How System Level Curriculum Reform in English Language Teaching is Enacted in A Chinese University

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Abstract

This research study examined College English teachers' perceptions and enactment of a systemic curriculum reform at the classroom level in a Chinese university and the major issues involved in the complex process through an approach of case study. Drawing upon data collected through analysis of documents, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, the study found that the enactment of China's systemic College English Curriculum Reform was not a matter of simple implementation but the result of a more complex process which changed the original reform intention. The research, therefore, argues that multi-level challenges intertwined to shape teachers' individualized classroom instructions. On the one hand, many factors worked together to facilitate teachers' positive attitudes towards and adherence to the intended changes, such as the direction of national curriculum reform, harmonious workplace culture, teachers' constructivist beliefs and self-reflection, and students' feedback. On the other hand, levels of contextual tensions and gaps caused confusions and challenges in the teachers' actual classroom instructions, such as the inconsistency among the policy strands, gaps between the institutional regulations and the national policy intent, classroom realities, Chinese students' characteristics and teachers' English proficiency. Thus, despite teachers' general endorsement of and positive attitudes towards the proposed changes, they failed to enact them effectively and purposely at the grassroots level. All the teachers in this study experienced some changes in their teaching behaviors, but most of the changes were incremental and context-driven rather than radical and curriculum-oriented as intended.

The findings suggest that the enactment of a top-down curriculum reform is mediated through an interplay of forces and challenges and that the major impetus for how teachers make sense of and enact the reform relates more to the strength of their current values and practices and students' feedback, rather than the power of external initiatives. Without localised management, a centralised curriculum reform itself is, therefore, insufficient to ensure changes in practices. The research

therefore adds our knowledge to the complexities of curriculum enactment and how external initiatives are interpreted and translated by multi-layer policy actors in the context of educational reforms, particularly, in China. The findings also have important implications for the policy makers in revisiting the way they formulate, design and implement future curriculum innovations. The results also provide information to the administrators and the frontline teachers concerning the significance of institutional perspective and teacher agency in interpreting and translating external initiatives, and the complexities involved in the organizational and individual changes.

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KEY ACRONYMS

CECR	College English Curriculum Reform
CER	College English Reform
CET	College English Test
CHE	Chinese Higher Education
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMoE	Chinese Ministry of Education
DoI	Diffusion of Innovations
COLT	Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (Observation Scheme)
DLA	Department-level administrator
EFL	English as foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NCETS	National College English Teaching Syllabus
SI	Student interview
TI	Teacher interview
ULA	University-level administrator
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The literature review indicates that the complex trajectory of systemic educational changes at the classroom level needs further and more thorough investigations, particularly at the tertiary level in China. This research study attempts to contribute an in-depth exploration of how a systemic curriculum is enacted in a Chinese university, with a special focus on the possibility and suitability of communicative approach in English as foreign language (EFL) context. This chapter firstly describes the context and background of curriculum reforms at the tertiary level in China, and then moves on to cross-cultural issues involved in implementing western-originated pedagogies. Next, this chapter reports the research aims and the research questions, and followed by the significance of the research study. Finally, this chapter outlines the structure and contents of the entire thesis.

1.2 The context of curriculum reform at tertiary level in China

This research is born out to explore the possibility / suitability of an imported pedagogical methodology for EFL teaching in China to meet the requirements of the revised College English Reform (CER) politically, socially and culturally in the context of change. In particular, the current study focuses on how teachers respond to the pedagogical changes, which are not only top-down, but also imported from the West, and how their beliefs and identities are influenced by the changes. In addition, according to the relevant literature review, there have been few studies exploring how a system level curriculum reform is enacted at the classroom level, which though of particular availability to a specific context, may also have wider relevance to the similar circumstances.

Systemic educational changes have become global phenomena, no exception to China. China has engaged in wide ranging education and curriculum reforms over the past decades. Large-scale reforms of educational practices are regarded as one

of the most important improvement levers in China's educational system (Liu, 2006), among which fundamental reforms of both curricular content and pedagogical approaches are encompassed. Currently, the changes in the international milieu and the internal changes of the economic system bring about new challenges to higher education in China. In response to the challenges, China has expanded its higher-education system into the world's largest in the past decade, and is determined to earn world-class status in the next decade.

College English (CE) education as one major part of higher education has experienced fluctuations due to the fall and rise of political movements and the change of economic policies since it was resumed in 1978. The rapidly developing national economy has set forth higher and more urgent requirements for CE teaching, particularly for students' ability to actually use the language. Hence, the last two decades have witnessed a dramatic change in the teaching and learning of English at the tertiary level in China. However, some researchers (e.g. Liu, 2006; Ryan, 2010; Wang, 2011) contend that the results of English language learning in China's higher education have been disappointing, since most students continue to graduate with low English proficiency. To tackle the problem, three rounds system-level CE reform have been launched. In 1985, the former State Education Commission (the current Ministry of Education) issued the first National College English Teaching Syllabus for the Science and Technology students (CMoE, 1985), and then in 1986 for the Liberal Arts students (CMoE, 1986) to cultivate the talents to meet the demands of national and societal development under the Open Door policy. The 1999 National College English Syllabus (NCES 1999) was a response to the problematic phenomenon of 'low efficiency and effectiveness' (Yu, 2001) in CE teaching with the intention to strengthen the use of Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT). A new document, providing a guide for current CE teaching, was needed to move along with the times (Liu & Dai, 2003). Thus, to meet the demands of the new English education quality as well as a changed social and educational context, the revised College English Curriculum Reform (CECR) was put into full implementation in 2007 with aims to raise the standards of English proficiency so that the graduates can command sufficient English communicative competency to communicate in their academic and professional career (CMoE, 2007).

The ultimate aim of educational reforms is to bring about improvement in classroom practices so as to enhance student's achievement, to which CER is no exception. After three years in primary school, six years in middle school and four years in college /university, with an average of five class hours for eighteen weeks each term, every Chinese student has spent about 2000 class hours learning English, but the invested and the expected learning outcome are so unbalanced. Su (2004) argues that one major reason of the great distance between the invested and the gained for Chinese students is that teaching and learning models have been unchanged for so many years. Therefore, with the purpose of improving students' actual use of English, CLT was first introduced to EFL teaching in China in the early 1980s, and ever since, it has been a major concern in CER. In 1999 national CE syllabus, CLT was written into the national policy intent; and in CECR 2007, it was strengthened through combining information and communicative technology (ICT) with classroom communicative teaching. CLT, as a pedagogical methodology, intends to develop 'the ability to use the target language for authentic communication' (Hu, 2002, p.93), by transforming the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM) into a student-centered communicative approach. However, since CLT is originated from the West, it is necessary to take into account the relevant cross-cultural issues embedded in the implementation process in the Chinese context.

1.3 Cross-cultural issues in implementing western-originated theory in EFL context

Educational approaches should take a society's cultural diversities into account (Luke, 2011). With the trend of globalization, education worldwide becomes increasing sensitive to modernize education systems, and to equip the graduates with relevant knowledge and skills to cope with the rapid societal changes. Since 1980s, China has continuously imported the Western educational theories and practices to improve the quality of education, such as communicative approach and student-centred model.

However, when a Western educational methodology is utilized in another context without appropriate consideration of and rigorous adaptation to the host culture, a

complex web of cultural conflicts and discrepancies are likely to happen (Nguyen et al., 2006). CLT, which was originated from England in the 1960s, spread quickly and gained popularity among language teachers after it was born, primarily in learning English as a second language (ESL) environment. Conversely, when CLT is transported into EFL context, such as China, Japan and Korea, it has been diffusing rather slowly. A number of research studies have been conducted and much effort has been put into discussions on the appropriateness in implementing CLT in EFL countries (e.g. Ellis, 1996; Li, 1998; Hu, 2002). The relevant findings can be summarized as follows.

First, resistance to CLT in the EFL context can be perceived as the conflicts between the Eastern traditions versus the Western approach, which underlies different values and traditions. The traditional Eastern approach focuses on teachers, textbook and grammar, which is in contrast to CLT's focus on learners, practice and skill development (Penner, 1995). Second, resistance to CLT is also regarded as a problem inherent in the cross-cultural importation of educational innovations, or the direct importation of one approach from one setting to another without consideration of the local contexts and the political, cultural and educational gaps between different countries (Holliday, 1994). A detailed discussion on these issues will be found in Chapter 2.

Thus, it is of great significance to consider the social and cross-cultural issues when transferring approaches from one context to another, which might determine the success or failure of an innovation. The introduction of CLT from ESL to EFL is a one way technology transfer, but appropriate methodologies should be based on the local contexts. Furthermore, Markee (2001) points out 'the systemic context in which an innovation is implemented seems to be an important determiner of whether or not the innovation will be adopted' (p.120). Therefore, any realization of a communicative curriculum must reflect a realistic analysis of the actual situation within which the language teaching takes place (Breen & Cadlin, 1980).

1.4 The focus of the research

The central research question of this study, therefore, is 'How do Chinese university teachers respond to a systemic curriculum reform at the classroom level?' This gives rise to the following specific research questions:

1. What are the changes the College English Reform in China intended to achieve?
2. Are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions of the changes and the intended changes?
3. At the classroom level, are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions and enactment?
4. What are the issues in the enactment of the curriculum reform, in particular, the Chinese model of CLT?

The first question is concerned with the demanded changes imposed on the Chinese university teachers and the expectations placed them as the result of the systemic curriculum reforms. The second question examines teachers' sense-making process of the intended changes, and also to see whether the teachers have fully perceived the curriculum reform as the policy makers expected. The third question focuses on teachers' execution and delivery of the intended changes at the classroom level, and also to explore whether there are any gaps between teachers' perceptions and the enactment of the intended changes; if any, what are the mediating factors involved. The final question seeks to identify the major issues involved in the process of enacting the systemic curriculum reform, and the possible solutions to the issues.

1.5 Significance of the research

This study uses a qualitative interpretivist approach to explore the implementation of the top-down national CE curriculum at the classroom level in China. The significance is as follows: First, this study provides further insight into the complexities of the use of an imported pedagogy `/ theory in the specific Chinese social and cultural context. Educational reforms in China are much more complicated owing to the long history of traditional pedagogy and its substantial

impact in terms of accepted conventions of learning and teaching. It is of significant importance to investigate how the reform has influenced EFL teachers' beliefs and practice and vice versa. In addition, from the investigation of how the CE curriculum is executed in the tertiary context of China, this study provides lessons to be learned for any future research conducted within the field of language curriculum enactment in other ESL and EFL contexts. In particular, original contributions will be made in the relevant knowledge of enactment of CER in China. Moreover, the findings also intend to inform the policymakers and administrators on how to assist the classroom teachers with their language education improvement and implementation of curriculum reforms in China.

1.6 Overview of this thesis

The thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapter 1 provides the rationale and context for this study, and also introduces the research aim, scope and significances. Chapter 2 sets the scene by defining the key terms and exploring the history of curriculum innovations and enactment with specific references to CECR 2007 and CLT at the tertiary level in China. Chapter 3 reviews the literature on levels of change, theories of change and teacher change in the process of curriculum enactment. It then sets up a tentative theoretical framework for this study for exploring the trajectory of how a system-level curriculum innovation is enacted at the classroom level, how the middle level administrators and individual level teachers cope with the changes, and how the national policy is contextualized and re-contextualized in a specific context. Chapter 4 outlines and justifies the research design and describes the instruments developed to investigate the research questions. In addition, this chapter also discusses the selection of research site and participants, the procedure of data collection, data analysis techniques, and consideration of the trustworthiness and ethics. Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 report and demonstrate the research findings, and sort out the multiple forces involved in the process of policy enactment. Chapter 8 summarizes the findings and discusses them in wider theoretical contexts arising from the literature as reviewed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Chapter 9 answers the research questions and draws conclusions. It also highlights the contributions of this study, identifies the implications and proposes areas for further research.

Chapter Two Setting the Scene: Changes and Challenges

2. 1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the key research concepts and provides the policy and research context in which the current study is conducted. In this chapter, the changes of curriculum and challenges of implementing the changes during the progressive process will be addressed, which aims to set the scene and provides wide research contexts for the following discussions. Specifically, the first section introduces the key research concepts and defines the features of the concepts used in this study; and then the system level of curriculum reforms in CHE is analysed, Next, this chapter moves on to report CER at the tertiary level in China, among which CECR 2007, the major foci of the current study is fully examined and analysed. The last section focuses on the nature of CLT and its implementation in EFL context, especially in China.

2.2 Key research concepts

2.2.1 Curriculum and Syllabus

Over the meaning of curriculum, there has been considerable dispute among scholars, and up to now no widely accepted or unanimously agreed-on definition has been reached. Meaning of curriculum also varies based on the contexts of the discussion (Connelly & Lantz, 1991). A dominant conception of the curriculum is that of content or subject matter taught by teachers and learned by students in schools. Tanner & Tanner (1995) define curriculum as 'the body of subjects or subject matters set out by teachers for students to cover' (p.151). Some scholars (e.g. Jackson, 1992; Pinar et al., 1995) approach curriculum from a broad perspective, and they contend that the conception of the curriculum needs to include the experiences of the learners, and accordingly, the curriculum is viewed as a composite including the learner, the teacher, teaching and learning methodologies, anticipated and unanticipated experiences, outputs and outcomes possible within a learning institution.

However, neither of the two approaches to curriculum seems appropriate in the current research. The conventional concept which regarding curriculum as general plan or subject matter neglect the other factors in the local context, such as, teaching methods and assessment, whilst the broad meaning seems too general as it contains all the activities involved in school life. Morris (1996) offers an alternative framework to examine curriculum, which contains five elements, namely, aims/goals, objectives, content, teaching method and assessment. In this framework aims/goals is placed at the centre, which means the aims/goals of a curriculum determines the other four components. Aims/Goals here are considered as more general and more influential than objectives. In other words, 'aims' are 'idealistic, long term and focus more on a planned intention' (Morris, 1996, p.11); and 'goals' are similar as they focus on a desired result but are more specific, while 'objective' is different in the sense that it emphasises the outcomes resulting from effort which is 'specific and short term' (ibid, p. 11). To achieve the aims/goals, four elements, namely, objectives, content, teaching method and assessment are suggested in a curriculum.

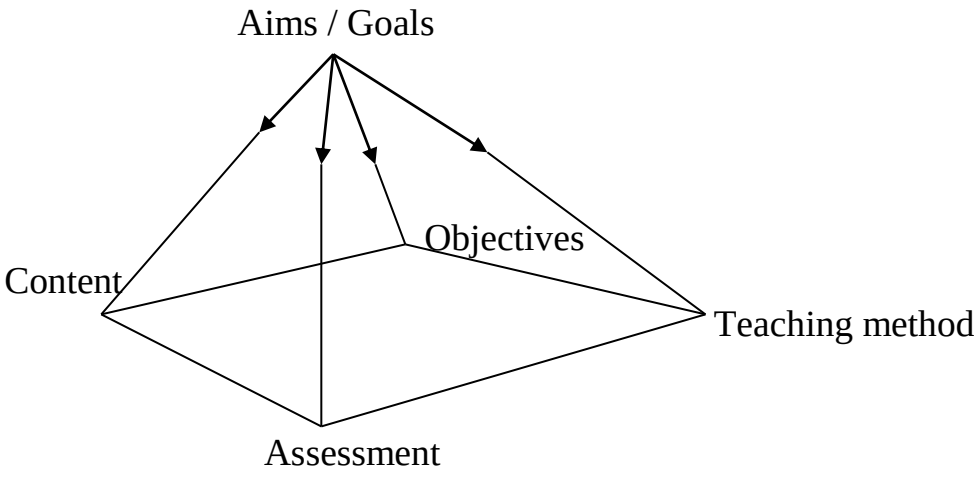

Figure 2.1 Framework to examine curriculum (adopted from Morris, 1996)

In language education, the meaning of curriculum is often defined through the distinction between syllabus and curriculum. Robertson (1971) contends that

‘curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, process, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs’ (p.566), whereas syllabus was ‘a statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself’ (ibid, p.566). To be more specific, curriculum refers to the subjects that are studied or prescribed for study, whilst syllabus refers to the program or outline of a course of study, that is, if the curriculum prescribes the objectives of the system, the syllabus describes the means to achieve them. Krahnke (1987) adds that ‘a syllabus is more specific and more concrete than a curriculum, and a curriculum may contain a number of syllabi’ (p.3). However, White (1988) argues that the terms ‘curriculum’ and ‘syllabus’ are used differently on either side of the Atlantic. In Britain, syllabus is placed in a subordinate position to curriculum; whilst in the USA, curriculum tends to be synonymous with syllabus.

Nunan (1999) contends that curriculum involves all elements and processes in the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning programs. The recent literature indicates that to understand curriculum adequately, it is necessary to include both what has intended (the intended curriculum) and what has actually happened in the classrooms (the implemented curriculum) along with what has been actually learned (the realized curriculum) (Zheng & Adamson, 2003; Zheng & Davison, 2008). Multiple difficulties exist in the processes through which the curriculum is contextualised and re-contextualised (Priestley, 2011). Supovitz (2008) adds that a curriculum tends to be mutated through the process of iterative refraction, which occurs across multiple levels and within multiple contexts. Local existing values and administration play an important role as they serve as mediators of ‘the intrinsic logics of policy’ (Priestley & Miller, 2012), thus, the enacted curriculum may be quite different from the intended curriculum and the realized curriculum.

Based on the discussions of different approaches to curriculum and various understandings of the distinctions between curriculum and syllabus, and simultaneously taking into account the context and the purpose of the current

research, curriculum and syllabus are respectively defined as follows to guide the present research:

♦ Syllabus is a specific outline or a brief statement of the main points of a course, outlining the objectives, the content, the process and materials to be used (e.g. textbooks, software).

♦ Curriculum is viewed as a composite whole, which includes long and short team purpose and outcomes of learning (goals/ objectives), what students need to learn to achieve the goals and objectives (content), how students learn and how teachers help them learn (learning and teaching methods), using what supporting materials (textbooks, software) and methods of assessment (assessment and testing), what means to evaluate the program (evaluation), and what kind of facilities to improve the project and the outcomes in a learning institution (administration).

Thus, to explore the enactment of a top-down curriculum reform at the classroom level in a specific university, it is necessary to explore the goals and contents and teaching methods prescribed in the system-level curriculum, and how the university designs a more specific and detailed syllabus according to the national curriculum. Moreover, how the four components, namely, content, teaching methods, assessment and evaluation work together to make the curriculum work. Therefore, the respective definitions of curriculum and syllabus tend to be more appropriate to guide the present research study.

2.2.2 Reform, Change, and Innovation,

'Reform' and 'change' are synonymous in some respects; for instance, they both mean that something becomes different from before. Change might be planned or unplanned, whilst reform involves a definite purpose and destination of improvement, but not necessarily overthrow it wholesale. Reform in education is not just the formulation of a policy and enacting the policy superficially, it also involves how to put the intended changes into practice. To achieve the substantial changes, three levels of change are needed, namely, changes in teaching material,

changes in teaching practices and changes in teaching philosophy and beliefs (Stacey, 1992; Fullan, 2007). Within the context of a curriculum reform, Kennedy (1988) contends that it is not enough for teachers to behave differently, which is a surface phenomenon, they are also required to change the way they think about certain issues, which is a deeper and more complex change.

Innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived new (Rogers, 1995, p. 11), and involves some deliberation and consciousness for changing for better (Kennedy, 1996) in the process of formulation and implementation. Elmore et al. (1996) argue that innovations require large changes in the 'core of educational practice' (p.2), such as how teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the students' role in learning. Hall and Hord (1987) add that an innovation can be something introduced several years earlier, and it is not necessarily something major, or dramatically different. According to Markee (1993), innovations are 'proposals for qualitative change in pedagogical materials, approaches, and values that are perceived as new by individuals who comprise a formal (language) education system' (p. 231).

To sum up, change indicates reshaping familiar elements into new relationships, and thus happens anywhere, not necessarily the result of someone's deliberate efforts; whereas reform emphasises a purposeful formulation of new ideas or projects to improve the current system rather than to overthrow it; and innovation is a deliberate attempt and entails working with something that is essentially new. These concepts will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

2.3 Curriculum reform in Chinese higher education (CHE)

Curriculum is regarded as a fundamental matter for the 'well-being and effectiveness of higher education' (Barnett & Coate, 2005, p.7), therefore no matter how curriculum is defined (e.g. learning experiences, contents, objectives, courses, etc.), it is one of the most significant matters (Hyun, 2006). China has engaged wide ranging curriculum reforms in higher education over the past decades (Ryan, 2010), and fundamental reforms of both curricular content and pedagogical approaches have been encompassed. Large-scale reforms of school educational practices are regarded as one of the most important events in China's educational

systems (Liu, 2006). Currently, the changes in the international milieu and the internal changes of the economic system bring about new challenges to higher education in China (Liu & Dai, 2003). To better understand the rationale underpinning systemic education reforms, a brief review of CHE history is in order, which mainly focuses on curriculum reforms in each phase relevant to the current research.

CHE in China was characterized by an over specialization in mid 1980s, which was divided into more than 1,400 specialties, therefore the students were usually locked into a narrow specialization, having little autonomy on what to learn in school and what to do after graduation, and also little flexibility and adaptability to the technological and economic changes. Consequently, this over specialization led to a waste of skills and expertise even in the period of planned economy (Hyun, 2006). As market reforms deepened, an education reform was issued in 1993, which proclaimed that the state encouraged all sectors of society, including enterprises, institutions, public organizations or groups as well as individual citizens, to run higher education institutions in accordance with law and to participate in and support the reform and development of higher education (Yang, 2005). Such a move resulted in major expansion of higher education, which, also, led to an unprecedented growth in college enrolment.

Curriculum reforms were coupled with the reform in teaching and learning process. In May of 1985, Vice-premier Wan Li highlighted at length on the need to abolish a traditional educational theory, to replace it by creativity and the opening up of new fields of knowledge. With the accession to World Trade Organization (WTO), the trend of globalization and the emergence of knowledge economy, higher demands have been set on CHE. In 1998, President Jiang Zemin pointed out that creation is the soul of social progress and the sustaining driving force of prosperity; and he also expressed the hope that universities become the cradle of creative talents. The university administrators and the professors are demanded to rethink the mode of teaching and learning in Chinese universities, as it is a common sense that the existing classroom activities in China are mainly teacher-centred; the students are passive listeners rather than actively participators. The way of teaching and learning is, thus, expected to shift gradually from the emphasis of the

memorization of factual knowledge to the cultivation of students' abilities in creative and critical thinking, problem solving and information acquisition and generation, and intellectual independence (Min, 2013).

2.4 Historic overview of College English Reform (CER) at tertiary level

College English (CE) education, that is, English teaching for undergraduates who major in areas other than English, has experienced fluctuations in China due to the fall and rise of the political movements and the changes of economic policies since it was resumed in 1978. Up to now, CE has witnessed noticeable development, and three relevant guideline documents have been formulated, specifically, the National College English Teaching Syllabus (NCETS 1985/1986), the National College English Teaching Syllabus (NCETS 1999) and the College English Curriculum Reform (CECR 2007).

In 1985, the first national College English teaching syllabus was issued for the Science and Technology students, and then in 1986 for the Liberal Arts students. In the two Syllabus, vocabulary and grammar was strengthened. The basic aim of the Syllabus was to help students develop 'a relatively high ability in reading, a moderate ability in listening, and an elementary ability in writing and speaking so that the students will be able to employ English as a means for getting information necessary for pursuing their specialties. In addition, it was also expected to help the students lay a good foundation for further English learning (NCETS 1986, p. 1). CE textbooks, as the most important means to implement, were revised accordingly in the curricula (NCETS 1985/1986). To reinforce the effective implementation of the Syllabus, the CET-4/6 testing system was adopted, which aimed to secure an 'objective, scientific and fair' measure of whether the undergraduates meet the requirements prescribed in the syllabus or not (Yang & Weir, 2001), and also to motivate English teaching and learning in higher education sectors. The then CET-4/6 format was composed of paper-and-pencil tests only, and most items were multiple choice questions in terms of grammar, sentence structure and reading. The scale of test scores was 100-point, and the passing grade was 60%. The CET was regarded as an exclusive assessment instrument of CE education during this period, and much effort and investment was given to it, particularly when CET-4 pass rate

became a criterion to evaluate and rank higher education institutions (Gu, 2005). In turn, these institutions awarded and promoted teachers based on the CET-4 pass rate and pegged the CET-4 score to student academic degree and certificate (Wang, 2007). These high stakes of CET-4 reinforced the motivation as well as the pressure for students to learn English, but, on the other hand, it also guided the attention of the institutions, teachers and students to the test, and eventually backwashed negatively on CE teaching and learning (Tang, 2005).

The aforementioned requirements in the 1986 Syllabus had remained the same for almost 15 years. In 1998, a survey among employers of the college graduates about their English proficiency was conducted. The findings demonstrated that the employers were dissatisfied with the students' general ability to use English (Liu & Dai, 2003). To modify the unsatisfactory, a modified version of NCETS for all non-English major undergraduates was issued in 1999 (Gao, 2007), in which the teaching objectives was shifted to 'develop in students a relatively high level of competence in reading, and an intermediate level of competence in listening, speaking, writing, and translating so that students can communicate in English' (NCETS 1999, p.1). Thus, it required CE teaching 'to foster stronger reading ability of students and certain abilities of listening, speaking, writing and translation in order to help students communicate with English' (ibid, p.1). The issuing of NCETS 1999 intended to strengthen the use of CLT at the classroom teaching to enhance students' communicative capability and better meet the needs of China's economic reform (Yu, 2001). To ensure the effective implementation of CLT, an oral session called CET-SET was added to CET. CET-SET was designed to assess directly the test-takers' communicative and interactional competence. However, it was only accessible for students who had graded 80 in CET-4 or 75 in CET-6, which was considered impossible for most students in most universities (Wang, 2007). Concomitantly, CET-SET failed to stimulate teachers' and students' motivation and interest to develop communicative competence (Min, 2013). However, the impact of CET on society was increasingly severe, and the certificate of CET-4/6 was utilized as gate-keeping device to higher degree education, general employment and even residential certification in big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong. Thus, CE curriculum gave way to coach materials of

CET, and CE learning was narrowed to doing mock tests and developing test-wise skills rather than promoting communicative proficiency (Gu, 2005).

2.5 College English Curriculum Reform (CECR) 2007

The rapidly developing national economy has set forth higher and more urgent requirements for CE teaching, particularly for students' actual use of the language. A new document, which might provide a guide for current CE teaching, was needed to move along with the times. The CECR (for trial implementation) was then introduced in 2004. After two rounds of trial implementation (from 2004 to 2006) in 180 universities, the official report (CMoE, 2006) concerning the policy and the implementation experience and students learning outcomes were formulated. The findings indicated that there were 'active involvement and morale increase on both teachers and students' (CMoE, 2006), based on which, the final version of the CECR was issued in 2007. The objective statement in CECR 2007 signals a significant change—from an emphasis on reading in the previous syllabi to the current emphasis on listening and speaking. In addition, the new curriculum requires the teaching to 'follow the principle of providing different guidance for different groups of students and instructing them in accordance with their aptitude so as to meet the specific needs of individualised teaching' (CECR 2007, p.25).

2.5.1 Different layers of policy actors involved in CECR 2007

The policy process is not simply developing the rules and texts for individuals or organizations to follow (Singh et al., 2013). Rather, policy process involves multidimensional and value-laden state activities existing in contexts (Fitz et al., 2006). In China, CE education is structured in a highly hierarchical manner. Specifically, the highest tier is the Ministry of Education, in which the policymakers formulate the national language policy based on the social, economic and political needs (Wang, 2011); the second one is composed of three committees undertaking three respective tasks at the national level, that is, the Syllabus committee, the Textbook committee, and the Testing committee (see Figure 2.2) . The first two tiers are the national policymakers, and they work together to reflect the government ideology in CER.

