential strategies	
• Non-communicative learning	• Pre-communicative language practice	• Communicative language practice	• Structured communication	• Authentic communication	
• Focusing on the structures of language, how they are formed and what they mean, e.g. substitution exercises, “discovery” and awareness-raising activities	• Practising language with some attention to meaning but not communicating new messages to others, e.g. “question-and-answer” practice	• Practising pre-taught language in a context where it communicates new information, e.g. information gap activities or “personalised” questions	• Using language to communicate in situations which elicit pre-learnt language but with some unpredictability, e.g. structured role-play and simple problem-solving	• Using language to communicate in situations where the meanings are unpredictable, e.g. creative role-play, more complex problem-solving and discussion	
<b>Focus on forms and meanings</b>		★	✱	<b>Focus on meanings and messages</b>	
<i>‘Enabling tasks’</i>		★	✱	<i>‘Communicative tasks’</i>	

# Non-communicative learning

•In the examples below, look carefully at the position of the adverbs *always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *usually*, and *never*. What are the rules?

- We are usually hungry when we come home.
- John is always late.
- His parents were often tired in the evening.
- I am never sure whether this word is correct.

- I sometimes go to the cinema on Fridays.
- We never eat much in the morning.
- Jane often arrives at school early.
- They always come home late at night.

- They have never written to me again.
- You can always come and visit me.
- I will never know why he did it.
- Pat has often seen him with two dogs.

# Pre-communicative language practice

•With your partner, practise asking and answering questions about what John and Rachel *have to do* and what they *would like to do*. (The cues could also be in the form of pictures.)

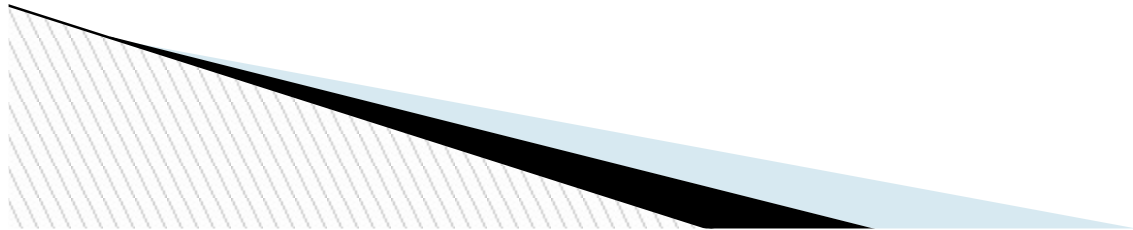
	•John	•Rachel
•Obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Clean floors</li><li>•Wash windows</li><li>•Empty the bins</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Type letters</li><li>•Answer the telephone</li><li>•Do photocopying</li></ul>
•Desires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Go to evening school</li><li>•Get a better job</li><li>•Marry Fiona</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Earn more money</li><li>•Take holiday abroad</li><li>•Marry her boss</li></ul>

(adapted from Harmer, 1987)

# Communicative language practice

Fill in this chart about your classmates' preferences

•Name	•Favorite male singer	•Favorite female singer	•Favorite TV actor or actress	•Favorite TV series	•Favorite place to visit



# Structured communication

## The World Tomorrow

- Students are asked to write down a list of changes they expect to see in the world by a date 50 years in the future. For example:
  - We will have a working day of four hours.
  - Every home will have a video telephone.
  - People will live to be 100 years old or more.
- The ideas are then read out and discussed. Those that most of the class agree with may be written up on the board.
- Later, students may choose predictions that appeal to them and use them as the topic for a short essay.

(adapted from Ur, 1988/2009)



# Authentic communication

## I love music!

How do you feel when you listen to music? Why do you like music?  
Discuss with your partner. Write down five reasons.

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(adapted from Vidal, 1996)

# Authentic communication

## Designing an alternative world

1 Students and teachers brainstorm aspects of the environment they like and those they would like to see improved. These may include changes to the geographical setting, nature, animal-life, housing, society, family, leisure activities, politics, etc.