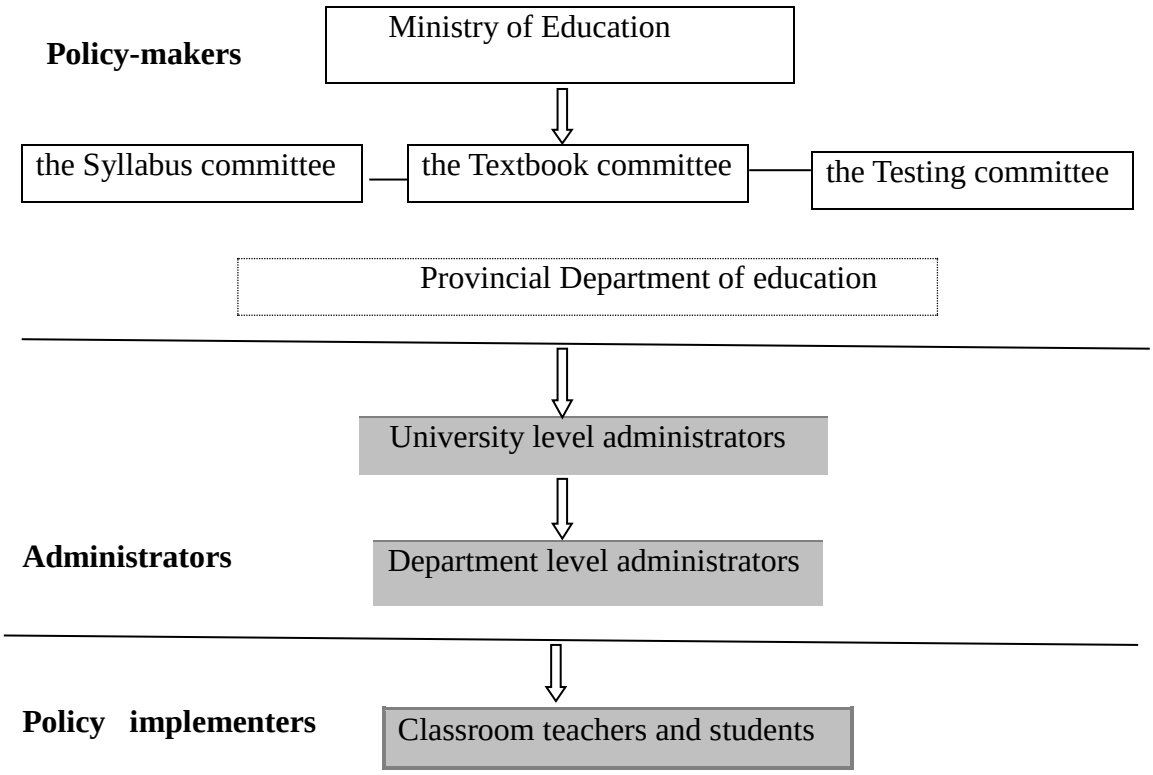

Figure 2.2 Layers of policy actors in CER

The third tier is at the provincial or municipal level, and its role involves policy-making at the local level, but it mainly functions academically, such as organizing academic conferences or provincial English contests. The last two layers are at the institutional level, that is, the administrators bridge the external initiatives with the frontline teachers, and take situated actions to ensure the national policy enacted; the individual level are teachers, the actual policy practitioners at the classroom level. This research study mainly concentrates on the last two tiers.

2.5.2 Intended changes in CECR 2007

As a result of negotiations and communications of the top two tiers of national policy-makers, a system level top-down curriculum reform was launched, which mainly consists of changes in three parts: changes in the Syllabus, changes in

Textbook and changes in Testing (CET), and the latter two are supposed to enhance the changes in the Syllabus. The main changes in CECR 2007, thus, can be classified into three categories:

(1) Changes relating to the teaching objectives and contents

In the previous CES 1999, the aim of College English was to build students' strong ability in reading and fair abilities in listening, speaking, writing and translating so that they could exchange in English. However, in CECR 2007, the objectives are to develop students' all-round abilities in English, particularly their communicative competency in terms of listening and speaking. The course also aims to enhance students' intercultural and autonomous learning abilities. To realize the teaching objectives, series of Textbooks were published, which were designed appropriate to implement the changes required in CECR.

(2) Changes relating to the teaching and learning model

The new teaching model in CECR 2007 is designed to solve students' dissatisfaction with the lecturing model of teaching and also reduce teachers' heavy workload and to meet the need of sharp expansion of student enrollment. The new teaching model is a combination of the use of information technology with classroom teaching, aiming to free CE teaching from 'constrains of time or space and geared towards students' individualized and autonomous learning' (CECR 2007, p. 3). The old lecturing teaching method regarded students as passive knowledge recipients from teachers and textbooks, which had been proved ineffective in cultivating students' communicative abilities, so the CECR 2007 prescribed the new teaching model to 'enable students to select materials and methods suited to their individual needs, obtain guidance in learning strategies and gradually improve their autonomous learning abilities' (CECR 2007, p. 3). Information and communication technology (ICT) is introduced to enhance the strength and effectiveness of CLT, and to promote the central position of students at the classroom instructions.

(3) Changes relating to testing and assessment

The CE assessment intention in CECR 2007 is composed of two parts, a new CET testing system and incorporation of formative assessment into the original

summative assessment policy. Major changes concerning CET are encouraging unpegging practices to alleviate the high stakes attached to CET, issuing score repots rather than passing CET certificate, adopting a 710-point scoring system, and including more non-multiple choice questions (35-40% instead of 15-20%), more listening (35% instead of 20%) and authentic listening materials, and providing some autonomy for universities to set passing scores according to their students' actual English abilities (CET Syllabus Committee, 2005). In addition, CECR 2007 proposed to adopt formative, as well as summative assessment to evaluate and enhance the learning process. Learning in terms of communicative ability is put at the center of the assessment.

(4) Changes of administration

The national policy-level administration reform constitutes three instruments, namely, document management, credit measurement, and the faculty development system. The document management mainly handles the documents of teaching and teaching administration, such as the teaching syllabus, course description, teaching arrangement, evaluation instruments, registration, and credit government. The credit management involves specific measurement of students' learning process and performance. The faculty development system should provide opportunities for CE teachers on their training and development in subject area as well as in computer technology.

Thus, CECR 2007 sets out new teaching goals, that is, 'promoting students' communicative competencies', and to ensure the goals to be realized, new teaching approaches (CLT with integration of ICT) is encouraged. Correspondingly, the textbooks were revised and the content and format of testing and assessment was adjusted. Furthermore, teachers were not only required to change their teaching approaches, but also to alter their teaching philosophies and beliefs. In addition, CECR 2007 tends to decentralize some authorities to individual universities for designing 'a scientific, systemic and individualized College English syllabus to guide their own College English teaching' in accordance with the Requirement and in the light of their specific circumstances (CECR 2007, p.1). Concerning CET, the universities are provided some autonomy for setting passing scores according to their students' actual English abilities (CET Syllabus Committee, 2005).

2.5.3 Theoretical rationale of CECR 2007

CECR 2007, as a national syllabus, serves as the guideline for all CE teachers across the tertiary level in China. Therefore, it is reasonable for the implementers to expect a solid theoretical rationale underpinning the policy document, which helps to clarify the theoretical basis and the practical implications of the prescribed external initiative, and the nature of the changes and the relevant means to apply them (Gao, 2007). Based on a detailed and careful search of the main journals in the relevant fields in China, such as *Foreign Language Journal, Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Foreign Language World, Modern Foreign Languages and Foreign Language,* Gao (2007) concluded that none articles or papers have dealt with the theoretical rationale of CECR 2007. Recently, some researchers (e.g. Wang, 2006; Ruan et al., 2009) have attempted to analyse the theoretical bases and the implications of the mandated changes in CECR 2007, and argued that it is inappropriate to expect using one single theory to account for such a systemic, comprehensive and expensive campaign as the national CER in China. Therefore, Ruan et al. (2009) contend that many modern theories, such as, theories in linguistics, theories in education, and theories in second language acquisition, have fuelled the revolutionary activities.

However, Gao (2007) contends that an eclectic theoretical approach is obvious in the policy documents in spite of the mention of some Western and modern concepts. There are some specific emphasises on the traditional skills such as reading, writing and translation. Even the precise reading and translating speed is prescribed in the policy intent. Some scholars (e.g. Wang, 2007) even comment that the CECR 2007, compared with the national syllabus 1999, is a step back, rather than an improvement.

2.6 Communicative language teaching in EFL context

CLT as a specific research concern has been discussed in Chapter one, particularly in terms of its implementation in China. However, as a major element to examine the system level curriculum reform, it is of great significance to understand the nature of CLT, and the challenges of applying it in EFL countries, especially in China.

2.6.1 Communicative competence and CLT

The concept of communicative competence proposed by Hymes (1972) is that which a speaker needs to know in order to communicate in a speech community. According to Hymes, competence is viewed as the overall underlying knowledge and ability that a speaker possesses. Brown (1987), based on Canal and Swain's description (1980), summarized four components of communicative competence as grammatical competence, which deals with 'sentence-level grammar'; sociolinguistic competence, which is related to socio-cultural rules of language and is not restricted to the literal meaning of utterances; discourse competence, which copes with the relationships among sentences; and strategic competence, which refers to the competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication through 'paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing, as well as shifts in register and style' (Savignon, 1997, p. 45). The four components relate to one another, and endow us with the capacity to use a language communicatively.

CLT is characterized as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a specific teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices aiming to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching, and to develop procedures for the teaching of the language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, Littlewood (2004) and Richards (2006) point out that CLT features a focus on language use and appropriateness, concentrating on fluency, learner-centeredness and integration of language skills. CLT has greater advantages in developing learners' overall communicative competence than the traditional approach. The representative classroom activities of CLT are games, information sharing activities, task-based activities, social interactions, and functional communication practice (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Through synthesizing various discussions (e.g. Littlewood, 1981, 2006; Maley, 1984; Prabhu, 1990; Nunan, 1999; Larsen- Freeman, 2000; Brown, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 2002; Brandl, 2008; Ellis, 2013), the main features of CLT can be summarized in Table 2.1.

Goals	Communicative competence; interaction and problem-solving
Activities	Role play, pair work, group work
Materials	Authentic materials: authentic language to solve real problem, Integration of four skills.
Teaching content and focus	Fluency and pronunciation; communicative competence; integration of four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing)
Teacher's roles	facilitator, a guide and a helper, coordinator, an idea-person and a co-communicator; the needs analyst, the counselor or the group process manager
Student's roles	Self-responsible for their learning; negotiator; participator; independent learner
Assessment	Language development as an ongoing process
Medium of instruction	Target language
Main features	Learner-centred, responsive to students' needs and interest, conversational interactions

Table 2.1 Summary of main features of CLT

There are two forms of CLT, namely, a weak version and a strong version (Howatt, 1984). The weak version stresses learning to use English for communicative purposes, while the strong version, on the other hand, entails using English to learn English. Thus, the striking difference between the weak and strong version lies in the purposes or teaching intentions (ibid). Furthermore, Larsen-Freeman (1986) adds that in the strong form of CLT, the students are encouraged to take more responsibilities for their learning and the teacher needs to be less dominant. However, the image of CLT, Spada (2007) argues, has transforming gradually in the past decades, as she explains that 'CLT is undergoing a transformation—one that includes increased recognition of and attention to language form within exclusively or primarily meaning-oriented CLT approaches to second language instruction' (Spada, 2007, p. 271). Dörnyei (2009) suggests that CLT has reached a

new phase which can be described as a principled communicative approach. This approach tends to bridge the gap between current research on aspects of communicative competence and the actual classroom practice, thus, it further extends and develops CLT methodology, rather than departing from the original CLT (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 165). However, Richards (2006) argues that the implementations of CLT worldwide are mostly in accordance with the characteristics of a 'weak' version of CLT. That is, the classroom practice normally shifts from the mechanical and controlled to the meaningful and free-controlled, but in many countries traditional form-based teaching modes are still prevalent, featuring lack of genuine message exchanging, real language contexts and personal interactions between teachers and the learners (Zhu, 2005; Brandl, 2008; Xue, 2009; Ellis, 2013).

2.6.2 Challenges in implementing CLT in EFL context

Most teachers in EFL context are generally open to CLT methodologies and willing to change and improve their teaching (Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Carless, 2004; Ho, 2004; Liao, 2004; Incecay & Incecay, 2009; Butler, 2011). However, to implement CLT in an EFL context, the teachers are more likely to confront some difficulties and challenges, which can be summarized as follows according to the relevant literature review.

First, the challenges attributed to the contextual and cultural reasons. CLT, which originated from Britain, may conflict with the EFL cultural contexts (Bax, 2003; Ellis, 2003, 2013). According to Holliday (1994), CLT, the 'temporary newcomer which brings an intrusion of change' (p.111), intends to introduce methodological changes to the existing routines in language classrooms in the host culture. The teaching pedagogy is, not only 'new', but also 'foreign' (Holliday, 1994, p.112) to the EFL teachers. In an EFL context, there is a lack of English-speaking environment (Zhang, 2004), and most students' major motivation for learning English is just to pass exams, not to survive (Wang, 2002; Wu, 2011). The role of teacher in CLT is a facilitator and guide (Brown, 2001), which seems difficult for EFL culture, especially for Chinese teachers and students to accept since they are used to following the authority of the teachers (Hu, 2002; Wang, 2011). Moreover,

the large class size and limited teaching time may also add difficulties to the teachers in involving more students in communicative activities. Therefore, Markee (2001) suggests that 'systemic context in which an innovation is implemented seems to be an important determiner of whether or not the innovation will be adopted' (p.120).

Second, CLT places a high demand on the teachers in terms of their linguistic and pedagogic abilities. Native-like proficiency and confidence are essential for the teachers to utilize a CLT approach because it demands 'an extraordinary level of expertise' (Hird, 1995, p.26). In addition, authentic materials rather than prescribed textbooks are utilized, which tends to be a great challenge for the teachers who are required to finish all the teaching content within limited timetable, for most of the assessments are content-oriented. The requirements from the linguistic and pedagogic perspectives are difficult for most EFL teachers to achieve.

Third, CLT is incompatible with the public assessment demanded in an EFL context. CLT does not prepare the students sufficiently well for the more traditional and form-oriented examinations which tend to determine their educational future in EFL contexts (Littlewood, 2007). Shim and Baik (2004), for example, contend that South Korea teachers are caught between government recommendations on the one hand and the demands of students and parents for a more examination-oriented classroom instructions on the other, which is also confirmed by the teachers in Kim's (2006) survey that grammar-based examinations are a major barrier on implementing CLT. Similarly, in Japan and China, English examinations emphasize grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehensions, and thus, students and teachers are less intended to focus on communicative aspects of English (Rao, 2002; Samimy & Kobayashi, 2004; Butler & Iino, 2005; Hu, 2005; Xue, 2009; Wu, 2011).

Last, some conceptual uncertainties of CLT need to be resolved. Besides the practical challenges of the implementation of CLT, there are some conceptual uncertainties of the concept of CLT, which makes it challenging to enact in an EFL context. Thompson (1996) points out that two of the most common misconceptions about CLT from different parts of the world are that CLT means

not teaching grammar and that CLT means teaching only speaking. According to Ho and Wong (2004), CLT has been implemented in different ways in East Asia, because the term almost means different things to the different English teachers, which is echoed in the survey of 164 teachers in China (Li, 2003). According to the survey, Chinese teachers have similar misconceptions about CLT, such as no place for grammar and to focus only on speaking.

Concerning the implementation of CLT in Asian classrooms, Butler (2011) summarised three-level constraints, specifically (a) conceptual constraints (e.g., conflicts with local values and misconceptions regarding CLT); (b) classroom-level constraints (e.g. various student and teacher-related factors, classroom management practices, and resource availability); and (c) societal-institutional level constraints (e.g. curricula and examination systems). Butler (2011), therefore, argues that implementing CLT successfully in Asia requires adaptation to the local environments, such as embedding CLT in local practices.

All the aforementioned issues make the implementation of CLT difficult and challenging in an EFL context. However, the relevant literature highlights that the impact of enacting the intended changes on the teachers are relative rare. Especially, how these challenges have influenced teachers' belief and practices, which is of great significance on enacting and sustaining curriculum reforms. Particularly, as a result of the globalization and open-door policy in China, people's traditional way of thinking is changing, and society is found to be more open to 'newness' and 'foreignness'. In addition, Chinese English teachers' linguistic and pedagogic abilities have been improving due to the relevant resources support and training programmes. Therefore, the current research argues that the challenges to implement CLT in China tend to mainly derive from the teachers. Particularly, CLT, in the Chinese context, is not only imported but also top-down, thus, Chinese teachers' response to it and challenges to enact it may be more complicated than other EFL contexts, the current research, therefore, contribute some originality to the existing knowledge of curriculum reforms and the implementation.

2.6.3 Chinese teachers' perception and implementation of CLT

The first article published in support of CLT in China, was '*In Defence of Communicative Approach*' written by Li in 1984, in which she claimed that language was communication, and learning a language was learning to communicate, which greatly influenced Chinese English teachers' attitudes towards CLT and led to several projects integrating content relevant to Chinese learners with common communicative expressions as well as grammatical structures (Song, 2009). Burnaby and Sun (1989), in their research about the impact of language contexts on Chinese teachers' attitudes of CLT, argue that teachers perceive CLT as more appropriate to those planning to study or live in an English speaking country (ESL context), but not to those who plan to remain in China (EFL context). They contended that the traditional methods were thought to be more suitable to EFL students, given their specific needs and learning aims. In addition, their study also revealed that the pressure to teach for the grammar-focused examinations, the clash of two different teaching philosophies, large classes, lack of resources, and the low status associated with teaching language skills were all perceived as difficulties of the application of CLT in China. Some other findings also resonate that both teachers and students demonstrate a preference for grammar-based method and a resistance to communicative approach (Hu, 2002; Rao, 2002).

However, Liao (2004) claims that CLT is best in China, because the adoption of CLT is the government's position and the application of CLT may bring about a positive effect on English teaching and learning. Moreover, he adds that difficulties caused by the situational constraints (e.g. large class size, grammar-based tests) can be overcome, so he concludes that CLT is the best choice for the Chinese teachers.

Contrary to Liao's absolutist view on the appropriateness of CLT for Chinese EFL classrooms, some researchers hold an eclectic approach. Hu (2005), in response to Liao's absolutist argument, points out that rather than impose CLT, or any specific methodology on teachers, 'a more rational and productive stance to take is to encourage teachers to adopt an eclectic approach, and draw on various methodological options at their disposal to meet the demands of their specific teaching situations'(p.67). Therefore, he adds that it is necessary to encourage and

help teachers to enhance their awareness of contextual influences, to build up their competence in analysing and overcoming contextual constrains, and to develop sound guidelines for making methodological choices.

Rao's research study (2002), through the views of Chinese university students on the appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in their EFL course in China, reveals that the students' perceived difficulties caused by CLT have their sources in the differences between the underlying educational theories of China and those of the West. Furthermore, he points out EFL countries like China need to modernize, not westernize, English teaching to update English teaching method. Particularly, he adds it is necessary to combine the 'new' with the 'old' to align the communicative approach with the traditional teaching structures. His findings suggest that only by reconciling communicative activities with non-communicative activities in the English classrooms can students in non-English speaking countries benefit from CLT.

However, some recent research studies (e.g. Han, 2008; Zheng & Davison, 2008; Xue, 2009) indicate a positive tendency and the possibilities for the execution of communicative approach in the Chinese classrooms. For example, Xue (2009) investigated the extent to which CLT was adopted and/or adapted by Chinese tertiary English teachers with the experience of teacher education overseas. Her findings suggest that CLT was perceived as important by nearly all the informants in terms of its effectiveness and contributions, potential usefulness and complexity. 'Communicative ideas' were found to be widely reflected in the teaching practice of the majority of the participants, although constraints on the implementation were both mentioned by the participants and observed in the classrooms by the researcher.

Through examining the literature of CLT application, we can see the researchers mainly focus on the teachers' attitudes towards, teachers' perceptions of and difficulties in enacting CLT in EFL contexts. However, what are the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings underlying teachers' attitudes and their perceptions? How do teachers enact CLT at the classroom level, and to what extent CLT is enacted? What mediates teachers' perceptions and their enactment? What

issues need to be considered for the Chinese stakeholders when enacting Western-originated teaching approaches in the Chinese context, particularly when the adoption becomes a top-down mandatory policy? Thus, through examining the actual application of CLT at the classroom level, the present study attempts to demonstrate the constraints and the possibilities of an imported pedagogy in the Chinese context.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has explained the key terms and set the scene for the study, particularly, the policy context in which the current research is conducted. It has reviewed the intended changes involved in a system level curriculum reform, and the challenges in implementing the changes in the continuously changing Chinese context. College English, which is an important part of curriculum reforms and a focus of the present research, has experienced major changes, among which speaking and listening have been strengthened, and CLT has been advocated in order to improve students' communicative abilities. However, CLT, which was imported from the West, has encountered strong resistance, for it is regarded as a challenge to the deep-rooted Chinese educational traditions and values. As the reforms and changes have become major concerns in CHE, particularly in English teaching and learning at tertiary level in China, thus, it is of great significance to bring change theories and policy of enactment in in order to highlight the nature, the process and levels of change in the process of enacting the policy intents, which will be the main focus of next chapter.

Chapter Three Reviewing the Literature: Policy Enactment and Educational Change

3.1 Introduction

Change has been a principal concern in education over the past few decades. To understand the nature and the complex process of change, it is necessary to generate a theoretical framework to explore the trajectory of the curriculum reform, which is the main focus of Chapter 3.

This chapter firstly illustrates the nature and levels of change, providing a starting point to understand change and theories of change. Then, theories of policy enactment are discussed to provide theoretical backgrounds for the study. After that, theories of change are presented, functioning as a bridge combining abstract theory with specific reforms to explore changes/non-changes involved in the process of policy enactment in the specific contexts. Then, this chapter moves on to review teacher change and curriculum reform, illustrating teachers' major role as change agents in carrying out curriculum reform in the classrooms. Finally, an initial model of factors affecting teachers' perceptions and enactment of external initiatives is developed, which serves as the initial conceptual framework for the study to design the research methodology and the research methods.

3.2 The nature and levels of change

In this section, the nature of change is explored in order to build the conceptual basis for the further discussion of theories of change. Moreover, to elaborate changes from a systematic and holistic perspective, three levels of change are explored, namely, systemic change, organizational change and individual change. The interactive relationships among the three levels are also examined, which tends to be imperative and helpful to analyse the complicated change process and the means to make changes happen.

3.2.1 The nature of change

Change, by its nature, means disturbing the equilibrium and the existing order, moving into territory which is uncertain, and leaving at least some of present certainty behind. In the literature, change is defined from different perspectives by the researchers, but all these definitions share something in common, that is, 'newness'. For example, Lewin (1951) defines change as unfreezing the old pattern and the existing situation or status quo to develop the **new** way in thoughts, feelings and behaviour. In Fullan's (2007) definition, change is a result of adaptations and decisions made by users as they work with particular **new** policies or programmes (Fullan, 2007, 2010). Rogers (2003) provides a similar definition, namely, 'if the idea seems **new** to the individual, it is an innovation' (p.12). Although the researchers used various terms, namely, 'change' and 'innovation' respectively, they all perceived the nature of change as 'newness'. However, it is worth noting that change has the meaning of replacement, transformation and substitution, but not necessarily advancement. Hence, change is the constant search for understanding and knowing, and there is no ultimate answer' (Stacey, 1992). Senge (2006) furthers on arguing that the real change explores interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains; and change, thus, is a process rather than snapshots. Due to the unpredictable factors involved, the change process is uncontrollably complex, dynamic and unpredictable.

The generation of change, generally speaking, can be initiated in two different ways. One type is viewed as 'bottom-up', 'grassroots' or 'voluntary change', which is developed by teachers with outside support. The other form of change is labelled as 'top-down', 'from above' or 'imposed change', which is generated by the policy makers. Fullan (2006, 2010) contends that to make change flourish, both top-down and bottom-up influences are needed simultaneously, that is, two-way relationship of pressure, support and continuous negotiation make things happen. Regardless of the origination of change, all real change involves loss, anxiety and struggle, thus, uncertainty, ambivalence and unpredictability pervade the process of change. However, once change works out, it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Given the implementation of educational changes, at least three dimensions are at

stake, namely, new materials, approaches and beliefs. All the three dimensions are necessary to achieve real and substantial educational changes because 'they represent the means of achieving a particular educational goal or set of goals (Fullan, 2007, p. 71). In addition, Markee (1997) points out that the language teaching contexts need to take into account in an educational change. The specific context in which an innovation is implemented determines in a great degree whether the change can be executed or not. Therefore, it necessitates the exploration of contextual factors and the corresponding relationships among different levels, specifically, individual, institutional and systemic level in order to highlight the complexities involved in the enactment of an external initiative.

3.2.2 Levels of change

An educational change is multidimensional and involves many levels (e. g. classroom, department, university, nation in the current research), and at each level there exist different layers of stakeholders such as students, teachers and administrators. The policy actors interact continuously in the dynamic process of change (Fullan, 2010), and also mediate the implementation of changes. To explore how a system-level curriculum reform is enacted at the classroom level tends to involve multi-level changes. Changes at one level, or one layer of change agent might influence the holistic picture of the dynamic trajectory of change process. Thus, it is necessary to illustrate systemically the levels of change, namely from systemic to organizational, then to individual level.

A systemic change is intended to be comprehensive, as a fundamental change in one aspect of the system requiring fundamental changes in other aspects (Banathy, 1992; Reigeluth & Garfinkle, 1994). In education, systemic changes may include the nature of the learning experiences, the administrative system that supports the instructional system, and the governance system that governs the whole educational system. However, Levin and Fullan (2008) argue that education reforms which primarily focus on structure and governance are now and will continue to be less dominant, because through which better results for students cannot be produced. Systemic changes thus can be perceived as approaches to change fundamental values and beliefs about schools and education in order to create a better

educational system than what exists currently. It is a process that considers the impact of change on all parts of the whole and their relationships to one another. To achieve a systemic change, it is necessary to recognize the interrelationships and interdependencies between the educational system and its community to ensure that all stakeholders are given active ownership over the change effort. Fullan and Miles (1992) contend that one must focus on two primary aspects to obtain complete information about a systemic change. First, one must look at reforms in the development of many interrelationships within a complex system (curriculum, teachers, students, community). Second, reforms must not focus simply on 'structure, policy, and regulations, but on deeper issues of the culture of the system (p.11). However, to achieve the desired results and the practices of systemic educational changes, substantial amounts of energy and attention at all levels are needed (Elmore, 2004; Hopkins, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). As Levin and Fullan (2008) point out , the heart of education changes lies in changing teaching and learning practices in thousands and thousands of classrooms, which requires focused and sustained effort by all parts of an education system and the corresponding stakeholders.

Schools and universities as parts of the educational system, along with individuals and teachers as main change implementers, have to shoulder their responsibilities in the concerted efforts of a systemic change. However, individuals and organizations usually resist changes, thus it is imperative to generate the need for changes, rather than simply focus on the benefits of the anticipated changes. According to Lewin (1951), organizational changes are outcomes of the dynamic balance of two opposing forces, namely, driving forces and restraining forces; changes would occur only when the balance shifted between these forces. To achieve the intended changes, the positive driving forces and the negative restraining forces have to be anticipated so that strategies can include enhancing the positive forces and decreasing the negative forces (Lewin, 1951). The implementation of organizational changes contains two stages, namely, initiation stage and implementation stage (Rogers, 2003). The initiation stage encompasses things that occur within an organization before an innovation is adopted (e.g. information gathering, conceptualizing, planning), whilst the implementation involves in putting an innovation into practices. However, in many organizations, a

transitional period is required, and the length of the transition is determined by some major factors such as the complexity, ambiguity, and power of organizational culture (Heilpern & Nadler, 1992). Fullan (2010) contends that educational reforms are not just putting the latest policy into practices, but also it involves changing the culture of the classrooms, the schools and the universities. The relevant literature on school culture and educational reforms suggests that schools interpret reforms through their particular cultural lenses (Hargreaves 1997; Gordon 2002; Patterson, 2002; Squire et al., 2003; Strahan, 2003; Elmore, 2004). For instance, Gorden and Patterson (2008) found in their studies that the two programs were interpreted to be consistent with pre-existing norms even though those reforms were pulling in quite different orientations, and reforms were adapted to fit the cultures already established in the school communities. Consequently, the reforms look quite different in different school communities, and eventually achieve different ends that may have little to do with their original intents.

Individuals need to change concomitantly in the process of organizational transitions and changes. Four phases might involve in individual changes, according to Rogers (2003), namely, initial denial, resistance, gradual exploration, and eventual commitment. However, personal changes may be the stimuli for and inseparable elements of organizational and systemic changes rather than are victims (Steinburg, 1992; Evans, 1994; Band, 1995). To achieve changes, individuals have to battle against individual resistances, dislike of insecurity and the unknown involved in the processes (French & Bell, 1990). Furthermore, psychological factors of individuals such as traits, habits, and routines are also important sources of resistance to changes. Although individual changes are essential for organizational and systemic changes, collaborative efforts among the stakeholders are of great significance to achieve and sustain the changes. Concerning the nature of individual level change, e.g. the teacher change, Bailey (1992) and Jackson (1992) point out that it can refer to many things including knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, understanding, self-awareness, and teaching practice. As individual level change, specifically teacher change, is one of the main foci in the present research, a more detailed discussion will be provided in Section 3.7.

3.3 Theory of policy enactment

To explore systemically the complex process of policy enactment, relevant theories and concepts are needed as nothing is as practical as good theories (Lewin, 1951). This section focuses on Ball et al.'s theory of policy enactment (2012) and Supovitz's (2008) conceptualization of policy implementation as iterative refraction. The relevance and limitations of their theorizations with respect to this study are analysed, based upon which a theoretical foundation for exploring the complicated trajectory of a curriculum reform is laid.

3.3.1 Concerning policy: policy as a process rather than a document or a text

Policy is often defined as an attempt to solve a problem through the production of the policy texts (Ball et al., 2012) 'on behalf of the states by its various instrumentalities to order the conduct of individuals, such as teachers or students, or organizations such as schools or universities' (Taylor et al., 1997, p.2). CER, as discussed in Chapter 2, was formulated in China with an effort to tackle the problems and dissatisfaction with CE teaching and learning towards the end of the 1990s, and to improve students' communicative proficiency.

However, the policy is not simply developing the rules and texts for individuals or organizations to follow (Singh et al., 2013). Rather, a policy process involves multidimensional and value-laden state activities existing in context (Fitz et al., 2006). Taking a policy as a 'closed preserve of formal government apparatus of policy making' (Ozga, 2000, p. 42) consequently oversimplifies the social and political interactions involved, particularly the struggles and connections among different groups of stakeholders. Hence, Ball et al. (2011, 2012) conceptualize policy as a discursive process, that is, as both texts and discourses. Policy texts are the products of compromises at various stages, involving negotiation and serendipity at all stages in the policy process and also different interpretations and 'interpretations of interpretations' at different layers of the policy actors (Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987). When the policy texts are translated into interactive and contextualized practices, there tends to involve 'productive thought invention and adaptation' (Ball, 1994) given the contextual constraints and circumstances.

Policy as a process provides some possibilities to examine the interplay between the policy documents and the policy responses (Adams, 2011), and to capture the interactions between the policy makers and the policy implementers (Maclean et al., 2015). Conceptualization of policy as a process, therefore, provides a useful theoretical framework in understanding the complex process of curriculum formulation, in exposing the complexities and struggles within each level, and then in examining the interplay between the policy, the middle-level management and teacher response.

3.3.2 Concerning policy enactment: policy enactment as a process of re-interpretation and re-contextualization

Once a policy is regulated and developed, the most essential stage is to implement it, that is, to put it into practice in the specific contexts. According to the literature, the records of policy implementation are not satisfactory (Fullan, 1993, 2010). Actually, some scholars argue that the term 'implementation' is relatively new (Snyder et al., 1992; Fullan, 2007), and not until 1970s, the concept of 'implementation' could be found. Implementation is the most challenging part among the various phases of policymaking (Delaney, 2002) due to the changes involved from the existing practices to some new or revised practices in order to achieve the desired outcomes (Fullan, 1993, 2007). Elmore and Sykes (1992) highlight the complex and incongruent relationships between curriculum policy and practice. They argue that once a curriculum policy is developed and diffused through the school system to the classrooms, teachers may not implement the mandatory changes due to the situated professional and personal factors, such as negative attitudes, inadequate skills and knowledge, entrenched beliefs and classroom realities. Thus, as implementation of a policy engages much more complicated factors, we need to observe politics in action, and explore how economic and social forces, institutions, people, interest, events and chance interact to influence their formulation and implementation (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 20).

In order to illustrate the complexities involved, Ball et al. (2012) and Braun et al. (2010) suggest utilizing enactment to replace implementation, which signifies a 'dynamic and non-linear aspect of the whole complex that makes up the policy

process, of which policy in school is just one part' (p.549). As many policies implemented in schools are written by government, their agencies or other influential stakeholders, the institutional administrators and teachers are written out of the process and perceived only as the policy implementers (Braun et al., 2010). Particularly, policy texts are typically written according to the best of all possible schools and imaginative contexts (Ball et al., 2012). Thus, putting policy into practice involves a creative process of interpretation and re-contextualisation---that is, the translation of text into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices (Ball, 1994; Braun et al., 2010; Ball et al., 2012). In order to produce relevant activities, it is necessary to take 'contextual, historic and psychological dynamics' (Braun et al., 2012, p. 71) into account with regard to the text of policy. Therefore, as Ball et al. (2012) contend, policy enactment is collective and collaborative in the continuous interaction and interconnection among diverse actors, texts, technologies and artefacts within networks and chains. Through the process of interpretation and translation (decoding and recoding), official policy texts are moved from sites of legislative formulation to contexts of enactment within the institutions and classrooms. The process, Ball (1993) argues, is fraught with different interpretations of policies, and the process of sense-making involves challenges and tensions resulting from the different cognitive processes of policy actors and diverse situated realities of the contexts.

Braun et al. (2010) and Ball et al. (2012) also contend that the processes of policy enactment involve borrowing, re-ordering, displacing, making do and re-invention' (ibid, p.8). Particularly, policies are sometimes poorly thought-out and / or poorly written out (Spillane, 2004). Schools make sense of policy through institutional interpretation, and translate policy to meet the specific context, priority and possibilities. Furthermore, as institutions in different contexts have different capacities, potentials and limits (Lauder et al., 1998), how policies are interpreted and enacted is mediated by the institutional factors (Ball et al., 2012). Enactment also relies on the extent to which the new policy initiative matches the existing ethos and culture of the institutions, and correspondingly, how many changes that might cause. The role of principal policy agents in the institution needs to be highlighted, since they have easier and more access to intended initiatives than the normal teachers (Spillane, 2004). They may choose what policies pertain to their

interest, or what they think of most value personally and institutionally, and filter out those that do not fit into their agendas.

Besides the subjective 'interpretation' dynamics, Ball et al. (2012) also offer a set of objective conditions in the theoretical framework. Policy enactment is 'a grounded account of the divers variables and factors (the what), as well as the dynamics of context (the how) that shape policy enactments and thus to relate together and theorise interpretative, material and contextual dimensions of the policy process' (Ball et al., 2012, p.20). Policy seldom dictates the practices and tells exactly what and how to apply; therefore, in order to put policies into practice in the school and university environment, policies have to be located in a particular context, and translated into contextualized practices. Accordingly, four overlapping and interrelated contextual dimensions are suggested, namely, 'situated context' (e.g. locales, school histories and intakes), 'material context' (e.g. buildings, technology, other infrastructure, staffing), 'professional context' (e.g. teacher commitments and experiences, values,) and 'external context' (ibid, p.21).

Theory of policy enactment makes important steps forward in investigating education policy enactment, and also establishes a firm ground to explore the complexity of what happens with policy in situated contexts (Heimans, S., 2014). Enactment, thus, indicates complexity and nuance and multi-directionality, as opposed to the unidirectionality implied in implementation (ibid, p.307). Educational scholars have widely adopted and applied Ball's theory to document and explore policy enactment in wide varieties of contexts, such as Koyama (2011) in America, Kedddie and colleagues (2011) and Hardy, I. (2014) in Australia, Grimaldi (2012) in Italy, Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2013) in Canada, and Chen et al. (2014) in China.

3.3.3 Policy enactment as iterative refraction

Argyis and Schön (1974) conceptualize the distinction between policy and policy implementation as espoused theory and theory-in-use. Specifically, the espoused theory is the policy itself, referring to how a policy is explained to its intended audience, whilst the actual implementation of the policy is its theory-in-use, which

might be different from the espoused theory.

Supovitz et al. (2008) conducted a longitudinal three-year mixed-method study of the implementation of five school-improvement programs in 15 American high schools. Like some other studies (e.g. Argyris 1978; Fullan, 1991; Bantwini, 2010), they identified substantial variations in how these programs were implemented at the school level. Supovitz (2008) theorizes implementation as a process of iterative refraction, which means reforms are adjusted repeatedly as they work their way across multiple levels and through multiple contexts. Refraction indicates that external reforms are likely to change repeatedly as they filter through multiple layers of the education system, including the district, school, department, team, and classroom, whilst the process tends to be iterative because each level makes decisions about different components of a reform over time (Supovitz, 2008). Thus, reform programs are mutated repeatedly through individual consideration, social interactions, and organizational structures. Through the process of adaptation and re-adaptation, the implemented reform might be inconsistent with the intent of the reform due to interpretations and reinterpretations at multiple levels. The discrepancies are conceptualized by Supovitz and Weinbaum (2008) as the 'implementation gap' between policy intentions and classroom practices.

Supovitz (2008) holds a supportive position towards the variations and refractions involved in the process of enacting reforms. He suggests that the deviations of implementation, though may distort the policy intentions, are useful innovations. Theory of iterative refraction has received some scholars' endorsement, such as Priestley. Priestley (2010, 2011) argues that iterative refraction as potentially positive as administrators and teachers tend to engage in tailoring the policy intents to their school settings. The 'implementation gap' suggested by Supovitz and Weinbaum (2008) has also well-documented in numerous empirical research, such as Wedell (2005), Kennedy (2010), Halstead and Zhu (2009), Yan (2012). Some research studies have tended to utilize Supovitz's (2008) theory to examine the trajectory of policy enactment, such as Priestley (2010, 2011), Priestley et al. (2011, 2014), and Maclean et al. (2015).

Ball's and Supovitz's research contexts are different from the present research,

British schools, American high schools and a Chinese university respectively, some theoretical and methodological support can be confirmed in their theories as to explore the enactment process of a systemic external initiative in China, such as theorising policy as a process, policy enactment as interpretation and re-contextualization and the iterative refraction of policy enactment. CECR 2007, as a policy, is a process open to multi-level interpretations and re-interpretations, i.e. the policy-makers, the middle-level administrators and then the individual teachers. In addition, the external initiative tends to be translated into localized and contextualized practices in the local environments. Multi-level factors may influence the enactment process, and subsequently the enacted curriculum may turn out to be different from the intended curriculum. CECR 2007 may be adjusted repeatedly as it moves through levels of contexts, from the university to the department and then to the classrooms. The intended reform is likely to change as it is filtered through multi-level reinterpretation and re-contextualization.

However, theory of policy enactment tend to lack explicit discussion of changes of the multi-level policy agents and how changes/non-changes at one level interact and influence changes at the other levels. In particular, the issues about how and to what extent the individual teachers change in terms of their beliefs and practices are not sufficiently explored. Supovitz's theory emphasises the mutation process of policy at the multiple levels and the implementation gaps between the policy and the practices, but it is also lack of examination of the changes at the institutional and induvial levels to execute the policy. Moreover, the dynamic relationships between a policy and its multi-level contexts need further and holistic exploration, as 'the context itself can change in a process of co-adaptation between the individual and the environment (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008, p.7).

Thus, concerning the complexity and scope of the process, Ball (1994) argues that two theories are better than one. Ozga (1990) also adds that it is important to bring together structural, macro-level analysis of educational systems and educational polices and micro-level investigation, especially that which takes account of people's perception and experiences to investigate policy enactment. Therefore, a combination of theory of policy enactment with theories of change tends to be more appropriate in the current study.

3.4 Theories of educational change

Three theories of change, namely, Roger's diffusion of innovation (DoI) (2003), Fullan's theory of educational change (2007, 2010) and complexity theory (Fong, P., 2006; Tong, 2006; Morrison, 2006, 2008; Mason, 2008; Snyder, 2013) are reviewed and discussed in this section. Rogers (2003) focuses on the characteristics of the innovation and the adopters, whilst Fullan's model emphasizes 'the human participants taking part in the change process' (Ellsworth, 2001), particularly, the roles and strategies of various types of change agents. Concerning the complexity of educational change, Fullan (1993) depicts the significance of the implication of complexity theory in the uncertainty and unpredictable process of change. Thus, theories of change will provide complementarily theoretical support for the present study to explore how and to what extent levels of changes involved in the complex process of enacting a top-down external initiative at the classroom level in a Chinese university.

3.4.1 Rogers' diffusion of innovations (DoI)

Rogers' theory of DoI (2003) is one of the most popular models in describing the process of adopting new innovations/changes (Sahin & Thompson, 2006). DoI regards change as being mainly about the evolution or 'reinvention' of products and behaviours so they better fit the needs of individuals and groups (Robinson, 2009). To Rogers, diffusion is 'the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system' (Rogers, 2003, p.5). As seen in the definition, four key components in DoI are innovation, communication channels, time, and social system:

(1) Innovation defined by Rogers as 'an idea, practice, or project that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' (ibid, p.12), that is, if the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation.

(2) Communicative channel is the means through which messages convey from one individual to another (ibid, p.5). There are two different communication channels, namely, media channel, and interpersonal channel. Mass media channels are more effective in creating knowledge of innovation, whereas interpersonal channels are

more powerful in creating or changing attitudes towards an innovation, particularly in influencing the decision to adopt or reject a new idea.

(3) Time: the third element is concerned with the time involved in diffusion, that is, non-spatial interval through which the diffusion events occur. These events include the innovation-decision process, the relative span of time for the individual or group to adopt the innovation and the innovations' rate of adoption in a system.

(4) The social system: a social system is a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem-solving activities to accomplish a common goal (Rogers, 2003, p.23). Regarding to the communication process of innovations / reforms among teachers, Hargreaves and Fullan (1996, 2010) present the idea of 'collaboration', which means teachers tend to share some experiences and understandings concerning the improvement of practice, though they often not involve deeper conversations in terms of investigation of the hidden assumptions regarding to the teaching profession.

These components in the process of diffusing innovations follow a basic information-processing model. It tends to be useful in the current research in separating out new messages concerning curriculum reforms and the effective communication channels to diffuse them, and also the necessity to take into account the time involved in the process and the features of the social system within which the reform is implemented. Hu (2009) and Hu and McGrath (2012) employed mix-methods case studies to explore the diffusion and adoption process of CER in the Chinese tertiary context. Their research argues that the teachers tend to be passive implementers in top-down educational reforms, and the hierarchical approach to diffusing an innovation is problematic. Their findings indicate that problems identified during the actual implementation could not be fed back to the top in the unidirectional process, and eventually remained unsolved, which definitely influenced the rate of diffusion and the ultimate effective implementation of the reform.

In addition to the diffusion process, Rogers (2003) also depicts the adoption process and the distinctions between the process of diffusion and adoption. The diffusion process permeates through society and groups, while the adoption process is most relevant to the individuals. The adoption process is defined by Rogers (p.35) as 'the mental process through which an individual passes from first hearing an innovation to final adoption', which involves a series of actions and decisions. There are five stages in this process. (1) The knowledge stage: in this stage the individual is first exposed to an innovation, and seeks information about it. During this phase, the individual attempts to determine 'what the innovation is and how and why it works' (Rogers, 2003, p. 21). (2) The persuasion stage: this stage occurs when the individual forms an attitude towards the innovation, and seeks more knowledge about the innovation to shape his or her attitude, but 'the formation of a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward an innovation does not always lead directly or indirectly to an adoption or rejection' (ibid, p.176). (3) The decision stage: in this stage the individual takes the concept of the change and weighs the advantages / disadvantages of using the innovation and decides whether to adopt or reject the innovation. (4) The implementation stage: an innovation is put into practices in the implementation stage, but the degree to which the individual employs the innovation depends on the situation. Rogers (2003) contends that uncertainty about the outcomes of the innovation might affect the implementation, so technical assistance from change agents and others are needed for the implementers. In addition, he argues that reinvention usually happens at the implementation stage. Reinvention is 'the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of its adoption and implementation' (ibid, p. 180). According to Rogers, the more reinvention takes place, the more rapidly an innovation is adopted and becomes institutionalized. (5) The confirmation stage: in this stage the individual finalizes his/her decision to continue / discontinue using the innovation, and seeks support to confirm for his or her decision. The five steps of adoption usually occur in a time-ordered sequence (see Figure 3.1).

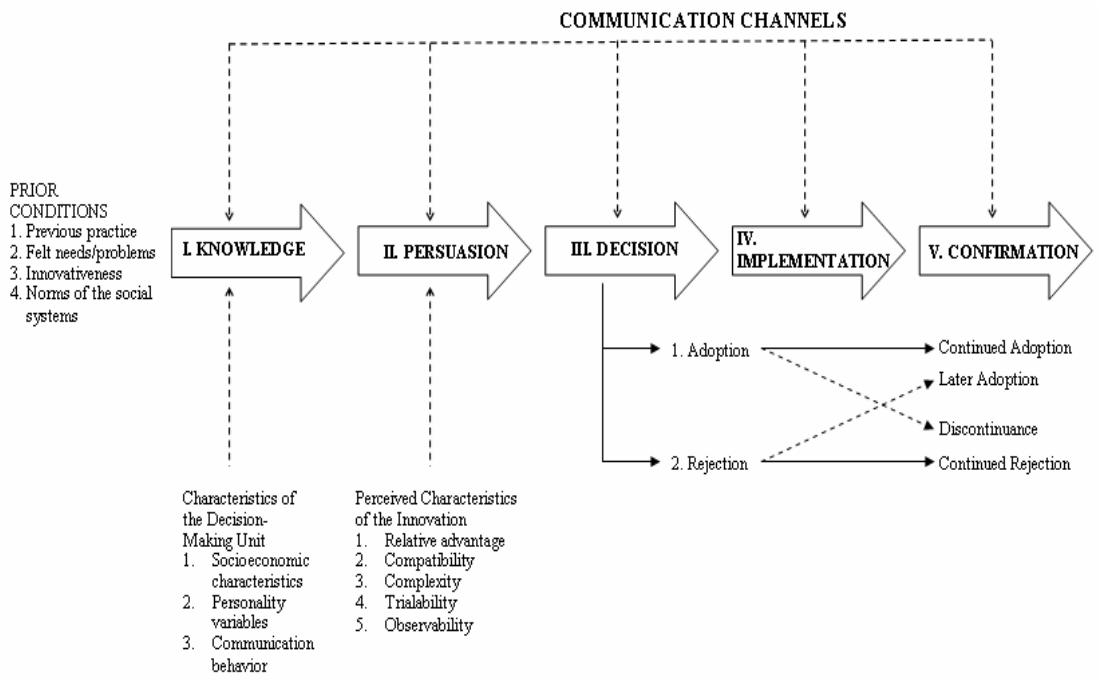

Figure 3.1 A Model of Five Stages in the Innovation-Decision Process

(Rogers, 2003, p. 172)

Rogers (2003) further points out that an individual might reject an innovation at any time during and after the adoption process. If eventually an innovation is adopted, it would spread through diverse communication channels. As noted in Chapter 2, CECR 2007, as a top-down systemic initiative in China, requires several layers of communication channels, such as the administrative level and the individual level. During this process, the institutions and individual teachers might have different perceptions of the intended changes, and the gaps between their perceptions might affect the actual enactment. On the other side, teachers' decision-making process might be influenced by their teaching beliefs and the institutional context. Thus, from this perspective, we can argue that Rogers's (2003) DoI is relevant in this study.

With regard to the rate of adoption, Rogers (2003) argues that it is affected by five variables, namely, perceived attributes of innovations, type of innovation-decision, communication channels, nature of the social system, and the extent of change

agents' promotion efforts. The perceived attributes of innovations are of great significance as the individuals' perceptions of these characteristics predict the rate of adoption of innovations (Rogers, 2003, p.219). The perceived characteristics of the innovation include: **(**1) relative advantages, that is, 'the degree to which an innovation is perceived better than the idea it supersedes' (ibid, p.13); **(**2) compatibility, which indicates 'the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters' (ibid, p.15); (3) complexity of the innovation, which means the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use; (4) trialability, which means the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis; and (5) observability, that is, the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others. An idea that is incompatible with the values and norms of a social system will not be adopted as quickly as an innovation that is compatible. New ideas, simpler to understand, are adopted more rapidly than those requiring the adopters to develop new skills and understandings. The easier it is for the individuals to see the results of an innovation, the more likely they are willing to adopt it (ibid, pp.13-16). Thus, except for the complexity, the other four attributes of innovation contribute to the rate of adoption. According to Rogers (2003), these five qualities determine between 49 and 87 percent of variation in the adoption of an innovation, however, which qualities are more influential than others should be compatible with specific innovations in different contexts. For example, the current research is situated in a constantly changing Chinese context, and the relevant elements which facilitate or inhibit the spread of the reform might be different from other contexts. The innovation-diffusion process is 'an uncertainty reduction process' (ibid, p. 232), and the qualities of innovations help to decrease uncertainty and spread the diffusions (e.g. Kearns, 1992; Albirini, 2006; Hu, 2009).

Rogers' DoI provides a standard classification scheme for describing the perceived attributes of innovations in universal terms (Ellsworth, 2001), which tends to serve as guidelines for the change agents about what attributes that they can build into the innovation to facilitate its acceptance by the intended adopters. Furthermore, DoI offers a solid framework for the process of moving an innovation through social system overtime. Numerous researchers have adopted Rogers' theory of DoI to

support their studies on innovations/changes (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1998; Lang, 2000; Chambers & Bax, 2006; Sahin, 2006; Hu, 2009). For instance, Karavas-Doukas (1998) conducted a case study to examine the implementation of CLT in Greek public secondary schools. The results revealed Greek teachers' unfavourable attitudes towards the innovation due to the lack of systematic teacher training, and limited understanding of the approach, ultimately led to the unsatisfactory implementation. The failure to take into account the constraints of classrooms and educational contexts also verified the importance of compatibility of an innovation in Roger's theory. For example, Hu and McGrath (2012) employed a mixed-method case study to examine the implementation of CER in a Chinese University. Their findings depicted that the implementation of the reform and its further adoption was hindered by ineffective communication networks and administrative inefficiency due to the centralised and top-down diffusion system in China. This validated Rogers' theory and also shed some lights on the present study. However, Medlin (2001) warns that Rogers' DoI is most appropriate for investigating the adoption of technology in higher education and educational environment (Anderson et al., 1998; Medlin, 2001; Surendra, 2001; Less, 2003; Sahin, 2006). Rogers (2003) himself usually uses the word 'technology' and 'innovation' as synonyms. Moreover, Rogers (2003) perceives change as being primarily about 'reinvention' of products and behaviours so they match better the needs of individuals and groups, rather than focus on persuading individuals to change, so in Rogers' theory, it is the innovations change, but not the people involved.

DoI illustrates not only how changes are accepted or rejected but also under what conditions they are likely to be implemented. The perceived characteristics of an innovation provide a theoretical basis to understand whether an innovation can be diffused or not. The process of adoption is of great importance to understand teacher's perceptions and enactment of CLT at the classroom level. However, in Rogers' theory it is not people change, but the innovations themselves (Robinson, 2009). Thus, Rogers' diffusion of innovation tends to be limited in exploring multilevel changes involved in the process of enacting an external reform, such as how teachers perceive and respond to the intended changes, and to what extent teachers enact the reform in their classrooms, and simultaneously how their beliefs and behaviours are influenced by the reform. Therefore, it is of paramount

importance to buy in other theories of change in order to lay a solid theoretical foundation for the present study.

3.4.2 Fullan's theory of educational change

Fullan's (2001, 2006, 2007, 2010) theory of educational change acknowledges not only the complexity and multidimensional nature of change, but also the existence of multi-agents involved (such as teacher, principal, student, district administrator, and government) in the change process. Fullan's theory of educational change can be synthesized into three main thrusts: (1) theories of education (what change to implement), that is, educational change as multidimensional, (2) theories of change (how to implement the changes), including the tri-level model of reform (i.e. classroom, school, district), correspondingly layers of stakeholders at each level, which addresses respectively the school, the community and the district or state; and the three stages of change, namely, initiation, implementation and institutionalisation, and clusters of factors affecting the process, and (3) the significance of complexity theory to delve the complex and unpredictable process of change. Concerning the first two clusters, Fullan (1994, 2007) argues that they cannot be separated, for they interact and shape and reshape each other in the complex process of educational changes.

According to Fullan (2007), it is necessary to probe further the subjective and objective aspects of educational changes in specific educational contexts. The subjective meaning of change means the subjective realities of policy actors, particularly, the teachers, the ultimate policy practitioners. However, in practice, the real conditions under which teachers have to work are ignored consistently (Heneveld & Craig, 1996; O'Sullivan, 2000, 2002). O'Sullivan (2002) states that the failure for the policy makers to take into account the realities within which teachers work is likely to result in the unsuccessful implementation of the intended changes. Despite classroom efforts prohibiting teachers from professional learning, most innovations and reforms demand new knowledge and skills, that is, the professional learning section. However, some studies (e.g. Ball & Cohen, 1999; James & McCormick, 2009) indicate that teachers' professional learning are

superficial and lack of consistency and coherence. Therefore, tensions tend to emerge between what is desirable and what is acceptable and possible.

Furthermore, Fullan (2010) points out institutions are more likely to adopt new programs and strategies without considering their deeper implications and appropriateness and practicability in the specific contexts. Ultimately, the abstract and unclear goals with a mandate for teachers to execute might lead to confusion, anxiety and frustration. Teachers may also experience false clarity, which means that teachers 'think that they have changed but have only assimilated the superficial trappings of the new practice' (Fullan, 2007). When the unclear innovations are attempted under conditions that do not support the development of teachers' subjective understandings of the change (ibid, p.37), teachers would suffer 'painful un-clarity'. Therefore, Fullan (2010) warns that people may misinterpret and misunderstand some aspects of the intended changes owing to the false clarity and painful un-clarity. For instance, Karavas-Doukas (1995) conducted a research to explore how a communicative syllabus was implemented in Greek secondary schools, and found that teachers demonstrated some incomplete and unclear understandings of the innovation and misconceptions and eventually led to teachers' negative attitude and low motivation in implementing the innovation. Subjective aspects alone are not sufficient enough to comprehend the nature and meaning of educational changes, as changes imply multiple objective dimensions (Fullan, 2007). Educational innovation is multidimensional, that is, at least three dimensions are involved in implementing any new policy, namely, the possible use of new or revised materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials or technology), the possible use of new teaching approaches (new teaching strategies or activities), and the possible alteration of beliefs (pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programmes) (Fullan, 2007, p. 39).
Education changes involve not only the meaning of the changes, but also the complex social process of implementing the initiatives, that is, theories of change. Fullan (2007) emphasises that change is a constantly changing process and the features of a change may vary at different stages of the change process. The initiation of change is the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. The implementation of change is the stage that involves the first experiences of attempting to put an idea or reform into practice, and

continuation or institutionalization stage is whether the change gets built in as an ongoing part of the system or disappears as a result of a decision to discard or through attrition (Fullan, 2010). In addition, 'what happens at one stage of the change process strongly affects subsequent stages' (ibid, p. 53). Fullan's (2007) three phases of change process share some similarities with Rogers' innovation-decision process discussed above. Among the three phases of change, the most difficult and complex phase is implementation (also the foci of the present study), for it is 'the means of accomplishing desired objectives' (ibid, p.70), and 'what works in one situation may or may not work in another' (ibid, p. 49). Fullan (2010) highlights that implementation does not happen overnight, as change is a complex process with many unforeseeable obstacles and problems. However, no distinctions between 'theories of change (what causes change) and theories of changing (how to influence those causes) is likely to lead to the failure of achieving the desired objectives, according to Fullan (2007, 2010).