2 Students are put into groups according to common interests. The groups identify the language and information they need. The students carry out individual and group research on the selected topics. The students discuss aspects of this 'Alternative reality' and then report back. They decide on the different ways (stories, recordings, games, etc.) to link all the research and present the final product.

3 Students present the topic and evaluate the activity.

(adapted from Ribé & Vidal, 1993)

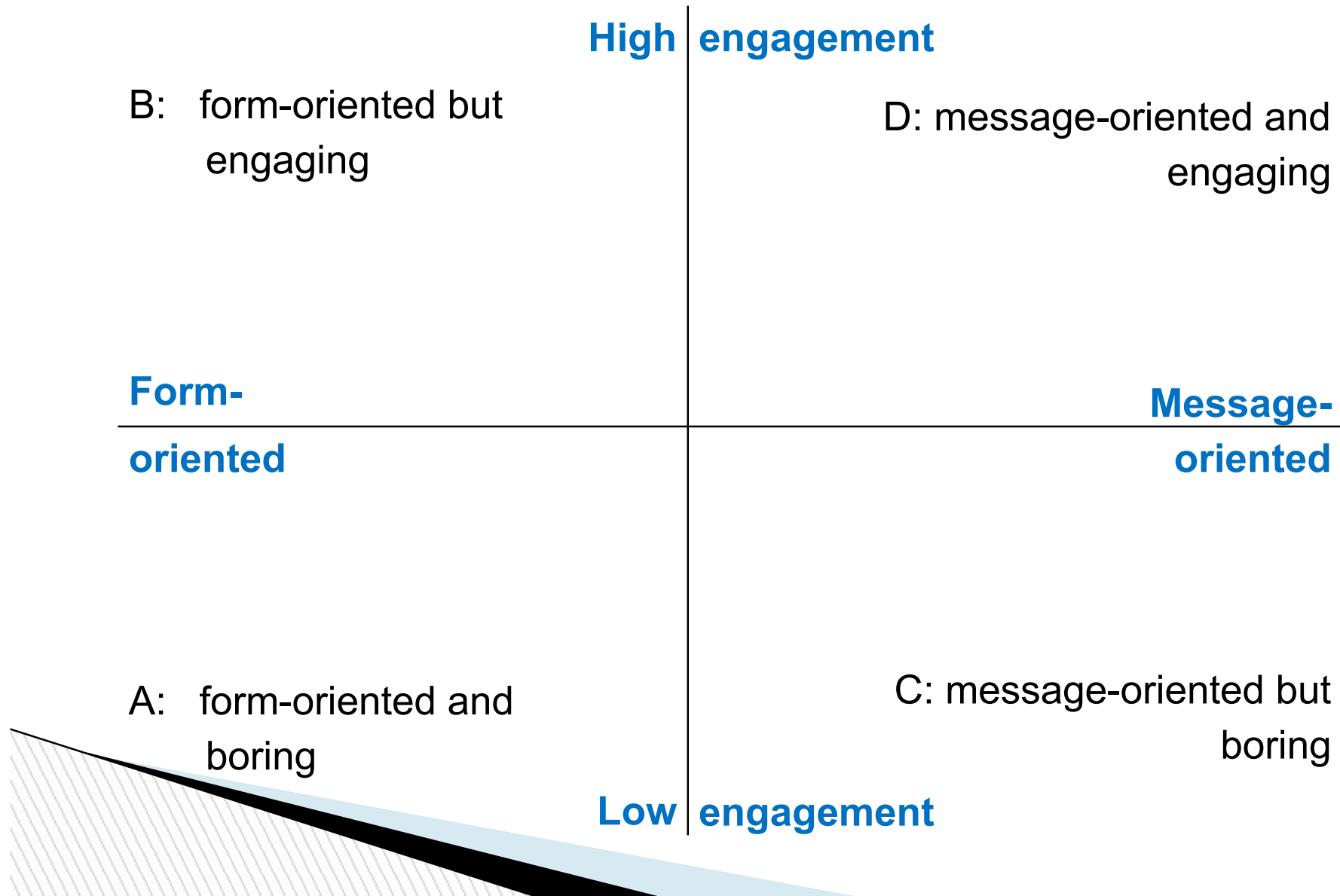
## Overall communicativeness of four teachers' teaching (Deng & Carless 2009b)