Fullan (2007) summarizes three clusters of factors that may influence the process of change (see Figure 3.2). The first cluster consists of the nature and characteristics of the change, namely, the perceived needs for the change, the degree of clarity about goals and means in the change process, the difficulty and extent of change required of the individuals responsible for implementation, and the importance of the quality and practicality of the change project. The second cluster comprises local characteristics, including the school district, community, the principal and the teachers and the immediate social contexts for change. The third one is made up of external factors such as the ministry of education, regional institutions and other external partners involved in broader socio-economic political contexts. Fullan's three stages of change and factors provided a theoretical foundation for some research studies, particularly those educational studies to explore and understand what, how and why changes happen or not happen during the process of implementation. Sufficient empirical evidences and specific features have been supplied in diverse enacting contexts along the complicated process of change. Some researchers (e.g. Kennedy, 1988; Pennycook, 1989; Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 1994; Kennedy, 1996; Markee, 1997; Waters &Vilches, 2001; Hu, 2004) highlight the importance of the contextual and cultural

factors in the implementation of reforms, which tend to be a key barrier in the endeavour to execute external initiatives.

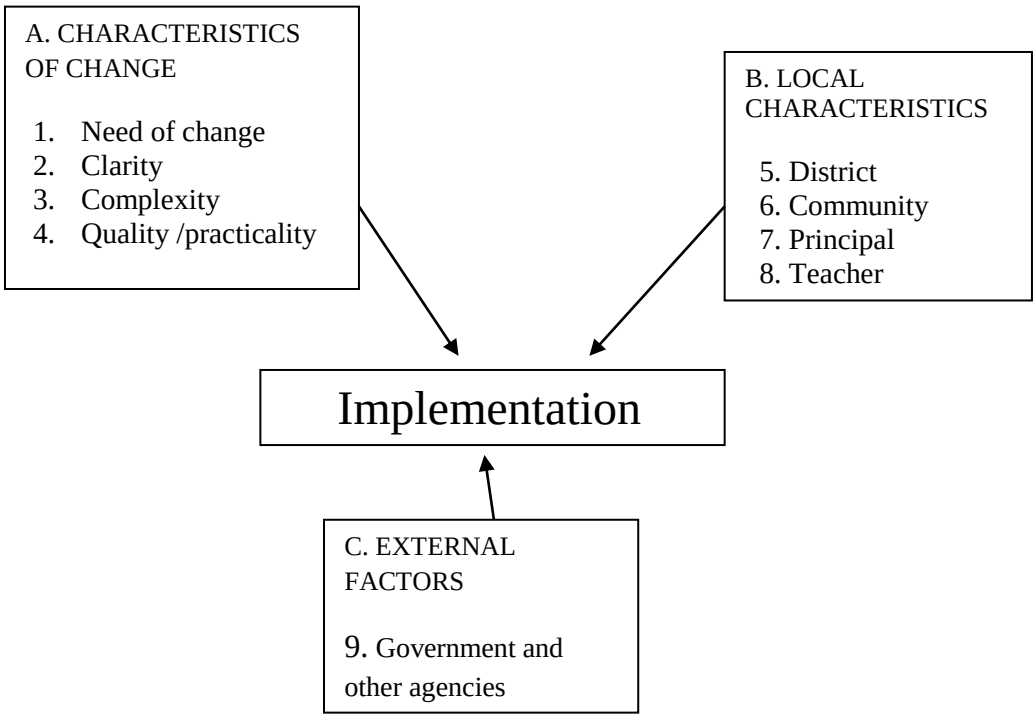

Figure 3.2 Interactive factors affecting implementation (Fullan, 2007, p.72)

Fullan (2007) points out multi-agents (i.e. teacher, principal, student, district administrator, and government) are involved in a change process. Concerning the specific context of the current research (University L in China), the role of principal (leadership) and teacher are essentially relevant. Leaders are most likely to shape and reshape the organizational conditions necessary for educational change, such as the development of shared goals, collaborative work structures and climate, and procedures for monitoring resources (Fullan, 2010). However, some

empirical studies (e.g. Hallinger, 2003; Elmore, 2004) indicate that most leaders do not play instructional or change leadership role because they fail to understand teachers' concerns and provide sufficient support. The role of the principals/ leadership has become dramatically more complex, overloaded, and unclear over the past decade in the increasingly dynamically complex society (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Principals are expected to shoulder the responsibility as initiators or facilitators of continuous improvements in their schools. In the field of education changes, principals are the intermediaries between teachers and external ideas and people, hence they are the gatekeepers of change. Thus, leadership is the key factor for school effectiveness, and energizing teachers in the complex changing society. In the relevant literature, some studies have provided some meaningful messages concerning effective leadership in the successful implementation of educational changes (e.g. Day et al., 2000; Donaldson, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Hallinger, 2003; Elmore, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2008).

However, education changes ultimately depend on what teacher do and think, so teachers' role is the core in the process of change (Fullan, 2007). Classrooms and schools become effective when qualified people are recruited to teaching. However, Fullan (2010) contends that the conditions of teaching appear to have deteriorated over the past two decades, which results in teachers' stress and alienation. The isolation and uncertainty associated with the settings divorce teachers from learning from and interacting with their colleagues. Teachers are, therefore, in a weak position to experiment and improve professionally. The working conditions and situations, together with the subjective and objective realities of change, mediate and influence greatly teachers' capacities and motivations in implementing the intended changes. In the literature, numerous empirical studies have demonstrated teachers as change agents in implementing reforms (e.g. Kennedy, 1996; Sykes, 1999; Carless, 2003, 2004; Elmore, 2004; Hargreaves, 2004). Concerning the importance of teacher and teacher change in the current research, a more detailed discussion about teacher change will be provided in Section 3.7 under the title of teacher change and curriculum reform.

Fullan's theory of change has been widely adopted in various research studies. For instance, the study of Nachmias et al. (2004) examined the factors affecting the successful implementation of innovative pedagogical practices. Their findings indicated that infrastructure factors such as school climate and educational policy were the most influential factors in the innovation. In another study of a technology-enhanced ELT reform project during 1998-2003 in an eastern Chinese university, Fang and Warschauer (2004) reveal that the deeply held cultural beliefs, that is, teachers should be in control of the classroom and deserve the utmost student respect, can hinder changes in in teaching and learning. Their study suggests that teachers tend to do so 'at the margins of instruction, leaving core relationships and processes in place' (p.315).

Rogers' DoI elaborates the diffusion of an innovation and the influencing factors; Fullan's model highlights 'the human participants taking part in the change process (Ellsworth, 2001), particularly, the roles and strategies of various types of change agents. To explore how teachers, the 'chief agents of reform' (McDonald, 1998, p. 471), enact the prescribed reform, it is of great significance to understand both the characteristics of the reform and the roles and strategies that teachers perform and utilize to enact the changes. Thus, both Roger's and Fullan's theories provide some useful theoretical and conceptual supports to explore the complicated process of educational change. However, given the present study is contextualized in a Chinese university, factors affecting the implementation may be distinct from the West. In a centralised hierarchy system like China, layers of power tend to be exerted on executing a mandate reform, that is, from government to district (province), then to the university principal, then to the heads of departments, and last to the frontline teachers. In addition, concerning the situated context, other elements need to be included, such as, cultural appropriateness, characteristics of Chinese students, teachers' English proficiency, resources, and communication. To explore and analyse all these complexities involved in the process of change, complexity theory tends to provide some theoretical possibilities and appropriateness.

3.4.3 Complexity theory

To fully explore the complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability of the change process, Fullan in his trilogy of educational change (1993, 1999, 2003) introduces complexity theory into education. However, Morrison (2006, 2008) contends that the entry of complexity theory into education is 'limited, spasmodic and piecemeal' despite its meteoric rise in the fields of natural science, anthropology and economics (Morrison, 2006, p.1). To explore and analyse its potential contributions to education, some scholars (e.g. Fong, P., 2006; Tong, 2006; Mason, 2008; Snyder, 2013) have explained complexity theories from different aspects and provided examples of its applicability in education research.

Complexity theory, to put it simply, asserts that 'systems begin as collections of individual actors who organise themselves and create relationships' (Snyder, 2013, p.11). These relationships among individual actors form 'positive or negative feedback', and 'new structures and behaviours then emerge as the actors act and react to each other' (ibid, p.11). In other words, complexity theory is a theory of change, evolution and adaptation, and through cooperation and competition in the interest of survival in a changing environment (Morrison, 2006). It employs an organic, dynamic, cyclic and holistic approach to understand the relations within the interconnected networks, rather than straightforward, linear, cause-effect, and fragmented models (Santonus, 1998). The concepts, namely, self-organization, complex adaptive systems, non-linear change, emergence, unpredictability and feedback, form the main part of complexity theory. They are unified into a complex adaptive system, but the wholeness of a system is more than the sum of parts. The central tenets of complexity theory are not new, but integrating the key constructs into a unified theory grants complexity theory power and strength.

In complexity theory, organizations or systems constitute large number of components or agents, and they interact, cooperate and compete with each other in many different ways. Through the continual clash of mutual accommodation and mutual rivalry (Waldrop, 1993), new emergent structures and behaviours emerge at various levels. New constitutes from new levels of interaction, and then produce new emergence, thus, the process is dynamic and continuous. Simultaneously, complex adaptive systems sense and respond to and adjust with the environment.

Systems survive through self-organization in the process of interacting with the environment. Self-organized emergencies within the system also transform the systems, and the relationship between systems and their environment is dynamic and holistic (Waldrop, 1992; Lewin, 1993; Stacey, 2001). Through feedback, recursion, connectedness and self-organization, higher levels of complexity and new systems and behaviours emerge from lower levels and the existing forms. However, the new emergent systems cannot be predicted in advance due to the non-linear and non-cause-effect relationships.

With regard to education changes, complexity theory posits some important insights, one of which is that new properties and behaviours emerge not only from the elements that constitute a system, but also from the myriad connections among them (Mason, 2008). Morrison (2006) argues that complexity theory suggests 'a movement towards bottom-up development and change, local and institutional decision-making on education' and 'a rejection of tight prescription and linear programming of teaching and learning and a move towards non-linear learning and their curricular derivatives' (p. 6). The national CECR 2007, which intends to address some changes emphasizing communication, connectedness, feedback and collaboration, indicates some features of complexity. However, the context (environment) of the present research is a high centralized educational system. Moreover, CECR 2007 is the highly mandatory prescribed top-down policy, which experienced two years trial period before its nationwide implementation at tertiary level. Thus, the uncertainty and unpredictability involved in the process of enactment is less likely to be dynamic and complex. Furthermore, the current empirical research on education change through the lens of complexity theory mainly focus on Macao (e.g. Fong, K., 2006; Fong, P., 2006; Lam Nogueira, 2006; Morrison, 2008, 2010) and the West (e.g. Kuhn, 2008; Mason, 2008; Snyder, 2013), that is, the educational systems and social background are quite different from the current study. Hence, employing complexity theory to explore a top-down mandate curriculum reform in a centralised system, such as mainland China, tends to lack theoretical and empirical support.

3.4.4 Integrating theories of change and policy enactment to conceptualize this study

Rogers (2003) distinctively distinguishes the diffusion process from the adoption process. The diffusion process permeates through society and groups, while the adoption process is most relevant to the individuals, as an individual may reject an innovation at any time during and after the adoption process. However, Rogers' theory takes 'changes as being primarily the evolution or reinvention of products and behaviours as they become better fits for the need of individuals and groups' (Robinson, 2009), rather than the changes at the intuitional and individual level. Fullan's theory of educational change (2007, 2010) provides some complementary support in understanding the change process and sheds some light on the understanding of the process of policy enactment. Therefore, to explore how teachers enact an external initiative at the classroom level, it is of great significance to examine the refraction involved in the iterative process of multi-level interpretations and translations of the (Supovitz, 2008) and the roles and strategies that teachers utilize to adopt (Rogers, 2003) / implement (Fullan, 2001) / enact (Ball et al., 2012) the reform. Thus, a combination of these theories tends to provide a useful and solid theoretical foundation for the current study.

However, these theories tend to have a common gap in exploring how the individual level change is impacted by the multi-level contextual constraints in a centralized hierarchical system like China, as they are embedded in different social, cultural and educational settings from this study. Rogers (2003) classifies adopters into five categories according to their propensity to adopt an innovation, whilst Ball et al. (2012) divide policy actors into eight types according to their different roles and positions in the policy enactment. Both Rogers and Ball et al.'s theories have limitation in analysing the changes made at the institutional and individual level in order to execute the reforms. Fullan's (2007) theory of change acknowledges the existence of multi-agents (such as teacher, principal, student, district administrator, and government) involved in a change process (Hu, 2009). However, similar to the theories of Rogers and Ball et al., Fullan's theory, also, has gaps in exploring how the multi-level agents, especially the individual-level teachers, perceive and respond to the policy, and how and to what extent the enacted changes match / mismatch the intended curriculum, and the relationships between teachers'

perceptions and their behaviours. To fill the gaps, it tends to be necessary to highlight and buy in some theoretical support from teacher change and curriculum reform.

3.5 Teacher change and educational reform

The success and effectiveness of an educational change depends on what teachers think and do (Fullan, 2007). Thus, it is of paramount significance to examine the subjective cognitive process of teachers, their concrete classroom behaviours, and the interrelationship between the two in order to obtain a holistic picture curriculum enactment at the classroom level. To fulfil the research purpose, it is also necessary to analyse teachers' thinking and behaviour in the context of national curriculum reforms and uncover the challenges they are confronted, and concomitantly the changes / non-changes involved in their attempts to enact the external initiative.

3.5.1 Teacher belief and teaching practice

The literature in teaching and teacher education is replete with studies on teachers' beliefs. The underlying assumption tends to be that teachers' beliefs contribute to a more realistic understanding of classroom teaching and learning, and correspondingly, a more holistic picture of how teachers perceive and react to the changes in the context of educational changes. This study mainly focuses on exploring CE teachers' views and beliefs about EFL teaching and learning and how their beliefs influence their classroom practices in the context of curriculum reform.

Numerous research studies during the past three decades have been conducted to explore the interrelationship between teacher beliefs and teaching practices, among which, some (e.g. Johnson, 1992, 1994; Richardson, 1996; Woods, 1996; Attardo & Brown, 2005; Zheng, 2005; Jones & Fong, 2007) have reported the complex interactions between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. Some study findings (e.g. Galton et al., 1980; Desforges & Cockburn, 1987; Fang, 1996; Freeman, 2002; van der Schaaf et al., 2008) posit inconsistency and mismatch between teachers' beliefs and the observed practices in the sense that teachers do less than what they claim (Zheng, 2005) or teachers do differently from their

beliefs. Some research studies (e.g. Graden, 1996; Zheng, 2015) purport that teachers tend to hold contrasting beliefs, which help to explain the discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and their teaching behaviours.

Johnson (1992) conducted a mix-method study to examine and investigate ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. The research results indicated that most of the 30 ESL teachers held explicitly defined beliefs, and their teaching behaviours were in accordance with their theoretical beliefs. Conversely, another study conducted by Jones and Fong (2007) demonstrated a different finding. They interviewed 57 secondary EFL teachers in Macau, many of whom expressed their faith in the effectiveness of CLT in the classroom teaching, while in actual teaching, they failed to apply it due to various constraints. The findings concur with Li's (1998) study, in which Li used survey and interviews to explore Korean secondary EFL teachers' difficulties in implementing CLT, and the results demonstrated that one of the major constraints was the mismatch between the EFL teachers' beliefs and the key features of CLT. Similarly, Choi (2000) surveyed 97 Korea in-service EFL teachers' perceptions and implementation of CLT. The findings showed that there existed discrepancies between teachers' positive perceptions of CLT-oriented policy intent and their actual classroom teaching practices.

Factors and constraints leading to the complex relationships have also been explored by various researchers (such as Fang, 1996; Cimbricz, 2002; Freeman, 2002; Jones & Fong, 2007). Some researchers (e.g. Fang, 1996; Freeman, 2001) claim some external factors also contribute to the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices, such as the teaching context and teaching reality. In addition, some scholars (e.g. Cimbricz, 2002; Zheng, 2005) contend that the high stake tests also attribute to the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. Another explanation of the mismatch between beliefs and practices is the distinction between teachers' espoused theory (theory individuals claim to follow) and their theory-in-use (theories inferred from their actions) (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Espoused theory and theory-in-use may be consistent or inconsistent, and the individuals may or may not aware of the inconsistency (Argyris, 1993), which also explains that teachers sometimes are unwilling or unable to express the

philosophical underpinnings of their teaching, and articulate their beliefs underlying their actions.

The relevant literature on EFL/ESL teachers indicates that there exist significant interactions between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. Due to various factors and constraints, beliefs tend to mismatch teaching practices. As one of the major forces imposed on teachers, curriculum reforms require the teachers to changes in their teaching practices or even their beliefs. Therefore, the literature concerning teacher beliefs and educational reform needs to revisit in order to provide a broad theoretical and empirical context and basis for the present study.

3.5.2 Teacher belief and education reform

Teacher beliefs function as filters through which the new phenomenon and information is perceived and interpreted (Allen, 2002). Beliefs influence teachers' perceptions and interpretations of an educational reform, and decide teachers' attitudes towards and perceptions of it, and eventually impact how and to what extent it is enacted at the classroom level (Pajares, 1992).

Numerous studies (e.g. Zheng, 2005; Water & Vilches, 2008; Ahn, 2009; Orafi & Borg, 2009; Yook, 2010; Zhang & Liu, 2014) have examined the complex interactions between teachers' beliefs and curriculum innovations. For instance, Water and Vilches (2008) examined the implementation of a curriculum reform in basic education in Philippines. Their findings demonstrated that English teachers' beliefs, such as textbook-based instruction, teacher authority, knowledge transmission, were incongruent with the principals of the new constructivist curriculum. Therefore, teachers' beliefs, together with the external constraints such as limited resources, lack of professional training, and school cultures, inhibited teachers from implementing the prescribed changes even though they were willing to. Thus, Nunan (2003) argues that a top-down educational reform may not achieve the intended results if teacher beliefs are inconsistent with the rationales underpinning the innovation.

In a case study to explore secondary English teaching in China, Zheng (2005) found that the teaching pedagogy of the case teachers in his study were shaped by individual, external and situated forces, among which, external forces, such as the intended curriculum and rigid national college entrance examination have affected teachers' teaching most, and accordingly impacted their intrinsic beliefs. Ahn (2009) employed a mix-method study to examine four pre-service Korean EFL teachers' enactment of CLT, and the result indicated that the extent to which the external initiative was enacted depended on teachers' experiences as EFL/ ESL learners, teachers' perceptions about EFL teaching and learning and instructional constraints, such as backwash effects of grammar-based, reading-based tests. The external impact of curriculum change on teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice was also elaborated by Yook (2010).

Some researchers (e.g. Anderson, 1993; Sato, 2002; Hiramatsu, 2005; Careless, 2006; Narari, 2007) have attempted to uncover the rationales (teacher beliefs) underlying teachers' perceptions, that is, what have decided and influenced teachers' perceptions. Their findings highlight that teachers' negative perceptions of a particular reform, e.g. CLT, tend to be caused by the conflicts between teachers' beliefs of language teaching and learning and the key contents of the reform requirements. The literature indicates that (EFL/ESL) teachers' beliefs impact their perceptions of a particular reform, and their perceptions and attitudes are essential to the possible implementation at the classroom level. However, few studies have attempted to explore how teachers' beliefs are challenged by curriculum reforms, and whether teachers change in their teaching and thinking despite the challenges and tensions. Thus, the interrelationships between teachers' beliefs and education reform need further exploration.

3.5.3 Teacher change and curriculum reform

Teacher change is perceived as crucial to curriculum reforms as most curriculum reforms aim to initiate changes in teaching and improve students' learning outcomes. Woods (1996) contends that the conceptions of teacher change and curriculum evolution are intertwined, that is, teacher beliefs, assumption and

knowledge (BAK) influenced their interpretations of a curriculum, while teachers' experiences of delivering it influences their BAK evolution.

The literature review indicates that researchers hold quite different views concerning teacher change. Some claim (e.g. Duffy & Roehler, 1986; Fullan, 1993; Tsui, 2003) that teachers resist change and stick to their old ways in teaching due to the hurt and anxiety brought by the changes, while others (e.g. Guskey, 1986, 2002; Richardson, 1996; Richards et al., 2001) argue that teachers do change, and the changes can be minor adjustments or dramatic developments in their teaching and thinking. Teacher change can occur at cognitive, behavioural and emotional level (Almarza, 1996; Richards et al., 2001). Behavioural change refers to change in what teachers do in the classrooms such as the teaching style or teaching behaviours, whilst cognitive change means changes in teachers' beliefs and understandings (Ferguson, 1993). However, to obtain substantial changes, teachers need to change both in their teaching behaviours and beliefs (Fullan, 2001). Behaviour change does not necessarily give rise to cognitive changes, and the latter does not guarantee behaviour changes, either (Almarza, 1996; Tillema, 2000; Richards, 2001; Borg, 2003, 2006).

However, no consensus is reached on the sequential order of changes in teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice. Some researches (e.g. Bailey, 1992; Golombek, 1998; Fullan, 2006) affirm that changes in beliefs precede changes in teaching practice, while others (e.g. Guskey, 1986, 2002; Prawat, 1992; Richards et al., 2001) insist that only through changing teaching practice and positive teaching outcomes, teachers' beliefs can change. Peterman (1993) and Richardson and Anders (1994) argue that the relationship between change in beliefs and changes in practices is interactive, and synergistic. Bailey (1992) and Jackson (1992) add that teacher change means many things, such as knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, understandings and teaching practices, rather than just beliefs and practices. Teacher change can be motivated voluntarily through self-reflection and evaluation (Richardson & Placier 2001; Guskey, 2002) or introduced by external forces (Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002). Richards et al. (2001) contend that teacher change is multidimensional and can be triggered both by personal factors as well as by the professional contexts in which teachers work.

Hargreaves (1994) highlights the issue of whether it is practical is the key of change for most teachers. Teachers bring their own values and beliefs to teaching which likely predispose them to the selection of particular strategies and the seeking of particular outcomes (Calderhead, 1984). Therefore, Hargreaves (1994) adds it is important to put the particular teachers in the particular contexts in which they work in order to understand teacher change. Shaw et al. (1991) provide a useful framework to understand the holistic picture of teacher change (see Figure 3.6), which constitutes four components, namely, cultural environment, vision, perturbance and commitment. Individual teachers' cultural environment is distinct, and some central cultural elements, such as the support from others, time, money, customs, common beliefs and other resources, have special impact on the process of teacher change. Teachers cannot change without perturbance in their thinking and behaviour; that is, the significant point for teachers to change is when they realise that their current practices might be problematic. Because of one or more perturbance, individual teachers are committed to realise the changes. Teachers in the process of change also need to form a personal vision of what teaching and learning looks like in their classes.

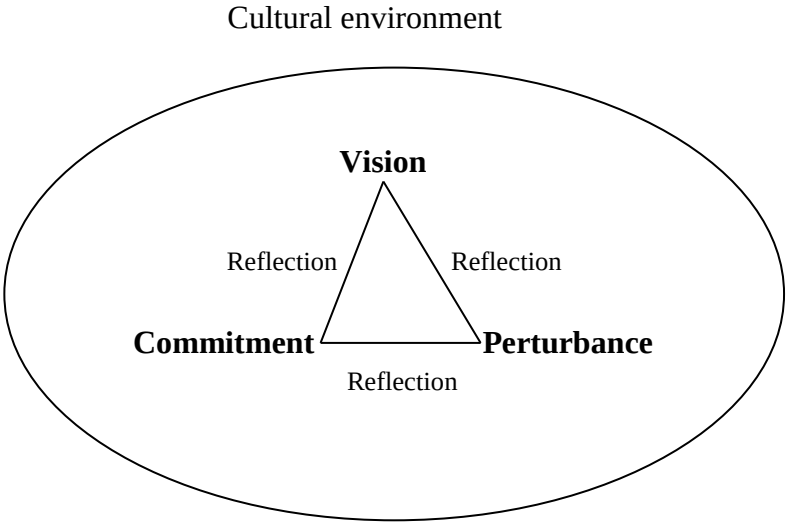

Figure 3.3 A framework for teacher change (adapted from Shaw et al., 1991)

Shaw et al.'s (1991) model helps to analyse how teachers deal with change and how the different factors reconcile in the situated contexts. Zheng's (2005) research findings on the implemented pedagogy of three secondary school English teachers in China resonate with Shaw et al.'s claim. Taking one teacher as an example, Mr Yang' s stated belief about English learning was rote memory, whilst the curriculum reform required the teachers to focus on students' communicative competence. Under the conflict and perturbance, Yang began to reflect his pedagogical knowledge and the teaching method. Together with frequent communication and interaction with his colleagues, Yang began to experience some changes in his thinking and teaching. However, the teaching context and classroom realities, such as, large class, tight teaching schedule and high stake national examinations impeded his changes, and eventually, he became flexible in his teaching and utilized different methods to meet different objectives .

3.5.4 Teacher change and curriculum reform in China

English education has undergone massive top-down reforms at all levels in China in the past decades, and teachers are required to incorporate the reform intents into their belief systems in order to make relevant changes in their teaching practices (Zhang & Liu, 2014). Some scholars (e.g. Zheng & Jiang, 2005; Chen & Chen, 2008; Lü, 2008; Chen, 2009; Si, 2013; Zhang & Liu, 2014; Zheng & Borg, 2014) have begun to explore teachers' beliefs and teacher change in the context of curriculum reforms. Studies (e.g. Zheng & Jiang, 2005; Chen & Chen, 2008; Chen, 2009) have examined CE teachers' beliefs and teacher change in the context of CER at the tertiary level. For instance, Zheng and Jiang's (2005) research investigated three CE teachers' beliefs in the context CER and also how teachers' beliefs influenced their teaching. Their findings revealed that teachers' beliefs demonstrated a tendency of shifting from the traditional knowledge transmitter to the cultivation of students' cultural awareness and communicative capacities, which were in accordance with the requirements of CER. However, the process of teacher change was pragmatic and slow, and teachers would adjust their teachings content and methods according to the classroom activities and teaching contents, rather than exactly follow the curriculum reform. The factors mediating the change process were multiple, such as, the top-down curriculum reform, expectations of

students and institutional leaders, communications among peers, professional development, and teachers' self-reflection (Zheng & Jiang, 2005).

Zhang (2005) conducted a case study to explore six Chinese university teachers' classroom teaching and their strategies. The results indicated teachers' classroom decisions and strategies were based on their personal theories in terms of theoretical knowledge of foreign language teaching and learning and personal beliefs accumulated and developed through years of teaching experiences. The findings confirm that teachers' beliefs decide teachers' teaching practices in terms of classroom organization, teaching methods, design of classroom activities and the roles of teachers and students. Xie et al. (2006) also elaborated the interactive relationship between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, and they suggested teachers' beliefs could not be fully realized in the classrooms due to various factors and constraints, such as the overemphasized teaching outcomes.

Chen and Chen (2008) contend that CE teachers' beliefs do not match their teaching practices. Their study findings demonstrated that most of the 35 teachers (76%) believed that language was a tool for communication, and the relationships between teachers and students were cooperative. Classroom teaching should be student-centred and communicative, which was consistent with the requirements of CECR 2007, and also resonated with Zheng and Jiang's (2005) findings. However, in actual classroom teaching, 85% teachers perceived their roles as knowledge transmitters and language demonstrators and students as knowledge recipients. Therefore, Chen and Chen (2008) concluded teacher' beliefs were inconsistent with their teachings, thus, CE classroom teaching and learning did not change according to the national intent. Based on the requirements of CECR 2007, Lü (2008) suggested some ways to change teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in the context of curriculum reform, such as, a) change teachers' beliefs in the teaching experiences; b) change teachers' beliefs through observation and simulation; c) change teachers' beliefs and their practices through infiltration of social culture. To ensure teachers develop beliefs consistent with the national policy, Chen (2009) proposed 'the College English Teachers' Core Belief System' based on the CECR 2007 to examine CE teachers' beliefs, and contended that the accordance of

teachers' beliefs with the policy intent was the key to the success of the national reform.

Therefore, Chinese scholars have begun to realize the importance of teachers' beliefs in their teaching practices, and the mediating role of beliefs in the enactment of curriculum reforms. However, empirical studies are found limited in both the research content and the research methods, particularly those grounded in the context of curriculum reforms. Firstly, researchers have explored the impact of curriculum reforms on teachers' beliefs, but the relationship between the reform and teachers' beliefs needs further exploration, such as, how beliefs influence teachers' perceptions and interpretation, and how teachers translate the reform policy into classroom activities based on their perceptions of the policy. Secondly, the research methods utilized to examine teachers' beliefs in the context of curriculum change are either questionnaires (e.g. Chen & Chen, 2008) or interviews (e.g. Zheng & Jiang, 2005) or theoretical reviews and assumptions (e.g. Lü, 2008; Chen, 2009), which are insufficient to expose the complexity of teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices and the interrelationship between teachers' change and curriculum reforms. Moreover, in the literature, little is known about 'the interplay between EFL teachers' beliefs, the school context and broader sociocultural realities within which teachers' beliefs are inherently situated in China' (Zhang & Liu, 2014, p. 190). To fill the gaps and overcome the limitations, this study employed multiple research instruments, such as analysis of documents, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to delve into teacher's beliefs, the relations between beliefs and practices, and teacher change in the context of curriculum change. Interviews with students and administrators were also conducted to triangulate findings from teachers' interviews and classroom observations. Multi-level factors (i.e. sociocultural, institutional and individual level) facilitating or inhibiting teacher change were highlighted and analysed, and issues concerning teachers' enactments or non-enactment of a national policy were addressed (see Chapter 8)

3.6 Tracing curriculum enactment in the process of change

The relevant literature indicates that some scholars tend to utilize a combination of policy enactment and other theories to explore the complexities involved in enacting education reforms. For instance, Koyama (2011) tracing policy process through networks and actor-network theory, Grimaldi (2012) and Hardy (2014) exploring policy enactment through a Bourdieuian approach, while Chen et al. (2014) combining policy enactment theory with 'the emergent materiality of policy' (Heimans 2012, p. 313). Heimans (2014) argues that enactment can be 'taken further, expanded upon, turned upside down and cut into a new space of being' and some cuts are suggested. Ball et al. (2012) also claim that two theories might be better than one to document and explain the complex phenomena.

This study attempts to marry theories of change with theories of policy enactment to explore the complexities and changes involved in the process of enacting a systemic curriculum reform at the classroom level. On the one hand, policies can affect institutions and produce second order effects and even change schools and universities. Policies may also restructure the subsequent political process once they are enacted, and they might also encounter institutional micro-politics, and struggle for institutional attention (Skocpol, 1992) in order to gain the focus of institution and being realized. On the other hand, institutions have to make some changes and adjustments in terms of structure, procedure and even culture in order to realize and sustain the mandated changes. As the frontline implementers, teachers need to change in their practice and beliefs and values to enact the planned changes. Therefore, educational reforms tend to be adjusted repeatedly as they are introduced and work their way through school / university environment (Supovitz & Weinbaun, 2008) and teachers' cognitive process, whilst schools / universities and individual teachers are required to make some changes and adjustments to ensure and sustain the policy initiatives.

Furthermore, given the present study is situated in a Chinese university, layers of contexts need to be illuminated. Multi-level policy actors are involved in the process of the enactment, that is, from government to university principal, then to heads of departments, and then to teachers. Therefore, based on the relevant literature review and the specific characteristics of hieratical layers of contexts at

tertiary level in China, an initial model of factors affecting teachers' perceptions and enactment of external reforms has been developed (see Figure 3.5), which serves as the tentative conceptual framework to provide theoretical support in terms of the research methodology and guidance for the data collection and data analysis.

3.7 Summary

This Chapter has highlighted the main aspects involved in education changes and how those aspects interact to initiate some newness in educational reforms. In order to illuminate factors influencing the enactment of educational changes, theories of change and policy enactment concerning educational reform are analysed, specifically including Rogers' diffusion of innovations (2003), Fullan's theories of educational change (2007), complexity theory, Supovitz's (2008) theory of iterative refraction and Ball et al.'s (2012) theory of policy enactment respectively. Concerning the complexity and scope of policy innovation and policy enactment, a combination of these theories tends to be appropriate to conceptualize and to offer useful perspectives for exploring the complexities involved in the process of education changes. Given teachers' major role in enacting curriculum reform, the literature concerning teacher change and curriculum reform is also reviewed, particularly in the context of education reforms in China, and gaps and limitations in the literature are identifies. In the light of these arguments, an initial model of factors affecting teachers' perceptions and enactment of external reform has been developed, which serves as the initial conceptual framework for the study to provide theoretical support for the design of research methodology and research methods and guidance for the data collection and data analysis, which will be the major concerns in Chapter 4.

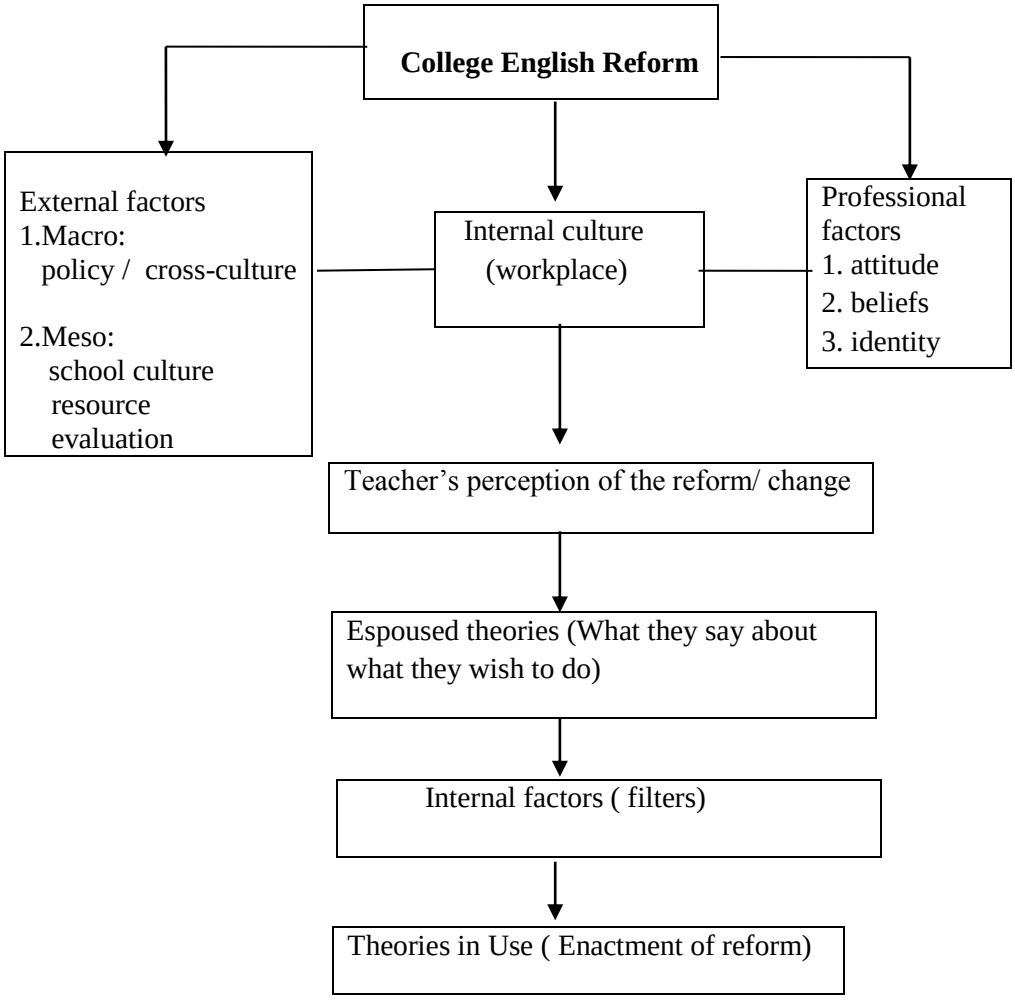

Figure 3.4 An Initial Conceptual Framework for Reviewing Teachers' Enactment of External Reform Initiatives

Chapter Four Research methodology and methods

4.1 Introduction

Choosing a suitable methodological approach to address the research questions is one of the most important things for a researcher (Cohen et al., 2011), because whatever approaches are adopted reflects a particular view of culture, form of standpoint, and ultimately represents a particular perspective and social interest. In this chapter, the methodological literature is discussed and the research methods are justified to highlight the research design in relation to the research questions.

First of all, this chapter elaborates the research design and establishes the methodological approach. Next, the chapter describes the informants and settings, and justifies the selection of case study informants. The following part illustrates the processes of data collection and data analysis, and also the relevant analytical techniques and measures utilized to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings. Finally, ethical issues are discussed.

4.2 Why an interpretivism paradigm?

Paradigm is a general perspective, and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world to guide the researchers (Guba, 1990; Patton, 2002). Our worldview, whether scientific or not, is conditioned by a prevailing paradigm or model (Kuhn, 1996), which is the basic belief system based on our ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 2001).

Ontology, as Cohen et al. (2011) contend, refers to 'assumptions about the nature of reality and the nature of things', and the major question that ontology intends to explain is 'social reality external to individuals – imposing itself on their consciousness from without – or is it the product of individual consciousness' (p. 5). The ontological assumption gives rise to the relevant epistemological assumptions. Epistemology addresses the principles and rules by which we decide whether and

how social phenomena can be known and how knowledge can be demonstrated (Mason, 2002, p.16). Epistemology is concerned with the bases of knowledge including the form of knowledge, how to acquire knowledge, how to communicate knowledge to others, who can be a knower and what criteria can be adopted to establish knowledge (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Both ontological and epistemological views impact our methodological considerations, and these, in turn, influence the choices of instrumentation and data collection (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, 'the way we think the world is (ontology) influences what we think can be known about it (epistemology); how we think it can be investigated (methodology and research techniques); and the kinds of theories we think can be constructed about it' (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 197) (see Figure 4.1). Consistency should be achieved among the ontological and epistemological assumptions and methodological considerations and the instrumentations as method and theory cannot be treated as two separate entities of social science (Danermark et al., 2002).

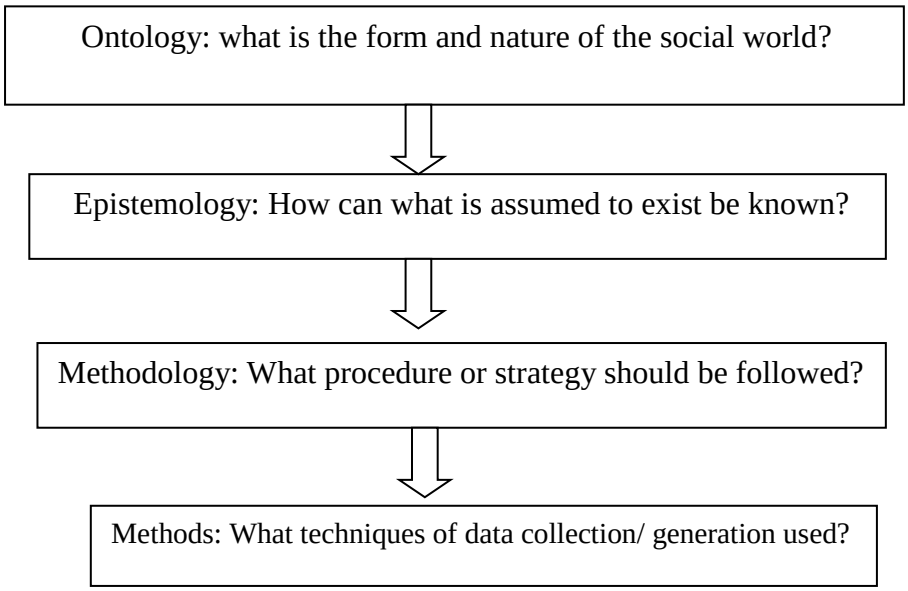

Figure 4.1 Methodological levels (developed from Scott & Morrison, 2006)

In the literature, there are various means to categorize the paradigms. Guba and Lincoln (1998) highlight four branches in the paradigms, namely, positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism; while an alternative to understand a paradigm is that it includes five categories, that is, positivism, interpretivism, postmodernism, critical realism and pragmatism. Cohen et al. (2007, 2011) categorize a paradigm into two major groups, namely, positivism and anti-positivism / interpretivism. The major difference between them is that positivism mainly utilizes quantitative and experimental methods to examine hypothetical-deductive generalizations, whereas interpretivism chiefly uses a qualitative and naturalistic approach to inductively understand human experiences in the context-specific settings (Cohen et al., 2011).

Positivism is based upon the view that 'the natural sciences provide the only foundation for true knowledge and that the methods, techniques and modes of operation of the natural sciences offer the best framework for investigation of the social world' (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p.21). According to the relevant literature (e.g. Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 2000; Scott & Morrison, 2007; Cohen et al., 2011), the specific positivistic assumptions of positivism can be summarised as follow. Firstly, the proponents of positivism hold that all genuine knowledge is based on sense experience and can only be advanced by means of observation and experiment; and social researchers are external observers of social reality. Secondly, positivism focuses on uncovering the causal connections and universal laws governing and manipulating human behaviours, thus, generalizations or similar conclusions can be established regardless of whom conducting the research and handling the data. Thirdly, positivists insist that once being correctly observed and identified, human behaviours in the future can be predicted under similar circumstances. Fourthly, researchers adopting a positivist approach tend to concentrate on a large amount of data and prefer quantitative research methods. Thus, the positivist researchers intend to establish a universal theory to account for human and social behaviours.

On the contrary, interpretivism or anti-positivism is set in the binary opposition to positivism. The basic tenet of interpretivism is that social actors negotiate meanings about their activity in the world. The social world should be observed from inside

through the direct experience of the people rather than be observed objectively from the outside. Based on the relevant literature (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 2001, 2005; Patton, 2002; Scott & Morrison, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007, 2011; Morrison, 2012), the significant features of interpretivism can be summarized as follows:

- For interpretivists, reality is not 'out there' as an amalgam of external phenomena waiting to be uncovered as 'facts', but a construct in which people understand reality in different ways (Morrison, 2012, p. 20), thus realities are multiple and mind-dependent. Interpretivist researchers identify themselves as part of, rather than separated from the research topics they investigated, therefore, there is an interactive relationship between the researcher and the 'researched'.

- Interpretivists view the research participants as the research subjects, and explore the meanings of events and phenomena from their perspective. In addition, interpretivists perceive that individuals are constructors of their own actions. Thus, to understand a certain social action (e.g. teaching practices, curriculum enactment), the researchers need discern the meanings underlying actions and get into individuals' cognitive process and understand the subjective meanings of the actions by grasping their beliefs, motives, and desires.

- Interpretivism emphasises on exploring the continuous process of a phenomenon in its natural settings. That is to say, actions and activities are not only consequences of psychological attributes such as attitudes or personalities, but also determined by the external social factors such as social structures. The process of meaning construction is a continuous changing process owing to the internal and external factors.

- Context and situations are fluid and changing rather than fixed and static in interpretivists' view. Events and behaviours evolve over time and are largely influenced by the social contexts and situations. Thus, a phenomenon should be explored in its natural state without the intervention of or manipulation by the researcher.

- There cannot be an objective reality which exists irrespective of the meanings constructed by human beings, thus, the data collected and analysed in the interpretivist research tend to be qualitative rather than quantitative.

  To explore the complex process of curriculum enactment in a specific Chinese university, in particular, the individual teachers' perceptions and practices of the intended changes and teachers' changes / no-changes, a qualitative approach using an interpretive paradigm tend to be the most appropriate. The specific reasons are:

- From an interpretivist perspective, it is of great significance to understand the meanings that constitute this action. This view provides a theoretical basis for the current study to investigate Chinese CE teachers' enactment of the intended changes at the classroom level. It justifies the necessities and importance of exploring teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes underlying their teaching practices, and then to identify the gaps (if any) between teachers' perceptions and enactment of the curriculum reform.

- Interpretivism focuses on exploring the complicated process of a phenomenon in its natural settings. In particular, interpretivists hold that actions and behaviours are not only consequences of personal psychological attributes but also determined by the external social factors. This view highlights that teachers' classroom instructions are not only influenced by their personal and professional attributes, but also by the external initiatives and situated contexts, which happen to be one of the major research purposes in this study. Exploring the phenomenon in the natural setting also provides theoretical underpinnings for this study to observe what teachers do in their natural classroom settings, and to probe into the teachers' cognitive world to explore their rationales for their teaching actions.

- Interpretivism holds the point that situations are changing rather than static, and behaviours are influenced by the context, which provides the rationale for the assumption that teachers' enactment of curriculum innovation tends to be affected by the changing Chinese higher education policy and the specific requirements of the individual university. Simultaneously, teachers themselves might change in

terms of identity, belief and teaching practices while being situated in the context of education and curriculum changes.

- The interpretivists tend to employ qualitative approach to collect data. One major feature of the qualitative data is 'naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings' (Miles et al., 2014, p.11). Particularly, qualitative data take the local context into account (ibid), which makes it possible and sound-grounded to explore curriculum enactment in a specific university (University L). Another feature of qualitative data is their richness and holism and thick description, which indicates the potentiality to reveal the complexity of a phenomenon, such as the complicated enactment process of CECR 2007 in University L.

4.3 Why case studies approach?

Case study is 'an in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon' (Gall et al., 1996, p.545). Yin (2006) argues that case study is proper for interpretivist qualitative research, because it is based on real life experience rather than what occurs in laboratory or clinical trials, which also echoes in Johnson's (1994) emphasis that case study tends to use multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Thus, case studies provide unique examples of real people in real situations, and make ideas more clearly than simply presenting abstract theories or principles (Gerring, 2007).

The significant features of case studies tend to meet the needs of exploring individual teachers' perceptions and implementations of a specific curriculum reform and to account for the impacts that the reform has imposed. Specifically, four CE teachers are identified as the cases in this study, that is, collectively through the four teachers to understand how a top-down curriculum reform is perceived and enacted in their classroom teachings. The appropriateness of case study in the present research is as follows:

Firstly, case study allows the researcher to 'observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of cause and effect' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 22). According to Yin (2009), case studies are differentiated from other research methodologies when a researcher purposely intends to cover contextual conditions, particularly, when the researcher wants to explore a phenomenon in relation to the detailed and complex interactions and process within a social context (Hartley, 2004). Furthermore, social contexts and situations are fluid and changing rather than fixed and stable; events and behaviour evolve over time and are richly affected by the contexts (Cohen et al., 2000; David, 2006). The current research is carried out in the context of higher education reforms in China. CECR is not an isolated education reform for it is situated in a wider context, which is constantly changing politically, socially and economically. Therefore, case study enables the researcher to generate a holistic picture of the enactment of the reform nationwide, and particularly an in-depth view of its enactment in a specific university.

Secondly, case study approach allows the researcher to be involved in the case as a result of interaction over a period of time with the informants. This enables the researcher to observe an object or event form his / her own perspective, and also from the perspectives of the participants over time, to portray what a phenomenon is like in a particular situation, to gain deeper insights while interpreting and analysing the data, and to catch the close-up reality and thick description of the participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation (Stake, 1995). Hence, the case study approach provides the researcher with a more thorough and in-depth understanding of the informants' realities, such as the teachers' perceptions and enactment of the intended changes, the impacts and challenges they have encountered and the changes they have experienced.

In addition, case study recognizes that many variables operate in a single case, thus, to catch the implications of these variables requires the use of more than one instrument for data collection and many sources of evidence, and multiple strategies for in-depth analysis of a single phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, 2007; Gerring, 2004; Kumar, 2005; Jones et al., 2006). As Yin (2006) argues, multiple data resources may be used in case study to provide different logics and evidence,

and to develop issues of validity (Hartley, 2004, p.24). Gerring (2004) contends that case study allows for the generation of a greater number of hypotheses and insights than a thinner set of empirical data across a large number of units. Therefore, case study provides the possibility for this study to investigate teachers' beliefs and practice in detail, and help to illustrate the gaps between their beliefs and behaviours, to explore the trajectory of curriculum enactment through multi-level stakeholders, and to present a tentative model to explore systematically the complex process of curriculum enactment.

However, the very complexity of a case can make analysis difficult, since various events, variables and outcomes in a case are often interwoven, and it is difficult for the researcher to develop connections among the data, and simultaneously not lose the sight of the whole. In addition, case studies have often been challenged for depending on data that lacks in reliability and validity when it comes to providing researchers with an acceptable research conclusion. As Flyvbjerg (2006) points out, some scholars argue that case study cannot allow generalizability grounded on a single case, indicating that such a process may be selective, biased, personal, subjective and illogical, therefore such perspectives raise issues of trustworthiness regarding of case study method. To tackle these concerns, Hamel et al. (1993), Stake (1995) and Yin (2006) highlight the uniqueness and specificity of case study not as weakness in method, but strengths the researcher may exploit as specific issues can be made visible in thick descriptions. With regard to the issue of the selection of information in case studies, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that case studies can replace quantity with quality and intensity, that is, 'significance rather than frequency is a hallmark of case studies, offering the researcher an insight into the real dynamics of situations and people' (p. 294). Concerning the limited generalizability of case studies, Robson (2002) and Yin (2009) claim that case studies tend to be analytic rather than statistical generalization. Analytic generalization is concerned with the contributions to the expansion and generalization of theory, which can help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena or situations. The connection between the case and the wider theory is logical rather than statistical. The bias in case studies (i.e. case studies simply being fulfilment of researchers' initial suspicions with selectively gathered and used data or researchers' personality and role may affect the research process)

can be avoided by addressing 'reflexivity, respondent checks or checks by external reviewers of the data and inferences /conclusions drawn' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 295).

As Hamel et al. (1993) claim, '…case study has proven to be in complete harmony with the three key words that characterize any qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining' (p.39). The current research focused on 'describing, understanding and explaining' the grassroots teachers' perceptions and enactment of changes in CECR 2007, and challenges they experienced in a specific university in China, and then to identify to what extent and how teachers change or non-change at the classroom level, and the possible reasons influencing the process of enacting a top-down external initiative.

4.3.1 Selection of the site for case studies

The first criterion of selecting cases is to maximize what we can learn. As our time and access to the fieldwork is limited, we need to pick cases which are easy to access and hospitable to our inquiry (Stake, 1995). Of course, the uniqueness and contexts of the cases need to be considered carefully, for which may facilitate or restrain the research. Given these criteria, University L, a key national university, is selected. It is located in northeast China, and offering multi-disciplinary subjects in engineering, science, liberal arts, management, economics, law and agriculture; that is, most of the students are learning CE, English for non-English majors.

To understand University L well in terms of culture, structure and student in-take, it is necessary to illustrate the admission system in China. According to the admission system, there are five stages in the undergraduate recruitment process. The first stage is for the 'first level' (i. e. the most prestigious) universities to choose their students based on the nationwide Entrance Examination taken in June each year. After the best students are chosen by those universities, the second level universities select theirs, and then the third level universities. Students selected during the first, second and third stages are all eligible to do BA degrees, while those selected in the fourth and fifth stages are eligible only for lower-level associate degrees. University L is entitled to recruit students in the second and third

stages. Thus, the students are all expected to obtain four-year BA degrees. However, their scores in the Entrance Examination are a little higher than average as a whole, which suggests that the students in this university are considered more than average in their all-round knowledge. As the admission process also sets requirements for students' English scores, thus, students' English proficiency in University L is also considered to be above the average level.

As a key national technical university, most of the graduates are expected to find employment in big cities, large companies or joint ventures after graduation; therefore, English communicative ability is crucial for their job-hunting and future career promotion. To meet all these demands, CE teaching in this university has experienced several changes. The students are now re-allocated into Level A classes and Level B classes according to their English scores in the Entrance Examination. Students in Level A classes have higher English scores than those in Level B. For instance, there are 100 students majoring in Software, and they are divided into two classes, namely Level A and Level B, based on their English grades rather than their majors. When they attend CE courses, 45 students with higher English scores are in Level A class and 55 with lower English scores in Level B class.

University L was not selected as one of the 180 experimental universities to experiment the CER from 2004 to 2006. Viewing the relevant literature, we can see the research of curriculum reforms in the non-experimental universities is relatively rare, which is one of the important rationales for this study. In addition, as a staff member who had worked for over 15 years in the University, the researcher has built strong relationships with the staff. Thus, it is relatively easy for the researcher to gain access to the university, department and the individual teachers for data collection, and obtain support from the administrators and the potential participants. The next section will discuss the selection of participants at the different levels.

4.3.2 Selection of the participants

The sampling technique utilized in this study is purposive sampling, that is, to select 'information-rich cases for study in depth' (Patton, 2002, p. 230). To ensure

the enactment of a top-down curriculum reform, the administrators in the university and department are expected to take the responsibility of bridging the policy and the contextual reality and help the frontline teachers apply the intended changes. The teachers and students, who are at the end of the policy enactment process, may have a different story to tell concerning the policy enactment. Thus, layers of policy actors were selected, namely the administrators at university- and department-level, the teachers and the students.

Administrators

Two institutional administrators were selected; one was the university-level administrator in charge of teaching and learning of the whole university and the other was the head of the English department, who was in charge of CE teaching and learning in the department. The purpose and rationale to select these two leaders was to explore their understandings and interpretations of the national curriculum reform, and to provide the justifications for the university- and department-level regulations concerning the enactment of the top-down policy intent. In the process of policy enactment, the middle managers played a dual role, that is, on the one hand, they were the intermediaries bridging the national policy and the grassroots teachers and responsible to reinterpret and re-contextualize the abstract policy text into the situated practical actions. On the other hand, they were policy actors and implementers to execute the policy at the institutional and departmental level.

Teachers

Four teachers were purposefully selected as the cases in this research. Table 1 presents the profile of the participant teachers.

- one teacher with less than 5 years of teaching,
- one with between 5 and 10 years of teaching,
- one between 10 and 15 years of teaching
- one more than 15 years of teaching.

The rationale behind the selection was that CE has witnessed three reforms since it began in 1998. The teachers of more than 15 years teaching had experienced all these reforms, whilst the teachers of 10-15 years experienced two or three times, the teachers of 5-10 years twice, and teachers of less than 5 years teaching only once. Through examining their perceptions and implementation of CECR 2007, the specific challenges and impacts of the national CER can be traced. Furthermore, cross comparisons among them can be drawn on to understand more explicitly about the overall teachers' enactment of curriculum changes regardless of their ages and teaching experiences. At the beginning, the researcher decided to choose one male teacher, who was also the only male CE teacher on duty. Unfortunately, he asked for one year leave and went overseas to conduct a joint project. Though male and female teachers might apply different teaching practices at the classroom level, the differences or similarities between them are not the focus of the research, and also the majority CE teachers are female. Thus, a female teacher, who had similar teaching experiences and age, was selected to take place of that male teacher.

Thus, four females participated in the study (see Table 4.1). Two of them had obtained MA in English language and teaching, one got BA in English and MA in management, and the other had BA. Their ages ranged from 28 to 46, and their teaching experiences varied from 3 to 20 years.

Participants	Gender	Age	Years of Teaching	Education Qualifications
Gao	F	46	20	B.A. MA
Zhao	F	38	12	B.A.
Zhang	F	35	9	B.A., M.A.
LI	F	28	3	B.A., M.A.