The extent of communication		Box 1 Non-communicative learning	Box 2 Pre-communicative language practice	Box 3-Box 4 Communicative language practice / structured communication
School A	Betty	<b>67.4%</b>	23.2%	9.4%
	Rose	60.5%	34.2%	5.3%
School B	Jane	31.8%	31.8%	<b>36.4%</b>
	Paul	43.5%	31.9%	24.6%

## The communicativeness of Rose's Lessons (Deng & Carless 2009a)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Box 1</b> <b>Non-communicative learning</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Box 2</b> <b>Pre-communicative language practice</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Box 3</b> <b>Communicative language practice</b></p>
<p>49 activities (62.8 %)</p>	<p>25 activities (32.1%)</p>	<p>4 activities (5.1 %)</p>
<p><b>Explanation</b> <b>Mechanical repetition</b> (19 activities, 24.4%) <b>Mechanical written exercises</b> (7 activities, 9 %) <b>Practice games</b> (14 activities, 17.9 %) Read with actions, bomb game, read loudly or softly game.</p>	<p><b>Ask-and-answer practice</b> (10 activities, 12.9 %) Ask-and-answer about a picture/situation, topic  <b>Activities with actions</b> (15 activities, 19.2 %) Chant with actions Respond to teacher's instructions by actions</p>	<p>1. Guessing game (1) 2. Personal questions (with information gap) (2 activities) 3. What's Missing Game (1)</p>

# A second dimension: task engagement



# Communication and engagement

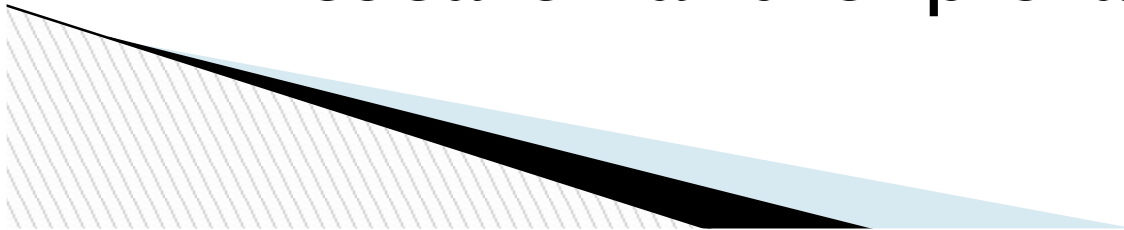
- ▶ Point A: an activity is form-oriented and does not engage the learners, e.g. a boring drill
- ▶ Point B: an activity is form-oriented but engages the learners, e.g. a word puzzle
- ▶ Point C: an activity is message-oriented but does not engage the learners, e.g. a role-play which does not motivate them
- ▶ Point D: an activity is both message-oriented and engaging, e.g. a personalized role-play or a discussion about a relevant issue

# Some key issues for COLT in specific learning contexts

- ▶ Explore optimal combinations of analytic and experiential strategies.
- ▶ Explore ways to structure classroom interaction more effectively (also without direct teacher control).
- ▶ Explore ways to deepen the content of L2 communication in the classroom.

# Some key issues for COLT in specific learning contexts

- ▶ Explore the role of the L1 as a resource in the language classroom
- ▶ Explore ways to create a rich L2 environment in the classroom.
- ▶ Explore better links between practice, theory and research, e.g. through collaborative research, action research and exploratory practice.





# **Thank you!**

**... and if you want a list of the publications referred to in the presentation**

**... or will share with me your own experience conducting COLT communication- oriented language teaching**

**... please email:**

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