Table 4.1 the profiles of the participant teachers

Students

Four focus groups of students were chosen, that is, one group from each teacher's classes, with six students each group (n=24). The disciplines of the 24 students covered both Arts and Sciences, both Level A and Level B. They were recommended by their English teachers with the major criterion that they are willing to talk, and simultaneously from different classes or majors, that is, to ensure that the student participants can provide diversities and varieties concerning their experiences of English learning. However, the students who volunteered to participate in the interviews were most male students, and one reason of that might be that there were more male students in University L, since it was a technical university. To increase the varieties of the data and ensure female students' voices be heard, with the efforts of teachers and the researchers' repetitive explanations of the research purposes, eventually more female students were willing to participate. The ratio of male and female students turned out to be 1.4:1, which almost matched the ratio of the male and female students in this university. Altogether, 10 female students and 14 male students were engaged in the interviews. Details of the participant students are shown in Table 4.2.

	Who's students	Major	Level
Group 1	Gao	Accounting	Level A
Group 2	Zhao	Marketing	Level B
Group 3	Zhang	Computer Science	Level A
Group 4	Li	Engineering	Level B

Table 4.2 the profiles of interviewed students

4.4 Data Collection

The overall data collection process constituted six major steps, namely,

Step 1: review of documents;
Step 2: interviews of the administrators;
Step 3: semi-structured interviews with the teachers and students;
Step 4: pre-observation interviews with the teachers and students;
Step 5: classroom observations;
Step 6: post-observation interviews with the teachers and students.

However, the six steps of data collection were not order-fixed and separated, but interwoven and overlapping, that is, issues emerged from the following stages might lead to revisiting the previous ones, and searching for possible explanations in the next phases. For instance, after examining the national and institutional policies (the first step), the researcher interviewed the university-level administrators. As some of their responses were in disagreement with the national changes, thus, the researcher would re-examine the relevant documents and found out the details of the mismatches, and in the next round interview, the researcher would probe into the rationales underpinning the discrepancies. Similar experiences happened in the teachers' and students' interviews and classroom observations. Therefore, the processes of data collection were cumulative and continuous unless the sufficient data were collected to illuminate the research questions and research purpose.

Multiple data collection methods were employed in order to obtain a multi-perspective picture of the reality. The specific research methods used in this study were summarized in Table 4.3 on the basis of the relevant research questions.

Research questions	Analysis of documents	Interviews	Classroom observations
1. What are the changes the College English Reform in China intended to achieve?	√		
2. Are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions of the changes and the intended changes?	√	√	
3. At the classroom level, are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions and enactment?		√	√
4. What are the issues in the enactment of the curriculum reform, in particular, the Chinese model of CLT?	√	√	√

Table 4.3 Methods used in this study on the basis of the research questions

4.4.1 Analysis of documents

Purpose

The purpose of analysing the documents is to address the first two research questions, that is, 'What are the changes the College English Reform in China intended to achieve' and 'Are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions of the changes and the intended changes?' To answer these two questions involves collecting and analyzing data produced from interpretation of the documents and records relevant to a particularly study (Payne & Payne, 2004). According to Cohen et al. (2011), the documents can include public records, such as government documents, political records, syllabuses, and textbooks, and also private documents, i.e. school records, personal journals, memoirs and teaching logs.

Rationale

Review of the national CE reform documents provided the context of the reform, and also the reference for the following interviews and classroom observations. With regard to the problems being explored, different combinations of various levels of documents were applied. The documents from the institution provided the contextual actions and measures taken in the university and enlightened how the intended changes were interpreted; how and to what extent they were contextualized and re-contextualized in a specific university; and how the situated culture, resources and relevant leadership facilitated or prohibited the enactment of the policy. Teachers' teaching plans and teaching logs provided some clues of teacher's professional beliefs and the rationale underpinning their classroom instruction, which in turn helped to explore whether there were any gaps between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices.

Analysis of the documents at the different levels, together with other research methods, such as interviews and classroom observations, helped the researcher to explore the trajectory of the national policy enactment at the classroom level, and to highlight the issues underlying the complex process.

Selection of documents

The documents utilized in the present study included,

- the national College English Syllabuses 1986, 1999, and the revised College English Curriculum 2007, the revised College English textbooks, the old and new CET examination paper;
- university and department-level rules and regulations to enact the national policy intents, and
- teachers' teaching plans and teaching logs.

The documents from the national policy, such as the syllabuses, textbooks and the CET paper, helped the researcher to explore the national policy within the whole scope in terms of what to teach (teaching materials and focus), how to teach(teaching methods) and how to assess (testing and assessment).

Procedures of document collection

Data from review of the documents were collected at the different levels concerning CER, including the national policy document, the institutional regulations, and the frontline teachers' teaching plans and teaching logs. Specifically, the documents at the national level, namely, the national curriculum, the revised CET and the revised CE textbooks were collected first, and then the institutional level regulations with regard to the adoption of CER were gathered, and then the grassroots teachers' teaching plans and blogs were examined. The process of collecting the document data was flexible and overlapped, rather than fixedly in order to ensure the data gathered could reflect the possible real and holistic picture of CER at the national level, the institutional level and the individual level.

In order to 'map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint' (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.233), interviews and classroom observations were also applied to triangulate the data collected through analysis of the documents.

4.4.2 Interviews

Purpose

The aim of interviews is to address the second, the third and the fourth research questions, namely, 'Are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions of the changes and the intended changes?', 'At the classroom level, are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions and enactment?', and 'What are the issues in the enactment of the curriculum reform, in particular, the Chinese model of CLT?'. To answer these questions, it is essential to explore teacher beliefs and their cognitive process about EFL teaching and learning, which are likely to be highlighted through the in-depth interviews of the participant teachers. Moreover, teachers' perceptions and interpretations of the national curriculum reform tend to be affected by the specific situated contexts and the relevant institutional regulations, thus interviews of the university- and department-level administrators were also conducted. In addition, the interviews of students were used to verify and validate

what the teachers said in the interviews and what they did in the classrooms in order to triangulate the interview data obtained from teachers and administrators.

Rationale

Interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more, that is, directed by one in order to get information from the others (Lincoln & Guba, 2001; Kvale, 2007). Through interviews, data can be collected through direct verbal interactions between individuals in order to understand what people think from their speech (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, interviews are often utilized to explore the participants' insider perspectives on their thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Silverman, 2009).

In the literature, three categories of interviews are generally identified, namely, unstructured interview, semi-structured interview and structured interview. Specifically, in unstructured interviews, the interviewees are allowed to address their own interests and concerns without any limitations imposed by the interviewer, whilst in structured interviews, the interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to obtain data within the designed scope (Cohen et al., 2000), and simultaneously, the interviewee may raise issues relevant to them during the process. Considering the 'fitness of purpose', semi-structured interview was employed in this study. That is, there was general consistency in the asked questions / topics of each participant, but also there was some freedom and flexibility for the researcher to bring about new questions and probe into the relevant topics with regard to the responses of the interviewees (Kvale, 2007).

Interviews of the students employed in the present study were group interviews, which were different from the individual interviews of the administrators and teachers. Group interview is an interview with a small group of people, typically six to eight people, on a specific topic for one-half to two hours (Patton, 1990, p. 335). Group interviews can bring together people with varied opinions or representatives of different collectivises (Cohen et al., 2011), and have the potentials to develop discussions among the group, thus, yielding a wide range of responses (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987).

Strategy

● Recruitment of the participants

Having worked in the research setting for about 15 years, the researcher has very close relationship with most of the teachers and administrators in the work place. However, this apparent advantage also tended to be one of the barriers to prohibit the administrators and teachers from participating in the study. Persuading the administrators to participate in the interview was not hard, but they demonstrated some reluctance in being audio-taped, for they worried that they might articulate some inappropriate words concerning the national policy and the efforts the university made to enact the national policy. The researcher repeatedly explained to them that this was a personal study and the data would never be published or used in public without their permission; in addition, their names and the name of the university would never appear. Eventually, they agreed and got ready to be interviewed, but they insisted that they should read the interview protocol beforehand.

The teachers seemed nervous to be engaged in classroom observations as they thought their teachings were evaluated and judged. Therefore, the researcher explained in great detail about the purpose of the study to the teachers, and asked them sincerely to provide some help and support to the personal study. The teachers have known the researcher for years, and they all knew that the researcher was considerate, friendly, helpful and sincere. Thus, the mutual understandings and trust between the researcher and the participants overcame the teachers' anxieties and worries. The teachers eventually agreed to be interviewed and observed in their classroom teaching, and they even promised to present their thinking and teachings in complete honesty, expecting some suggestions and advice from the researcher as the researcher was one of the most popular teachers in University L.

However, concerning the interviews of their students, the teachers demonstrated worries in case that the students would provide some negative comments on and responses to their teachings. Thus, the researcher assured them that the interviews of students would be used only as information concerning the classroom practices, students learning experiences, and students' reflections about the revised textbooks and CET, rather than evaluations of their teaching. Eventually, all the participant

teachers agreed to call on their students to participate in the interviews. To explain explicitly the purpose and the criteria of the participating students, the researcher went to the teachers' classes several times and explained to the students face to face about the study. Thus, the student participants were selected among the volunteers and got ready for the interviews.

● Designing the interview protocol

To ensure the data collected from the interviews were consistent with the research purpose and also flexible enough to probe into some responses of the participants, the present research employed semi-structured interviews to explore participants' perceptions and behaviours regarding of a top-down national policy in terms of what to teach, how to teach and how to assess. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer prepared an interview guide beforehand to 'ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed' (Patton, 2002, p.343). Therefore, the questions to be examined in the interviews of the current study were listed in the interview protocol. However, as I have done, the researcher was not limited to follow the questions in a fixed and particular order and could probe into the areas that arose from the interviewees themselves during the interview interactions.

● Choosing suitable place and language in the interviews

Concerning the interview time, the place and language used, the researcher left the choices to the participants in order to promote more valid information in their convenient time and comfortable places. Eventually, most of the interviews were conducted in my office, and some in a café on the campus, and one even in my car. I prepared some fruits and drinks to create kind of natural and pleasant atmosphere for the participants. Furthermore, to avoid the interview questions being too threatening, some general questions were asked at the beginning, such as 'How many hours classes are you teaching now?', 'Which level of students are you teaching now? '. Of courses, the interview questions for the administrators, the teachers and the students were different. Subsequent interviews were conversational in order to enable the participants to discuss some topics further and probe deeper what they had mentioned. Each interview lasted about one hour (students interviews were a little longer), and was conducted in Chinese (mandarin)

so that the participants felt comfortable and free to articulate what they wanted to express.

●Issues addressed in group interviews of students

Group interviews have some advantages, such as rich data, low cost and time-saving, but there are some weaknesses in the method, i.e. the limited number of questions to address, the problem of taking notes (Kvale, 2007), and the possible domination of one or some respondents. To overcome these disadvantages, some issues were addressed before and during conducting the group interview of students. First, the group participants were provided specific guidance of the interview in terms of the nature and the intended outcomes of the research. Second, one more student from the same class was employed to document the responses, to operate the recorder, and to reflect her / his overall impressions of each group interview. Third, the researcher mediated among the participants, that is, to prevent specific participants dominating the interview and to ensure that all the members were involved in the interviews (Flick, 2002). Fourth, the researcher attempted to manage the interview process to ensure that the prioritised questions were asked within the agreed time.

Procedure of the Interviews

Two pilot interviews were conducted with two PhD students from the University of Nottingham and two teachers from University L to test the interview protocol, the approximate lasting time of the interview, and also to examine the recording equipment. The schedules of the main interviews were composed of five stages (see Table 4.4). All the interviews were conducted in Chinese (mandarin), and occasionally with some English words. Under the agreement of the participants, all the interviews were audio-taped, and notes were taken simultaneously and summarized afterwards.

Stage	Time	Participants	Purpose
1st pilot	Oct. 2012	2 PhD students	To test the interview procedure
2nd Pilot	Nov. 2012	2 teachers from University L	
Stage1	Nov. 2012	2 administrators	To obtain an overall profile of College English teaching and learning, and also to gain permission to conduct teachers' interviews and classroom observation.
Stage2	Dec.2012-. Jan. 2013	4 teachers 4 groups of 24 students	To explore teachers' perceptions of the intended changes and the rationale underlying their classroom teaching
Stage3	Jan. 2013	2 administrators, 4 teachers, 4 groups of 24 students	To find out the possible reasons influencing teachers' teaching practices and the possible reasons leading to the mismatches between what they said and what they did
Stage4	March-April, 2013	2 administrators and 4 teachers	To validate the findings
Stage5	March-April, 2014	4 teachers	To validate the findings

Table 4.4 Interview schedule

All together around 60 hours' interview data were collected, and the transcription of the data were conducted immediately after each interview; issues emerged were probed in the follow-up interviews. However, as the interview data might not be the accurate representations of the case teachers' perceptions and enactments of the intended changes, thus, the researcher decided to use direct observations of their practices in their classrooms as a complementary data collection method.

The time and duration of each interview was varied due to the availability of the interviewees, but overall the interviews were conducted according to the planned schedule, and the intended objectives were achieved before the following stage

interviews. The details of the interviews completed with all the participants are summarized in Table 4.5.

	Participants	No. of interviews	Details
2Administrators	University-level	3	Nov. 15, 2012; Jan. 3, 2013; March 4, 2013
	Department - level	3	Nov. 16, 2012; Jan. 3, 2013; March 5, 2013
4 Teachers	Zhang	10	Nov.22, 26 , 28, Dec. 4, 11, 13, 2012; Jan 4. 2013; March 6, 2013; April4 , 2014
	Li	10	Nov. 23, 28, Dec. 4, 5, 12, 14, 16 2012; Jan. 5, 2013; March 7, 2013; April 5, 2014
	Gao	10	Nov.20, 27 , 29, Dec.3, 9, 11, 13, 15 2012; Jan. 6, 2013March 8, 2013; April6, 2014
	Zhao	10	Nov. 21, 26 , 27, Dec. 4, 10, 14, 16 2012; Jan. 8, 2013; March 9, 2013; April 7, 2014
24 Students (4 groups, each group 6 students from one teacher)	Zhang's	4	Nov. 28, Dec.3, 11, 2012; Jan 4. 2013
	Li's	4	Dec. 5, 12, 14, 2012; Jan 5. 2013
	Gao's	4	Nov. 29, Dec.3, 9, 2012; Jan 6. 2013
	Zhao's	4	Nov. 27, Dec. 10, 14, 2012; Jan 8. 2013

Table 4.5 Summary of interviews completed with all the participants

4.4.3 Classroom Observation

Purpose

The purpose of classroom observations was to investigate how and to what extent the case teachers enacted the intended changes at the classroom level, and whether there were any the gaps between their perceptions and implementations of CER.

For each classroom observation, the teachers and their teachings were the focus of interest, and their interactions with students were also observed.

Rationale

Observation is an important method to obtain direct information on classroom events and on the reality of the program implementation (Weir & Roberts, 1994, p.164). Since people sometimes cannot remember accurately what and how an event has happened or do not always do what they say they do, an observational method is needed to overcome these possible limitations (Lang & Heiss, 1991; Robson, 2011). Foster (1996) claims that observational data are more likely to be accurate as they are not told by participants through the interviews but perceived by the researchers directly. The value of observation is that it permits the researcher additional opportunities to understand and study the events and phenomenon in the natural environment (Baker, 2006). More importantly, observation may enable the researcher to see things that the participants are unaware of, or things that they are unwilling to admit or discuss (Yook, 2010). Observation also enables a researcher to look afresh at the everyday behaviours that might be taken for granted or go unnoticed (Copper & Schindler, 2001).

Specifically, in the present study, data obtained from classroom observations would verify whether or not the changes teachers claimed in the interviews matched what they did in the classrooms. The comparison assisted the researcher to address the third research question, that is, 'Are there any mismatches between what teachers say and what they do about the national policy? '. Another purpose of classroom observation was to develop questions for the post-classroom observation interviews of the teachers and students, and also to explore the implicit theories and teacher beliefs underpinning their classroom teaching practices.

There are three kinds of observation, namely, unobtrusive, participant, and non-participant. This study employed non-participant observation, that is, merely watching and recording what was happening on the spot without any participation in the event (Patton, 2002). The purpose was to ensure the natural process of classroom teaching and learning, and to highlight the actual trajectory of the teachers' execution of the external initiative.

Recruitment of the participants in classroom observation

Persuading the participants to be observed and audio-taped turned out to be more difficult than the researcher had ever imagined. The teachers expressed their concerns and worries; thus, I spent much time explaining in great detail about the study and the importance of observing what really happened in the classrooms, and also assured them sincerely that the observation was just used for this personal study.

The teachers also worried that the dean of the department would require the researcher to provide some comments on their teachings based on the interviews of their students and the classroom observations. I promised them that would never happen with these data. The teachers finally agreed to be observed and audio-recorded, rather than video-taped in case that they themselves and their students were too concerned about the camera to perform naturally.

Upon with the agreement of the teachers, I also asked the permission of the relevant administrators in the university who were in charge of teaching and learning. After gaining the permission to the classroom observations, I told the teachers that I needed to observe a whole and complete unit, which would last two or three weeks. In addition, the teachers were told not to prepare their lessons purposely for the observation; and they were asked to teach in their normal and usual way for what the study needed was their natural and usual classroom teachings.

Strategy

Field notes and a modified model of the Communicative Orientation to Language Teaching (COLT) were employed to document the classroom data. Field notes are qualitative means to describe the classroom events in detail; whilst COLT scheme is a quantitative instrument with specific categories to document the particular aspects of the instructional practices. COLT, which was developed by Spada & Fröhlich (1995), was used to distinguish quantitatively between a more knowledge-transmitted and a more communicative language learning environment. Given the research purpose, a modified version of COLT was constructed, including six main categories (and subcategories), namely (1) Time, (2) Sections (3)

Time assignment (teacher talk and students talk), (4) Student participation (whole class, groups, individual), (5) Teaching content (grammar, listening, speaking), (6) Medium of instruction (English, Chinese, the mix). The first category records the starting time of each section, and the second was qualitative descriptions of the classroom events and procedures; whilst the last four categories are used to record specifically teachers' classroom activities. These activities were analysed through the continuum of communicativeness developed from Littlewood's (2004) matrix (a detailed discussion see Section 4.5.2), aiming to evaluate the degree of communicativeness in the classrooms. While coding for the observation scheme during the observations, field jottings, particularly focused on the main features of CLT, as summarized in Section 2.6.1, were also taken that were later transformed into formal field notes. The overall extent of CLT enactment was grounded upon the overall evidence of CLT implementation in the classrooms, which contains five degrees, specifically, no evidence of CLT, limited evidence of CLT, moderate degree of CLT, moderate high degree of CLT and high degree of CLT. All the classes were audio-recorded in case that any information was missing in the note-taking. During the observation, the researcher just sat at the back, taking notes on the events that were going on in the classrooms.

Foster (1996) warns that observations may give a partial view of participants' behaviour since researchers unavoidably select what they need to observe. Everston and Green (1986) add that the observers might have bias towards the observing objects since they have their own beliefs and expectations, which unavoidably influence their observation effects. Moreover, some participants' behaviours might be affected by the presence of the researcher and acted not normally as they know that they are observed (K. Richards, 2003).

To overcome these side effects of classroom observations, this study utilized method triangulation and participant triangulation to collect multiple data. Specifically, three research methods were employed, namely, analysis of documents, interviews and classroom observations. Furthermore, to gain a possible real and holistic picture of the phenomenon, the same questions were explored by asking and observing different participants and the same participants at different period of time.

Procedure of observation

To examine the research protocol and the observation equipment, a pilot observation was carried out on two CE teachers in University L in November, 2012. The pilot observation indicated that one recorder put in the front could not capture clearly students' interactions and particularly those sitting in the back, thus, two recorders were used in the formal observation, one in the front of the classroom and the other in the back. Other issues, such as techniques needed to take the field notes, writing down description of non-verbal interactions between teachers and students and simultaneously operating the recorder were also developed. The formal observations of the participating teachers were carried out from November, 2012 to January, 2013 (see Table 4.6 and Table 4.7).

Before I started to observe teachers' classes, I had been to their classrooms several times to visit their students and prepare them to be accustomed to my presence. In the process of the formal observation, I sat quietly at the back of the classroom, and was as unobtrusive as possible. The teacher had one recorder in the front and I had another in the back to ensure the quality of the effects of the recordings. During the observations, I mainly followed the observation guide, concentrated on the teaching content and the teaching methods teachers utilized in their instructions and practices, such as the teaching activities, using target language, the interactions between teacher and students and among students.

In addition, I also concentrated my attention on the classroom realities and local classroom contexts to examine whether the local contextual factors, such as the physical conditions of the classroom and the realities of students mediated teachers' classroom teachings. To enhance the observational effect and decrease the limitations in audio-recording, I took field notes to record what I heard, observed and felt in each class. In addition, I wrote down my thoughts and reflections of teachers' teaching during or right after the observation and prompted relevant post-classroom observation interview questions to gain verification and clarification from the respective of the teachers. Altogether, 36 hours' audio-taped classroom observation data were collected, and each teacher around 9 hours.

	Participants	Time	Purpose
Pilot	two teachers	Nov. 2012	To examine the research protocol and the observation equipment
Formal Class observation	Gao	Nov.2012- March. 2013	To explore teacher's enactment of the intended changes, and to examine whether teachers did what they claimed in interviews
	Zhao	Nov.2012- March. 2013	
	Li	Nov.2012- March. 2013	
	Zhang	Nov.2012- March. 2013	

Table 4.6 Summary of observations of the participating teachers

Participants	Students observed	Units observed	Duration of lesson	Lessons observed	Lessons audio-taped
Zhang	Level A Freshman	Unit 5	90 Minutes	8 (Nov.21, 22, 26 , 28, Dec. 4, 11, 13, 2012; Jan. 3, March 6, 2013)	6
Zhao	Level B Freshman	Unit 5	90 Minutes	7 (Nov.27, Dec. 4, 10, 14, 16 2012; Jan. 8, March 9, 2013)	6
Gao	Level A Sophomore	Unit 7	90 Minutes	7 (Nov. 27, Dec. 9, 11, 13, 15 2012; Jan. 6, March 8, 2013)	6
Li	Level B Sophomore	Unit 7	90 Minutes	8 (Nov. 28, Dec. 4, 5, 12, 14, 16 2012; Jan. 5, March 7, 2013)	6
Total				30	24

Table 4.7 Summary of the lessons observed and audio-taped

Through multiple data collection methods, large amount of data were collected. The details of the collected data are summarized in Table 4.8 in terms of the content and the amount.

Data	Amount	Methods of collection
1.Interviews	60 hours' audio-tape	Audio-taped and transcribed interviews with the informants (two administrators, and four classroom teachers and their respective students)
2.Classroom observation	32 hours' audio-tape	Audio-taped and field notes (four classroom teachers)
3.Analysis of documents	Documents from September 1st 2004 to July 30th, 2013	the 1985/1986 College English Teaching Syllabus, the 1999 College English Teaching Syllabus; the 2004/ 2007 College English Curriculum Requirement; English textbooks, teachers' books, the four case study teachers' lesson plans, and their teaching logs

Table 4.8 Summary of the collected data

It is worth noting that the data collection process was continuous and cumulative, rather than a closed and fixed process. During the collecting process, the researcher employed ongoing analysis (Rossma & Rallis, 2003), that is, when some issues emerged and more follow-up interviews were needed, the researcher would re-interview the participants to gain more information and clarification, which eventually added depth and validity to this study.

4.5 Data analysis procedure.

Data analysed in this study including data obtained through qualitative approach in terms of various research instruments, i.e. review of documents, semi-structured

interviews and classroom observations. Thus, the overall category of data analysis is qualitative, which tended to entail some extent of judgment and interpretation of the researcher.

Concerning the analysing and presenting qualitative data, Cohen et al. (2011) point out that one needs to abide by 'the issue of *fitness for purpose'* (p. 537, the original italic). Marshall and Rossman (1999) contend that qualitative data analysis is a coding process, which involves constructing order, structure, and interpretation of the collected information. Qualitative data analysis often merges analysis with interpretation and meanwhile data collection with data analysis (Gibbs, 2007). Thus, qualitative data analysis tends to be 'thick descriptions', that is, including data not only describing events in context, but also rich, detailed and thick descriptions of the phenomenon and the participants. Therefore, making sense of the massive amounts of data is a great challenge for the researcher (Patton, 2002; Gibbs, 2007; Cohen et al., 2011).

4.5.1 Framework for communicativeness analysis

To tackle the challenges to the implementation of CLT, a framework is needed, which clarifies what CLT means and how it relates to the actual happenings in the classrooms (Littlewood, 2007). To achieve the ends, Littlewood (2004, 2007) suggested a five-category continuum with varying degrees of communicativeness in the classroom activities (see Table 4.9). The matrix highlights the communicative degree of activities focusing more on the grammatical forms in the left-hand side to the more authentic communication in the right hand.

The first category in this continuum is the strongest focus on language forms, including classroom activities such as decontextualized grammar exercises and drills. The typical activity in the second category involves 'ask-and-answer' practices, that is, the answer is already known but students need to pay attention to the meaning in order to produce them (Littlewood, 2004, p. 46). In the third category, there exists 'information gap'; that is, the language conveys meanings that were not previously known to everybody.

Focus on forms <----------> Focus on meaning				
Category 1 Non-communicative Learning	Category 2 Pre-communicative Language Practice	Category 3 Communicative Language Practice	Category 4 Structured Communication	Category 5 Authentic Communication
Focusing on the structures of language, how they are formed and what they mean, e.g. substitution exercises	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. personalized questions.	Using language to communicate in situations which elicit pre-learnt language, but with some unpredictability, e.g. structured role-play & 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

Table 4.9 Continuum of communicativeness of activities (adopted from Littlewood, 2004)

The unpredictability involved in Category 3 highlights that it is more communicative than Category 2. In Category 4, the main focus moves to the communication of meanings but the situation is carefully structured to ensure the learners are capable of coping with the existing resources; whilst at the extreme right of the category, language forms are 'correspondingly unpredictable', and students can communicate more freely. Thus, as Littlewood (2004, 2007) contends, the higher unpredictability of information and language forms, the higher degree of communicativeness in classroom instructions. This continuum is relevant and useful for the current study to clarify communicative and non-communicative activities, and also to analyse the extent to which the participant teachers enact the communicative curriculum.

4.5.2 In-the-field data analysis

There were two main stages of data analysis in this study, namely, in-the-field analysis and intensive systemic data analysis. In-the-filed data analysis was the initial transcription and analysis of the gathered data during the period of fieldwork. The main purpose was to summarize the main themes of the data and generated

subsequent interview questions for the following interviews, and to clarify subconsciously presumed information between the researcher and the participants, which might be unclear or insufficient to understand the phenomenon explored. As the researcher was an insider of the research setting, there might be some information presumed understood mutually.

4.5.3 Systemic data analysis

After the field work was done, the data was analysed systemically to identify the essential features and the systemic interrelationships among the gathered data. Some specific analysis methods were employed with regard to the data collecting procedure in the study, specifically, analysis of the documents, interview data analysis, and classroom observation data analysis.

Analysis of documents

Data collected through document review included different level polices and regulations about CER, such as, the national level policy, the institutional rules and regulations. Specifically, the documents were the 1985/1986 College English Teaching Syllabus, the 1999 College English Teaching Syllabus, the CECR 2007, revised versions of textbooks and relevant versions of CET, and the institutional rules to carry out the intended changes. The four teachers' lesson plans and their teaching logs were gathered to examine how teachers planned to execute the prescribed changes at the classroom level. To understand and explore the documents, the analysis process was organized systemically as follows.

Firstly, the national level policies were examined, and the top-down policy intents were restructured into three major categories in terms of what to teach (teaching content and focus), how to teach (teaching methodology), and how to assess (assessment and testing). The rationale underlying the three categories is that they are the main elements of a curriculum (as noted in Chapter 2), and the major changes in CECR 2007. Examining the intended changes would help the researcher to develop interview questions for the administrators, and also provide a basic outline to examine the institutional changes in the process of adopting the national reform. Secondly, the institutional regulations and actions taken at university- and

department-level were analysed. The purpose was to explore how and to what extent the university had addressed the national policy; and whether there were any the discrepancies between the two level policies; if any, what were the possible reasons underlying the mismatches. Thirdly, the frontline teachers' lesson plans, and their teaching logs were examined, specifically, including Gao, Li, Zhang and Zhao in the study. The data gathered from the individual teachers would help the researcher to understand how teacher beliefs guided their teaching design, and whether their plans were carried out at the classroom level.

Analysing the documents provided a general understanding about the intended requirements and changes in CER, and also laid a foundation for the comparison of the prescribed and the actual implemented curriculum at the classroom level. Additionally, as the data provided by documents were permanent and available, the information could be checked by other researchers, therefore, open to public scrutiny (Denscombe, 1998).

Interview data analysis

Two steps were utilized to handle the interview data collected through audio recording, namely, transcribing and coding. As noted earlier, around 60 hours' tape-recorded interview data were collected, and the transcription of the data was conducted immediately after each interview, and issues emerged were probed in the follow-up interviews. Thus, the data collection and data analysis were merged together form the beginning.

Specifically, the procedure of the interview data analysis followed six phases of thematic coding analysis: familiarizing the data, gathering initial codes, identifying themes, constructing thematic network and making comparison, and integration and interpretation (Robson, 2011). With regard to group interviews with students, the unit of analysis was the view of the whole group response rather than the individual member; that is, a collective group response was sought and established even if there might be some individual differences among the groups to ensure that no individual was marginalized or ostracized (Cohen et al., 2011).

Being familiar with the data involved transcribing all the interviews verbatim into manuscripts in the study, which made the access to the specific information more efficiently, and also provided a foundation for further in-depth analysis. After all transcription was conducted, the manuscript was presented to the relevant participants to obtain feedback, which was a key verification step in data analysis (Creswell, 1998). Through reading and rereading the typed manuscripts, initial codes were identified. Coding could be conducted either manually or with the support of software; in this study, all the coding was performed manually. To gather codes and patterns effectively, a short list of initial codes based on the initial conceptual framework (see Chapter 3) was developed and used as a starting point.

However, to ensure the voices of the participants were not constrained by the predetermined initial codes, emergent themes from 'the bottom-up' were also analysed. That is, through reviewing and re-reviewing the database, the categories of themes were expanded. In a qualitative research, not all information is used, and some parts might be discarded (Wolcott, 1994). Thus, the parts involving the patterns and themes in the manuscript were translated into English from Chinese, rather than the whole manuscript. After translation, a fluent speaker of Chinese and English was invited to check the interview data to ensure the accuracy and truthfulness to the participants' intended meanings. Finally, the categories were compared and reconstructed conceptually and an analytic network was developed for further data display and interpretation (see Chapter 5).

Through these procedures, recurrent themes were identified and categorized with regard to the main research questions, namely,

(1) The intended changes of College English Curriculum Reform,
(2) Gaps between teacher's perceptions of and the intended changes,
(3) Gaps teachers' perceptions and enactments of the intended,
(4) Issues involved in enacting a top-down and western-originated curriculum.

The process of data analysis, as noted earlier, was conducted cyclically, rather than linearly. New data was collected to validate and modify the emerged issues in the

previous data analysis, and then newly analysed data might involve and guide more and further data collection.

Classroom observation data analysis

Analysis of observation data in this study mainly involved analysing quantitative observational data in the modified COLT scheme and the qualitative field notes, combining with listening to the audio-taped classroom teachings. The main purpose was to generate follow-up questions for the post-class interviews of students and teachers, as well as to collect complementary information on how the teachers enacted the mandated changes, and also to compare whether they had done what they claimed and whether there were any mismatches between that they claimed and what they actually did.

COLT raw data were analysed and synthesized according to the observation framework (see Appendix H), whilst the formal field notes were examined for emergent patterns and themes that would shed light on instructional practices in the setting. Analysis of COLT mainly involved grouping the data and calculating the percentage of time spent on each of the categories *(Sections, Time assignment, Student participation, Teaching content, and Medium of instruction)*. The grouping and calculation was analysed according to individual lessons, and then further grouping and calculation were conducted on the basis of individual teachers. After several times of listening to the tapes and re-reading the field notes, I developed a matrix (see Appendix J), which covered the main categories in the observation guide and field notes, but also extended to include more specific information concerning the classroom teaching, such as using of the resources, roles of students, roles of teachers, classroom activities, teaching goals, and the classroom assessment methods. The matrix served as a guideline and an orientation in the following further and specific analysis of the individual participants. The matrices developed from different teachers' classroom teachings were also the objects of codes themselves, that is, further theme identification and integration could be conducted from the matrices without referring repeatedly to the recorded tapes. Then these activities were examined through the continuum of communicativeness developed from Littlewood's (2004) matrix and comparison with the main features

of CLT summarized in Section 2.6.1 to evaluate the degree of communicativeness in individual teachers' classrooms. The overall extent of CLT enactment was grounded upon the overall evidence of CLT implementation in the classrooms, which contained five degrees, specifically, no evidence of CLT, limited evidence of CLT, moderate degree of CLT, moderate high degree of CLT and high degree of CLT.

To ensure the essence of each lesson was fully comprehended and grasped, I listened to the tapes repeatedly, and particularly the segments covered the matrices, and accordingly, the relevant adjustments of the matrix were made. Then, I demonstrated the matrices, together with a brief description of the recorded lessons to each informant to ensure that their classroom teachings were reflected accurately. Some issues emerged in the classroom teaching were developed into the following post-class interview questions, and the possible rationales of their teaching were also explored after each lesson. Students' voices were demonstrated as evidence of the frontline teachers' actual classroom teachings. Finally, the relationship among various categories and interrelationship within a specific category were identified in order to achieve the credible integrations and interpretations of the teachers' actual classroom teachings.

In sum, the procedures of data analysis were similar to the process of data collection. They were discussed separately for the sake of easy and comfort understanding, but actually they were interwoven and overlapped rather than separated and sequential. For instance, analysis of interviews of the administrators might involve revisit the documents; and similarly, analysis of the specific teachers' classroom observations would cause re-visiting their interviews and interviews of their respective students; and additional information was also collected from the follow-up interviews. Thus, the process of data analysis was continuous and cumulative rather than linear to ensure that the actual happenings in the classrooms were possibly reflected.

4.6 Trustworthiness of the research methods and the findings

Rigor is required in all kinds of research to ensure that the research methods are sound and the research findings are accurate (Davies & Dodd, 2002). However, the rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research has been challenged, and the most common question imparted on qualitative researchers is concerned with the validity and reliability of data collection and research findings. Merriam (1998) argues that in assessing the rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research, it is imperative to know what kinds of questions or problems the research is designed to address and how well a study does what it is designed to do. Some scholars proposed different concepts and perspectives to address the rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative study from quantitative research. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1989) talk about credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, whilst Brink (1991) propose the terms of stability, consistency and equivalence. However, Long and Johnson (2000) contend that the use of alternative terms is proved to be identical to the traditional terms of validity and reliability. Thus, to address the rigor and worthiness of the present research instruments and findings, the terms of validity and reliability are used and discussed in this study, particularly their meanings and connotations in qualitative research.

Validity is viewed as an important key to effective research, that is, if a study is invalid then it is worthless (Cohen et al., 2011). Validity traditionally means that a particular instrument actually measures what it is supposed to measure (ibid) or the credibility or correctness of description, explanation, and interpretation (Maxwell, 1996). In other words, an account is considered valid if it represents accurately the features of a phenomenon that the researcher attempts to describe and explain (Winter, 2000). Currently, validity has taken many forms; specifically, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data, triangulation and objectivity of the researcher in qualitative research (ibid.). To ensure the trustworthiness and effectiveness of a study, a researcher needs to minimize invalidity and maximize validity as much as possible. However, validity can only be achieved as a matter of degree rather than an absolute state (Patton, 2002).

Two main threats are likely to challenge the validity of qualitative studies, that is, reactivity and subjectivity. Specifically, reactivity means the influences of the researchers on the research settings or research participants (Maxwell, 1996), and subjectivity refers to the researchers' bias in describing and interpreting the data obtained in the process of data collection and data analysis. To overcome the threats, it is important for the researcher to retain an outsiders' scepticism in describing and interpreting the data (Lincoln, 1995).

Reliability elaborates whether the same findings can be achieved through the research design given the same subjects to study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Some scholars (e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, 1995; Winter, 2000) suggest that the concept of reliability is largely positivist, thus, alternative terms are preferred, like 'credibility' 'neutrality', 'confirmability', 'consistency' 'dependability' and 'transferability', for qualitative research. Whatever terms are used, reliability, as the precondition of validity, is relevant to both quantitative and qualitative research though in which the meanings of reliability might be slightly different (Cohen et al., 2011). Concerning qualitative research, reliability can be regarded as a match between the data collected and the actual occurrence in the natural setting which is investigated and researched. Thus, Merriam (1998) contends that what really matters to qualitative research is not whether or not the results of one study are identical to the findings of a second or third study, but rather the results of a study are consistent with the data collected.

There are some means to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research, specifically, triangulation, respondent validation, prolonged involvement and persistent observation, peer examination, self-description and reflective journal, and audit trail (Merriam, 1995, 1998; Long & Johnson, 2000). Triangulation can increase the depth, width and richness of the understandings of a phenomenon under investigation (Flick, 1998). According to the literature, triangulation can be subsumed as five categories, namely, data triangulation, method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and analysis triangulation (Denzin, 1989; Flick, 1992). Data triangulation means using various data sources in a study or collecting both qualitative and quantitative data; method triangulation refers to applying multiple methods to investigate the same problem; investigator

triangulation involves more than one researcher or investigators in the study; theory triangulation draws on different theoretical perspectives to explain and interpret the data collected; and analysis triangulation means the researcher crosschecks the same data in different period of time to see whether the findings are the same or different researchers analyse the same data at the same time.

In this study, several strategies were employed to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the research findings. First and foremost, triangulations, specifically, data, method and analysis triangulation, were utilized. The data were collected through various sources and methods, including reviews of documents, interviews and classroom observations. Secondly, the data analysis and interpretation were provided to the participants to gain their verification and feedback. The analysis and interpretation of data was crosschecked by the researcher several times at different periods of time, and the same findings were achieved. Thirdly, the process of data collection and data analysis involved in a relative longer period of time (around 1.5 years), and the process of data collection and analysis was iterative and cumulative. Fourthly, I talked about the research with some staff members and other PhD students, and asked for their opinions concerning whether the emerging results were consistent with the data collected or not. Comments and examinations from the peers helped to enhance the validity and reliability of this study. Fifthly, during the process of data collection and data analysis, I continuously reflected my own values and beliefs in a similar way to the examination of the participants, taking into account rather than attempting to eliminate the effects of the researcher. Of course, it is impossible to eliminate the perceptions, values and beliefs of a researcher, but it is important for a researcher to explain and reduce the bias through these reflections. Last but not least, audit trail was tracked in this study, that is, I described in detail what and how data were collected, how the categories were summarized and how the decisions were achieved throughout the inquiry process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1998). With the noted efforts, the validity and reliability of this study were attempted to be achieved.

4.7 Key issues emerged from the fieldwork

Major issues concerning the fieldwork in the study contained gaining entry into the field and the participants, role of the researcher and limitations with regard to the methodology. In order to overcome the challenges and limitation, thorough relevant considerations were undertaken and some concrete measures were taken in the research study.

4.7.1 Issues concerning gaining entry to the research field and the participants

Gaining access to the research field is significantly imperative to ensure the study conducted successfully, particularly when an in-depth research of the field is needed (Patton, 2002; Shenton & Hayter, 2004). The combination of strategic planning, hard work and opportunities are needed in order to entry into the field smoothly and win the trust of the participants (Feldman et al., 2003; Johl & Renganathan, 2010).

As a staff member, who had worked in University L for more than 15 years, it was relatively easy for the researcher to gain entry into the research field and the participants. However, there were other challenges, such as disclosure on some private or sensitive topics and power relations involved between the researcher and the informants. To overcome these problems, some strategies were planned and executed carefully at the different stages of the fieldwork.

Firstly, the researcher used informal means to gain permission of entry into the field through emails and phone calls to the administrators at the university- and department-level who were in charge of teaching and research. The informal way indicated the study was just a private and personal thesis, rather than a public and formal project. A private study was more easily acceptable for the Chinese administrators, as it indicated that the research findings either good or bad would have no or little influence on the reputation of the university. The arrangement of the time and schedule of the field work was made easily, as the researcher was very familiar with the semester system and the teaching schedules in University L. All the participants knew the researcher well, thus none of them declined to be interviewed or observed.

Secondly, the researcher assured the participants that this study was just a personal PhD thesis. There was no intension of public comments or evaluation on the university or any participants, and no publication would be made without their permission. The promise eliminated the administrators' worries of inappropriate words articulated or institutional documents issued might influence the image or fame of the university or department. Moreover, teachers' fear that the classroom observation and students' interviews would be used to evaluate their teachings was removed, and they were happy and relaxed to demonstrate what their actual classroom teachings were. The students who worried that the comments might feed back to their teachers were also cleared up, and they were more likely to express themselves freely.

Thirdly, the researcher was understanding and considerate in personality, leaving the choices of interview time, place and language used to the participants. The kind consideration also added more trust and comfort to the participants. In particular, the researcher once served as consultant in University L before pursuing her PhD, and most of teachers involved in the study had once or more long conversations with the researcher. The pre-established intimacy and trust reduced the distances between the research and the informants.

Fourthly, the researcher applied some techniques during the interview, such as using easy and general questions to open the interviews and avoiding some threating questions. The transcriptions of the interviews were provided to the participants timely after the interviews, and the feedback and responses of the informants were valued and taken seriously.

4.7.2 Issues concerning role of the researcher

Role of the researchers could vary from complete membership of the group (an insider) being studied to complete strangers (an outsider) (Adler & Adler, 1994). The insider role indicates that the researcher is a member of the group being studied, while outsider means that the researcher does not belong to the group. In the present study, all the participants were the researcher's colleagues (insider), but the researcher had left the university three years before the study was conducted,

and especially she did not belong to the CE department (outsider). Thus, the researcher had no common understandings with the CE teachers concerning how they developed or changed their teaching practices and beliefs during the process of the enactment of the new curriculum. Therefore, it was reasonable to argue that the role of the researcher in the current study was both insider and outsider.

Bing an insider, it is relative easy to gain access and entry into the research field and the participants and the relevant documents as noted earlier. In addition, an insider has a greater understanding of the culture of the group being studied, the ability to interact naturally with the participants, and superior intimacy with the group to stimulate the telling and judging the truth (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). However, there are also pitfalls associated with these advantages. For instance, greater familiarity between the researcher and the participants might lead to lack of objectivity, and the researchers might make wrong assumptions based on their prior knowledge and experiences (Breen, 2007). In addition, insider-researchers might be confronted with role conflict (i.e. researcher and instructor in the current research). The role conflict can also lead to role confusion when the researchers analyse the data or respond to the participants from a perspective other than that of researcher, and also the risk tends to be higher when the researchers are familiar with the research settings or participants (Asselin, 2003). Moreover, due to the commonalities with the participants, the insider-researchers might assume that they know the participants' views and the participants may tend to assume the researchers already know what they know, thus some difficulties might occur in collecting sufficient and valid data (Breen, 2007; Dwyer, 2009).

However, Unluer (2012) argues that in educational research, various players and wide range of perspectives are involved to explore human beings and their behaviours, thus it is necessary to include the perspective of the researcher. The potential concerns associated with the role of insider might be reduced through detailed reflection on the research process, and close awareness of one's own personal biases and perspectives (Dwyer, 2009). Moreover, holding a membership in a group does not represent complete sameness within the group (ibid.). The researcher in this study was familiar with the participants, but was unfamiliar with their perceptions and enactment of the new curriculum, thus, these differences and

unfamiliarity enabled the researcher to delve deep the information needed. Up to the time the study conducted, the researcher had left the university more than three years, thus changes might be great during this period. For instance, some new institutional regulations and actions concerning the national curriculum reform were taken, e.g. '171' teaching model. To the participant students, the researcher was a completely stranger, and some of them even had not heard of the researcher before.

Therefore, in the context of this study, the researcher was positioned as both insider and outsider, that is, to maximize the advantages of each while minimising the potential of disadvantage (Breen, 2007). In addition to utilizing the techniques such as triangulation, respondent validation, peer examination, self-description and audit trail to promote the trustworthiness and rigor of the data collected and the findings obtained, the researcher also attempted to be open, honest and authentic in the experiences of the participants and committed to accurately and adequately reporting and representing their experiences (Pitman, 2002).

4.7.3 Issues concerning the methodological limitations

While reading the final summaries and findings of this study, it is necessary to bear in mind that there are several limitations in the methodology adopted. Firstly, this study focused on one specific university in China, thus it was impossible to represent the whole universities in China, which has more than 1700 universities. Secondly, the case informants involved only four English teachers, though they were likely representative concerning their working experiences and life experiences and ages, it cannot be concluded that they represented exactly all the other teachers in the university. Thirdly, the audiotaping also had its limitations compared with videotaping, for instance, it lacked concrete and vivid images and information. Some messages conveyed through gestures and facial expressions could not be recorded and analysed.

4.8 Ethical issues

The current research abided by the requirements of the guidelines adopted by the School of Education from British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research 2004. A detailed ethics protocol was discussed with my supervisors, and a relevant statement of Research Ethics form was submitted (see Appendix A, B, C, D). Before gaining access to the research site, precise statements of the research aims and intended research methods and designs, including means of access to the research participants were discussed with my supervisors. Particularly, the participating university, the teachers and students involved in the study were pseudonymous and totally voluntary; that is, they could withdraw freely from the study whenever they wanted without any risks; and their dignity and interests were respected at all times. The findings and results of the research informed the participants, and their feedback was valued and appreciated.

Another important ethical issue that could not be ignored was the relationship between the researcher and the participants, especially in the discussion of observation and fieldwork. Given the present research, the researcher occupied the position of both insider and outsider. The insider role not only allowed the researcher to be accepted more rapidly and more completely by the participants, but also allowed her to gather a greater depth to the data. On the other side, it was possible for the researcher to keep an outsider status in the current research, because the participants and the researcher did not necessarily share complete sameness within the same working place. Specifically, in the present research, the researcher had been teaching English literature to postgraduates, whereas the case teachers were CE teachers to undergraduates, therefore they were using different teaching materials, owning different teaching intentions, and teaching different students. Furthermore, CER, the foci of the study, was mainly concerned about non-English major undergraduates, which empowered the researcher to keep an outsider status. The outsider perspective made it possible to access authentic knowledge owing to the objectivity and scientific detachment, whilst the insider perspective can provide special insight into the phenomenon based on the shared knowledge and understanding of the culture (Kearns, 2000).

4.9 Summary

This section has elaborated the research design and established the methodological approach. The informants and settings were described and the process and criteria of selecting the case study informants were justified. To ensure rigor and trustworthiness of the data collected and the research findings, reliability and validity was discussed and the methodological limitations and ethical issues were explained. In the following three chapters, the main findings of the research will be summarized based on the research questions and the emerged themes under the umbrella of the theoretical framework constructed in Chapter 2 and 3. Multi-level changes, namely changes at the university-, department- and individual level, will be described and presented respectively.

Chapter five: What did the university and department do concerning enactment of the curriculum reform?

5.1 Introduction

The following three chapters present major themes that emerged from analysis of the document resources, interviews and classroom observations in relation to the research purpose, that is, to explore how external system-level curriculum reform is enacted at the classroom level. Chapter five reports what the university and department did in order to adapt and implement the national reform. Chapter six focuses upon teachers' perceptions, and the changes claimed in terms of beliefs and practices as a result of the reform. Chapter seven documents what teachers were observed to do and what students experienced in the classrooms. In addition, gaps, if any, between what teachers said and what they did, are identified. Finally, the possible factors mediating teachers' change or non-change are reported. In the teacher change literature, exploration into the mismatches between changes teachers claimed and changes enacted seemed limited (e.g. Cohen, 1990; Guskey, 2002), therefore, the research findings contributes to the knowledge of teacher change.

The underpinning rationale is that the sense-making processes of the leaders and teachers, and measures taken at the institutional, departmental and individual levels reflect how and to what extent the national reforms are managed and implemented in the local contexts. The enacted curriculum at the classroom level is not necessarily the same as the curriculum intended by the policymakers or indeed the institutional regulations due to various levels of filtering, mediating, 'translating' and thus reshaping. The existing literature of policy implementation / enactment tends to lack systemic explorations on how external initiatives are interpreted and re-interpreted by layers of policy actors, and also how they are shaped and reshaped by the multi-level influences in the local contexts, and eventually how they are carried out in the classrooms. The results of this research indicate that although

mediation does occur, teachers tend to claim more changes than they actually enacted.

Although the findings in Chapter 5, 6 and 7 are presented separately, they are actually connected (see Figure 5.1). The university, taking into account of the constraints and possibilities, played a mediating role in adopting the external policy. That is, actions the university taken influenced how the national reform was executed at the departmental level, and simultaneously the intended changes were further mediated by the departmental constraints. Teachers' professional beliefs and values filtered the information they received and reshaped their teaching practices to fit the teaching realities. Thus, the findings suggest that the national reform was mediated and filtered through three level factors in a Chinese university, namely, the university-level, the department-level and the individual-level.

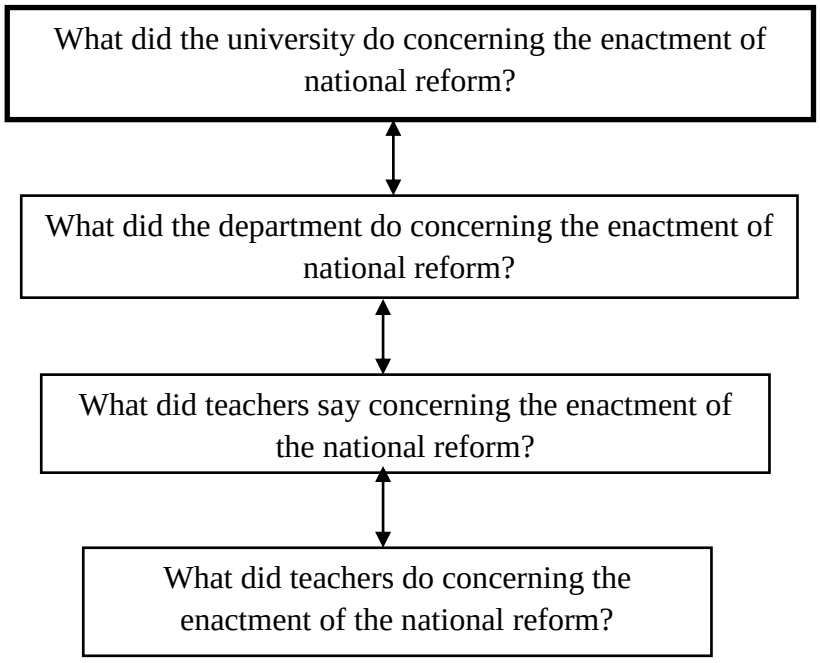

Figure 5.1 Connection maps of the findings

As noted in Chapter 3, the existing literature reveals that leaders in the organization need to motivate the staff to respond to large scale reforms in locally meaningful ways to ensure that it achieves the intended goals (McLaughlin, 1987) or to make sense of and adapt it in the local context (Elmore, 2004). Leaders are required to support individual teachers in acquiring knowledge and skills needed for such a response (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The university and department leaders in the current study, on the one hand, demonstrated low motivations and limited capacities to respond to the national curriculum meaningfully and productively. On the other hand, they also failed to provide the frontline teachers with sufficient support and training demanded by the reform. Though some actions were taken, and relevant regulations were made to respond to the national curriculum, organizational changes seemed small and superficial due to some challenges perceived and confronted in the situated contexts. Thus, gaps emerged between the national policy intents and the institutional and departmental changes in terms of teaching content (what to teach), pedagogy (how to teach), and assessment (how to assess).

5.2 What did the university do to enact CECR 2007?

This section discusses what the university did concerning the implementation of the national reform based on interview data of the vice-president of the university and the university-level documents concerning CE (see Table 5.1). Specifically, this section contains university-level leaders' interpretation of CECR 2007, actions taken to implement CECR 2007, challenges encountered and changes claimed as the result of CECR 2007 in the university level. Role of leadership is essentially important, as leaders are most likely to shape and reshape the organizational conditions necessary for the intended changes (Fullan, 2007), and to understand teachers' concerns and provide sufficient support for the enactment of the national policy (Elmore, 2004).

University L, similarly to other Chinese institutions, has a centralized administration, that is, the research and teaching committee, chaired by the vice-president of the university and consisting of heads of all faculties, is in charge of university-wide teaching and learning. As a leader in charge of university-wide

teaching and learning, the voice of the vice-president could, to some extent, represent the collective perceptions of the university-level leaders. University-level documents were also analyzed to confirm or complement the interview results of the vice-president. The findings indicated that university leaders had doubts about the practicality and compatibility of the national policy in University L, albeit they demonstrated publicly general endorsement of the national initiative in theory. Therefore, there emerged some discrepancies between the rhetoric and the reality, and between the public face and private actions. Taking into account the situated resources and conditions, the university played a mediating role upon the national reform. Though some actions were taken and some changes claimed as the result of CECR 2007 in university level, they tended to less fully mirror the intentions of the policy.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Pre-action Perceptions</td><td>General endorsement of the principle</td><td>the content of reform and its guideline role</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reservations about the national policy</td><td>(1) limitation of the national policy document,
(2) skepticism about the shift of teaching focus,
(3) limited changes in college English test</td></tr>
<tr><td>Actions</td><td colspan="2">(1)regulating the teaching focus to stimulate students' comprehensive abilities,
(2) enhancing student-centered communicative approach to teaching,
(3) incorporating formative assessment with summative assessment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Challenges experienced</td><td colspan="2">Relating to policymakers:
limited help and support from the top-level, such as expert support and resource support

Constraints within the University:
(1) lack of resources,
(2) the context of the university, and
(3) lack of confidence in the expertise and capacity of the teachers and students</td></tr>
<tr><td>Changes claimed</td><td colspan="2">(1) provision of guideline for executing the reform
(2) provision of resource support, such as language labs and multimedia classrooms and innovative projects,
(3) reorganization of the classes based on students' English scores</td></tr>
</table>

Table 5.1 What the university did concerning the implementation of CECR 2007

5.2.1 Reception of CECR 2007 at the university-level

As demonstrated in Table 5.1, the university-level administrators believed that in some respects, the reform was a positive response to the demands of the current societal and economic changes in China and endorsed its general guidance and direction of CE teaching and learning nationwide at the tertiary level. As the vice-president stated in the interview,

> The national curriculum is very timely and meaningful to meet the development of our country's (China) social and economic development. It serves as a guideline and direction for nationwide CE teaching and learning. Our university-based college English teaching syllabus was designed under the guideline of the requirement (ULA, Ref. p.103:31-32).

However, the university leaders also had reservation about the national policy intent. First and foremost, they thought there were some limitations of the national policy document, such as no explicit guideline to direct and guide the universities on how to execute the national initiative. Thus, even if the universities attended to carry it out, they were puzzled and confused in how to address it. As the vice-president noted in the interview,

> The national policy document tells us what the changes are, but concerning how to carry out the changes, it provides no explanation. We were put into a difficult situation, you know, we have to do something because it is a national reform. Thus, we know we have to change in some way, but we don't know exactly how to make the changes (ULA, Ref. p.101:7-10).

Concerning the shift of teaching focus from speaking and reading to listening and speaking and also the changes in the teaching method in the national curriculum, the institutional leaders considered it difficult to address them if there were no relevant changes in the national CET. In their perspective, the main purpose of learning English for undergraduate was to pass CET and to add 'some capital to their job-hunting'. As the leader said,

> To shift the teaching focus from reading and writing to listening and speaking is only a good intention. Everybody knows that communication is important for a language. But

> as long as there is no speaking portion in the national college test, the teaching focus on speaking is difficult to realize. As for students, CET is more important than their speaking, for the certificate is tangible (ULA, Ref. p.101:19-23).

Furthermore, the university leaders perceived it impractical and inappropriate for the non-experimental universities to replicate the successful experiences and practices of some experimental universities advocated in the official report 2006 due to the different and specific circumstances. University L was not chosen as an experimental institution to trial the national curriculum, hence the leader complained the support and investment from government to execute the reform was relatively limited. With respect to the autonomy and flexibility that the national policy granted to specific universities to carry out the reform under their specific circumstances based on their situated context, the leaders revealed lack of confidence and interest in adapting the reform in a creative and individualized way. They perceived that the freedom and autonomy was impossible if CET was used as the only national criterion to evaluate CE teaching and learning and simultaneously an important parameter for university ranking. As the vice-president stated in the interview,

> It seems that the national reform gives specific universities some freedom to carry out the policy. But, you know, I don't think we have the ability to realize the freedom. Particularly, we are constrained in resources and our teachers don't have the expertise, either. In addition, we can't do what we want unless CET was not used as the only national criteria to evaluate CE teaching and learning and a major means to assess universities (ULA, Ref. p.105: 10-15).

Nevertheless, the university leaders claimed that they had to make some responses to the reform as it was mandatory. Thus, some measures had been taken to carry out the top-down reform, and concomitantly some changes had been achieved in the university. As the vice-president noted,

> Though I, personally, held some conservative opinions about the national curriculum reform, our university had attempted to overcome all the difficulties in order to make some changes in college English teaching and learning within our capacities. You know, it is a national reform, we have to do something (ULA, Ref. p.101: 22-25).

5.2.2 Actions taken at university-level to enact CECR 2007

To ensure the possible smooth implementation of CECR 2007, the national policy intent puts forward some requirements on specific universities in terms of what to teach, how to teach, how to assess and how to administrate. The universities are expected to work at their own pace to adapt the national reform to the local circumstances as well as for the local needs and interests.

Generally speaking, actions taken in university L tended to be largely in accordance with the national requirements. Based on the university-level documents and interviews of the university vice-president, actions taken at the university level can be categorized as (1) the teaching objectives was regulated to enhance students' comprehensive abilities; (2) student-centered communicative approach to teaching was encouraged; and (3) formative assessment was incorporated with summative assessment.

(1) Enhancing students' comprehensive abilities, particularly listening

The existed previously University-level CE syllabus was designed in 2000 based on the national CER 1999, which focused on students' reading and writing. In 2007, University L redesigned a university-level CE syllabus according to CECR 2007, and changed the teaching objective from focusing on reading and writing to all-round abilities. As the new syllabus said,

> The overall objective of College English is to cultivate students' ability to use English in a well-round and comprehensive way, and to arouse the enthusiasm of teachers' teaching and students' learning (University-level CE syllabus, 2007, p.2).

However, there was no specific emphasis on listening and speaking, which was a major demand in the national syllabus. The institutional administrator explained in the interviews that specific emphasis on some aspects of English teaching and learning such as listening and speaking might mislead teachers and students to neglect other aspects like reading and writing and translation, which were equally important for students, 'particularly in CET 4 examinations' (ULA, Ref. p. 138:11-13).

The teaching content of the university-level syllabus demonstrated a similar emphasis on the textbook as required by the national curriculum. However, the university syllabus tended to have exerted more effort and time in listening than speaking. After the year of 2008, CE teaching in University L was separated into two separate sections, reading and writing as one, and listening as the other. During the compulsory 240 hours CE teaching and learning in each semester, the time of reading and writing was reduced from 220 hours in 2007 to 180 hours in 2011, whilst listening was improved from 40 hours to 60 hours (University-level CE syllabus, 2007, p.9).

With regard to the rationale for the change, the university-level administrators stated in the interview that the portion of listening was improved in new CET, thus, the university had to make some adjustments.

> Students' listening ability in our university, as far as I know, is very low. The new CET 4 improved the portion of listening from 15% to 35%, that means that listening will decide, in a great degree, whether students can pass CET 4 or not. Thus, we have to provide more help to our students in listening, which is also a major requirement of the national reform (ULA, Ref. p. 138:22-26).

(2) Regulating a student-centered communicative approach to teaching

The national policy required specific universities to provide different guidance for different groups of students and instruct them in accordance with their aptitude. Three levels of requirements were set for undergraduate CE teaching, namely, basic requirements, intermediate requirements and higher requirements. Students in University L were classified into two levels in 2008, namely Level A and Level B, rather than three levels required by the policy, due to limitation of teachers and resources. In addition, there were no specific differences for the different level students in terms of teaching content, teaching methods and assessment. As the administrator stated,

> Dividing students into different levels is to make it scientific and convenient for teachers and students. In terms of how to teach and what to teach, that depends on teachers. But the university evaluates all the students by using the same examination

> paper. That is fair for all the students. No matter which level they are in now, they are required and encouraged to pass CET examination (ULA, Ref. p. 138:22-26).

To stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and communicative abilities, the university teaching syllabus encouraged teachers to apply CLT at their instructions. CE teaching innovative projects were established to arouse teachers' interest and motivation in improving their teaching. However, the statistics in the university document indicated that the project to CE innovation was quite limited, one each year, which was much less than other disciplines. When probed what help and support the university had provided to enhance teachers' professional improvement to execute the national initiative, the administrators confessed that little help had provided due to some situated and realistic difficulties, such as lack of resources and teacher's tight teaching schedule.

(3) Incorporating formative assessment with summative assessment

From 2007, University L began to require the departments and teachers to incorporate formative assessment and summative assessment to evaluate student learning. With regard to the specific procedure and methods to conduct it, some autonomy was granted to the specific departments. However, the major evaluation methods were still the university-level final-term examinations and CET 4 according to the regulations, and the formative assessment mainly involved students' classroom attendance and participation, which was different from the national curriculum reform, that is, using formative assessment to stimulating students' communicative proficiency and evaluating the learning process (CECR 2007).

CET 4 was revised in the national policy in terms of format and scoring, and specific universities were granted some freedom and flexibility to participate in the national exam and decide their passing scores. Based on the university regulations, CET 4 was a must for all undergraduates, and specific passing rate of CET 4 was set for the department leaders. Furthermore, CET was used as a major means to evaluate teachers' teaching and the management of the department, which tended to have influenced significantly the department management and the frontline

teachers' classroom instructions.

5.2.3 Challenges experienced at the university-level to enact CECR 2007

The university leaders stated that they experienced great challenges in the process of implementing the national policy, mainly including (1) limited help and support from the top-level policy actors, (2) the nature of the university, and (3) lack of confidence in the expertise and capacity of the teachers and students.

Challenge 1: limited help and support from the top-level policy actors

It was found that tensions to enact the national policy in University L were increased because of limited help and support from the top-level policymakers. As the leader said,

> University L had received no specific and concrete support in terms of investment, equipment, technology or expertise, but we had to report yearly how and what had achieved about college English reform in the provincial and national college English meetings. It is really a pressure, thus, we have to do the policy as much as we can within our capacity and situation (ULA, Ref. p. 136: 13-17).

Challenge 2: the context of the university

According to the institutional administrator, the nature of the university was another challenge to enact the national reform. The major principle in the university was science, and the students were mostly male from countryside, most of whom expected to be engineers and technicians after graduation. CET 4 certificate was more important to students than their oral English abilities in job-hunting. Apart from the pragmatic functions of CE learning for the graduates, the leader also mentioned that CET 4 has been one of the major priorities among the institutional interests.

> Our university, you know, mainly focuses on scientific subjects and most of students are males. What they need most is to pass CET 4, for it is important for their job-hunting, and also CET 4 has been the only tangible means to evaluate College English teaching in our country (ULA, Ref. p. 132:30-35).

The enactment of CECR 2007 needed to take into account of the situated circumstances and the teaching realities. Different kinds of situated constraints inhibited University L from fully delivery of the intended changes, one of which was limitation of the resources. As the university-level administrator noted in the interviews,

> We cannot follow exactly the requirements of the policy, you know, we have to consider our actual situation and context. Technology and Web-based English teaching, I think, is very necessary, but because of the limitation of our resources, it is difficult for our university to ensure that all English classes are conducted in multi-media classrooms, no mention in Language labs and access to Internet (ULA, Ref. p, 132:23-35).

Challenge 3: lack of confidence in the expertise and capacity of the teachers and students

Last but not least, the administrators also expressed their lack of confidence in the expertise and capacity of the teachers to employ the imposed changes at the classroom level. It is worth highlighting that the university provided limited professional support and help to teachers, albeit they acknowledged that teachers were the main practitioners in enacting the reform, and they lacked confidence in teachers' capacities and expertise.

The same mistrust was also conveyed to the students with regard to their English proficiencies, especially in their listening and speaking abilities. As the leader remarked in the interview,

> Concerning teachers' English proficiency and their technological abilities, I do not think they are capable of applying the changes intended in the national policy, particularly in the new teaching model. With respect to students, I don't think they could understand fully if teachers speak no Chinese at all. You know, most of our students are from countryside, and their listening and speaking in English are not good enough. They might be frustrated by the total English instructions and lose their motivation and interest (ULA, Ref. p. 135:20-25).

5.2.4 Changes claimed at the university level

To ensure an acceptable response to the national curriculum reform, the university leaders stated that they did what they could do under their specific circumstances. Concomitantly, some changes were claimed in the University-level, while, others were not due to various difficulties and challenges experienced. University L attached some public importance to the national curriculum reform. The artifacts and posters of the university were full of slogans with respect to CER such as 'further CE reform, and improve the quality of teaching and learning'. In the language lab, we could also see the words like 'following the demand of the era, improving listening and speaking in English'.

The university-level implementation plan was designed in 2007, and then the related regulations were made, and as a result, some changes were achieved in the university. As the university leader mentioned in the interview,

> When the formal and full CER began to expand to all universities, the university had responded actively in order to carry out the significant policy. …We held several university level staff meetings to introduce the national policy. Based on our specific conditions, we regulated our implementation plans (ULA, Ref. p.132:12-16).

The main changes claimed at the university level as the result of the national curriculum mainly contained (1) provision of guidelines for executing the reform, (2) provision of resource support, such as language labs, multimedia classrooms and innovative projects, and (3) reorganization of the classes based on students' English scores.

(1) Provision of guidelines for executing the reform in the university

In September 2007, university-level implementation plan of CECR 2007 was executed under the guidance of the national curriculum, which normalized how the reform would be applied gradually in the university. Following the plan, a university-level CE teaching syllabus was designed in November 2007, which was to provide guidance for CE teaching and learning in the university. However, as reported in Section 5.2.2, the guideline provided by the university seemed to have imparted an imbalanced emphasis on listening due to its importance in CET, rather

than focus on both speaking and listening demanded by the reform.

(2) Provision of resource support

The national policy emphasized that the quality of teachers was key to the improvement of the teaching quality, and required specific universities to focus on the training and development of teachers and created favorable conditions for the possible adoption of the new teaching model. To meet the requirement, University L launched some innovative projects and funds to promote teachers' motivations for improvement. To enhance the technology demanded in the national reform, three language labs were built and 5 multimedia classrooms were decorated in March 2008 (ULA, Ref. p. 138:34-36).

However, the administrative management and resource support to the frontline teachers tended to be insufficient, as the leader admitted in the interview,

> We did want to provide teachers sufficient help and resource support. But, to be honest, the support is not sufficient due to some specific difficulties. Anyway, you know, we tried what we could and built several language labs, and established some innovative teaching projects to stimulate some changes in the classroom instructions (ULA, Ref. p. 139:12-16).

(3) Reorganization of the classes based on students' English scores

The national policy recommended dividing students into three levels according to their capacities and aptitude, and also strengthened students should be taught and assessed differently. To meet the demand, students in University L were grouped into levels according to their English scores in matriculation examination in September 2008. However, it is worth mentioning that in University L, students were classified into two levels and all the students were taught the same materials and assessed by the same criterion. Thus, level-based teaching in University L was quite different from the national requirement.

In the view of the university leaders, the preconditions for executing the reform were ensured in University L, and some resource support, though limited, was provided. However, the changes claimed at the university level tended to have

focused on the changes in the structure, such as paper-based guidelines concerning CE teaching and learning and the provision of some physical conditions, rather than deep changes in the culture or support to teachers to ensure deep changes in the classroom teaching, although the leaders lacked confidence in teachers' expertise and capacities to enact the intended changes. How and to what extent CECR 2007 was implemented at the institutional level tended to influence how and what the lower level (the department and the individual teachers) could do or should do to enact CECR 2007.

5.3 What did the department do to enact CECR 2007?

This section reports the analysis of departmental documents and interviews of the department administrator. The top-down curriculum reform and the relevant university-level actions and changes were re-interpreted and re-contextualized in the department before it reached to the front-line teachers (see Table 5.2).

The department was confronted with the national policy as well as the related university-level regulations, and was expected to execute the changes under the workplace circumstances. In the perspective of the department leaders, measures taken at the university level provided prerequisites for the enactment of CECR 2007, such as changes in the university regulations and changes in structure, such as language labs built and level-based teaching adopted. However, the department leaders perceived that CECR 2007 had not been implemented fully at the university level, such as less attention given to the intended pedagogy and imbalanced emphasis on listening. Concerning the national policy, the departmental leaders expressed their skepticism about the curriculum intent. In their view, the reform was 'too ideal to perform' and 'too abstract to approach' (DLA, Ref. p. 95). They also complained about their powerless in formulating university-level regulations, some of which, in their perception, were impractical, such the increasing CET pass rate.

It is worth noting that the departmental accountability tended to be the university level administrators, rather than to the top-level policy makers or the grassroots level teachers or the students. Under the pressure of the institutional agenda, the

department was observed to have attempted to implement the changes which were strengthened by the university regulations, such as more focus on CET score, a major means to evaluate the departmental management by the university leaders. In addition, the department administrators intended to relay the pressure to the frontline teachers and set certain passing rate of CET 4 for them, rather than to provide teachers sufficient support and help needed by the national policy.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Pre-action Perceptions</td><td>General endorsement of the principle</td><td>the reform content and its guide role</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Reservations about the national policy</td><td>Similar to the institutional leader:
skepticism about the shift of teaching focus and limited changes in college English test.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Different from the institutional leaders:

(1) lack of interest in the national policy,
(2) the impractical function of the national curriculum.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Actions</td><td colspan="2">(1) regulating a new teaching model,
(2) re-contextualizing formative assessment,
(3) adopting new means to evaluate teacher.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Challenges experienced</td><td colspan="2">Similar to the institutional leaders:
characteristics of University L, lack of confidence in the expertise and capacity of the teachers and students.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Different from the institutional leaders:
Related to the university:
(1) constraints from the university-level regulations,
(2) little help and support from the institution,
(3) limited resource and equipment.

Related to the workplace conditions:
(4) the workplace realities, such as large class size, tight teaching schedule.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Changes claimed</td><td colspan="2">(1) regulation of departmental level teaching plans,
(2) adoption of new teaching materials,
(3) adjustment in the classroom procedures.</td></tr>
</table>

Table 5.2 What the department did concerning the implementation of CECR 2007

The major categories of what the department did to enact CECR 2007 were summarized similar to the university-level based on the emerged major theme patterns for the convenience of comparison, including the department leaders' interpretation of the reform, actions taken at the department level, challenges perceived at the departmental level, and changes claimed as the result of CECR 2007.

5.3.1 Re-interpretation of CECR 2007 at the department level

As we will see in the discussion section, the leaders at the departmental level demonstrated some similar perceptions about the national curriculum as the university-level leaders. For example, the department administrators also agreed with the general guiding role of the top-down policy. As the dean said in the interview,

> We really need a nationwide syllabus to guide our teaching, and it can guide our direction in English teaching, otherwise our teaching will become aimless and get into confusion. Particularly, our textbooks and CET are based on the syllabus, so it is really important to get a general guideline (DLA, Ref. p. 96:12-14).

The department leaders also strengthened the importance of examinations, particularly CET to the students, teachers and the whole department. As the leader explained in the interview,

> CET 4 is very important for undergraduate students. Firstly it can stimulate students' motivation and interest in learning English; secondly certificate of CET 4 is very helpful during their job-hunting. Therefore, teachers should focus on CET examination in their teaching and students should also regard CET 4 as a priority in their university learning. CET 4 is an important criterion to evaluate teachers' teaching and also the administration of our department (DLA, Ref. p.100:5-8).

Concerning the application of the prescribed pedagogical changes, the department leaders also doubted teachers' and students' English proficiency and abilities. As the dean stated,

> Concerning teachers' English proficiency and their abilities, I do not think they are capable of applying the changes intended in the national policy, particularly in the new teaching model. In addition, students in our university are mainly from countryside, and their English are not good enough. You know, some of them may even not be able to understand the teachers, not mention to participate in the classroom activities (DLA, Ref. P. 98: 7-11).

However, the department leaders uniformly demonstrated skepticism about the national policy intent. Instead, in their views the university-level regulations were more significant than the national policy. As the department leader noted,

> To be quite honest, I hadn't read the national syllabus thoroughly, and not quite clear about the details of the intended changes. Our university had made our implementation plan and university-level regulations to carry out the national reform. You know, because of some practical difficulties, we had to adapt the national policy to our contextual constraints. Therefore, what I care about is the university level regulations (DLA, Ref. P. 98: 11-17)

Concerning the formulation of the university-level regulations, the departmental administrators lamented their powerless and voiceless. In the dean's view, the university failed to take the realities of the workplace into consideration, and consequently made some regulations that were difficult and impossible for the department and teachers to approach, such as level-based teaching and student-centered communicative teaching model. As the dean lamented in the interview,

> The regulations in our university are not practical with regard to our conditions and students. The university regulated level-based student teaching, which is a good intension. But, we have limited teachers and language labs, thus we have to assign more students in each class. On average, there are around 65 students in each class. Thus, it is difficult for the teachers to apply student-centered communicative teaching model. In addition, we have tight teaching schedule and heavy workload (DLA, Ref. p.94: 10-15).

To ensure the proposed changes were enacted at the classroom level, the department leaders perceived it necessary to regulate some rules and regulations to

specify some items in the university-level syllabus, and also to impart teachers some pressure to make some changes in their teaching practices. As the dean explained in the interview,

> During the first two years (2007—2009), we just redesigned teachers' teaching plan according to new requirement and new textbooks, and encouraging more interaction and communication to cultivate students' listening and speaking. We did not promulgate new department-level rules in case teachers suffer too much pressure. However, after two-year transitional period, you know, I found that the teachers were teaching so differently, some of them even forgot what CECR 2007 was about. They just taught their own way, and students from different teachers differed so much in their oral English, so we think that we should do something to force teachers to focus on cultivating listening and speaking (DLA, Ref. p. 110:20-37).

5.3.2 Actions taken at the department level to enact CECR 2007

This section documents what the department did to implement the national and institutional changes, and the rationale underpinning these actions. That is, why and how some changes (e.g. changes in regulation and adoption of a new teaching model) achieved, while others not (i.e. re-culture the workplace and professional development of the teachers). Under the guidance of the national CE policy intent, particularly the university-level implementation plan, the CE department readjusted the regulations concerning CE teaching and learning, and then some specific actions were taken. However, the findings revealed that actions taken at the departmental level were not only impacted by the departmental leaders' interpretation of the prescribed changes and the situated realities in the workplace, but also constrained by the university level context and regulations.

Based on analysis of the department-level report on how to carry out CE reform and interviews of the department-level leaders, actions taken at the department level were summarized under similar categories of the intended changes and changes at the university level, including

(1) Regulating a new teaching model: '171' teaching model was formulated, that is, in every 90-minute teaching period, ten minutes for listening comprehension and

ten minutes for oral practice.

(2) Re-contextualizing formative assessment: final examination occupies 85% and classroom performance 15%.

(3) Adopting new means to evaluating teachers: adopting two means, namely, student feedback and CET pass rate, to evaluate teachers.

(Department-level teaching plan, 2010)

The national policy intent was further mediated and filtered within the workplace. The teaching model was shifted from the ICT-based communicative approach in the national curriculum to CLT in the institutional level, then to the '171' teaching model in the department, that is, the teaching period was mechanically divided into three parts, which seemed quite different from the national requirement. However, in the view of the department leaders, '171' teaching model was much more concrete compared with the student-centered communicative teaching model, thus, it was easier for teachers to understand and to apply in their classroom instructions. Concerning the formulation and promotion of '171' teaching model, the dean admitted that it was based on his teaching experiences and perceptions of communicative teaching. He admitted that he organized some discussions concerning the '171' teaching model, and the teachers seemed approval of it, as no opposite voices were heard from them.

It is worth highlighting that there was no specific reward or punishment mechanism or regulations in the department to superintend the set passing rate of CET 4, thus, CET pressure of the teachers tended to be reduced. As the dean said,

> Our teachers have very heavy workload. On average, each one has 18 hours teaching weekly. On weekend, some of them also have some compulsory courses. Thus, we don't want to punish teachers for not achieving the set goals or rewarding them for doing it. We just want to remind teachers that there is a goal and we have to work hard to achieve it (DLA, Ref. p. 110:23-26).

In addition, the department leaders indicated their confidence that CET was not contradicted to CLT teaching. From their perspectives, more active and interactive classroom atmosphere and teaching methods could stimulate students' learning interests, and then would positively influence their learning outcome.

5.3.3 Challenges experienced at the department level to enact CECR 2007

The department experienced some similar challenges as the university did in the actual enactment of CECR 2007, such as lack of resources and constraints by the nature of the university, and lack of confidence in the expertise and capacity of the teachers and students. The faculty leaders also admitted that actions taken at the institutional level provided some preconditions for the national CE reform to be realized at the workplace such as level-based English teaching, newly-built language labs and incorporation of formative assessment.

However, the departmental leader acknowledged that the difficulties and tensions to execute the national reform were further exacerbated by both the workplace realities and the university level actions and regulations. Challenges experienced at department level to enact the national reform can be grouped into two major categories, including challenges related to the university and challenges related to the workplace conditions. Each category subsumed sub-categories as follow.

Challenges related to the university

Challenge 1: constrains from the university-level regulations,

CET had been attached great importance in University L, and the university set increasingly CET passing goals for the department, such as 57 % of the total students in 2008, 60% in 2009, and 63% in 2010. The dean stated that the increasing passing rate set by the university and using CET pass rate as a major criterion to evaluate the department administration exerted great pressure and challenges for the department, particularly with regard to the student realities and English proficiency. As the dean noted,

> Our university (University L) is a comprehensive university, and the majority of the principles are related to coal engineering. Among the undergraduates, almost one third of them are self-funded students who come directly from local coal plants, and their

> English level is very low and limited. Passing CET 4 is really hard for them through two years of teaching and learning English (DLA, Ref. p.95:30-34).

The pressure of achieving high CET pass rate was even strengthened within the specific contexts at the workplace, such as the classroom realities and limited teaching time.

Challenge 2: little help and support from the university

In addition, like the ULAs complained little help and support had provided to the university from the top-level, the DLAs also pointed out that the department had received little help and support from the institution, particularly in terms of how to address the intended changes.

> The leaders in our university attached more attention and provided more help to the major principles, such as Computer science, Coal engineering and Communication and technology. English, particularly, CET 4 is regarded as the complementary tool to realize their glory. It seemed that the university only cares about the passing rate of CET. Concerning how to improve the English teaching, they let our department to figure it out, which is unrealistic and impossible (DLA, Ref. p.96: 22-16).

Challenge 3: limited resource and equipment

The faculty leaders admitted that limited resource and equipment invested from the university also constrained the realization of the prescribed changes promoted in CECR 2007, particularly concerning the changes in teaching focus and pedagogy. As he lamented in the interview,

> The university invested three language labs, but it is very limited to conduct computer-based English teaching. You know, there is no Internet access, and even the computers are often broken down. For most of the time, we had to have English class in the traditional classrooms with tape recorders. Without equipment and technology, we don't know how to conduct the new teaching model and ensure students' autonomous and individualized teaching and learning (DLA, Ref. p.96: 22-16).

Challenge related to the workplace conditions

Challenge 4: the realities at the workplace: large class size and heavy workload

Due to the limitation of resources, the department leaders complained that the CE classes, 60-70 students in each on average, were over large-sized, and difficult or even impossible for the teachers to employ student-centred instructions. As the administrator stated,

> The challenge also comes from the actual classroom reality, particularly in our department. English classes are very large, on average each class has 65 or over. Particularly, the teachers have to finish the teaching content and various exercises within the limited teaching time. I think that it is unrealistic and problematic to apply the new curriculum at in the actual classroom teaching (DLA, Ref. p.96: 13-16).

In addition, each of the CE teachers had very heavy workload, on average, 16-20 hours teaching each week. It was perceived difficult or even impossible for the department to organize some opportunities to develop teachers professionally, which, as a result, increased the tensions and challenges of managing and implementing the intended changes at the department level.

5.3.4 Changes claimed at the department level

Despite the challenges and tensions, the department administrators acknowledged that they had taken some actions to implement the national reform and relevant departmental regulations were made. The underlying reasons, based on the department leaders, on the one hand, were that they had 'no choices', but on the other hand, they also wanted to 'make some changes for the sake of students' (DLA, Ref. p.21). Concomitantly, some changes were claimed at the department level as the result of CECR 2007, specifically containing (1) regulation of the departmental level teaching plans, (2) adoption of new teaching materials, and (3) changes of the classroom procedures.

(1) Regulation of the departmental level teaching plan

The department leaders complained that both the national and university-level changes were too abstract in the workplace to be realized, thus the national policy

and the university level regulations needed to be re-localized and re-specified to ensure the actual utilization and application. Thus, the departmental level teaching plan of CE teaching was regulated, as the dean explained,

> The policy really points an excellent direction for English teaching, but it is just a theory and a framework. The policy makers, in my view, have not taken into careful account of the feasibility and availability of the reform in terms of teaching resources, teacher's self-efficacy and students' adaptable abilities. Even the implementation plan in our university, I think is too abstract and general, specific methods and regulations at the department level are needed in order to make some real changes (DLA, Ref. p.22:37-39).

(2) Adoption of new teaching materials

New revised textbooks, specifically, *New Horizon College English* (3rd edition) were adopted, which was one of recommended textbooks to enhance the implementation of the national curriculum reform by the government.

(3) Change of the classroom procedures

CE classroom teaching was re-organized according to the new teaching model. To help students prepare for CET, the department organized CET training classes on the weekends to introduce exam-related strategies and mock exams. Some experienced teachers were chosen to teach the training classes, and extra monetary reward was granted to them. According to the leader, the teachers were proud to have been chosen to teach CET training classes as it was recognition of their teaching excellence in addition to the extra income.

Furthermore, teachers in the department were required to observe the experienced and model teachers' lessons, and to communicate with peers concerning how to improve their instructions and conceptions. However, the dean acknowledged that the department had provided limited opportunities and help to teachers' professional development, and there was no formal learning community to encourage teachers' collaboration and collegialities among the peers (DLA, Ref. p. 110:21).

Therefore, the national curriculum reform was further mediated at the department level. When confronted with the external policy intent, the departmental leaders, like ULAs, attempted to fit it within the local realties of the workplace, rather than to cooperate it with cohort efforts from the frontline teachers or make some real changes at the classroom level. In addition, the department-level administrators continued to doubt CE teachers' English proficiency and their abilities to enact the reform, but simultaneously failed to provide appropriate support to the frontline teachers, such as organizing a department-level professional learning community.

5.4 Reflective remarks on issues of intention and implementation

Generally speaking, the university and department leaders agreed with the overall policy in principle, but clearly they held doubts about the actual execution of the reform within local constraints. They did what the structure and conditions allowed and played the mediating roles accordingly. For example, the university created relevant regulations and prepared some physical conditions for the national policy. However, these were not perceived by the university and department leaders sufficient enough to ensure the full implementation of the reform. Actions taken at the department level were concrete workplace activities concerning CE teaching and learning, which were generally consistent with the university-level syllabus rather than the original national curriculum. Thus, the abstract policy intent was translated into the situated activities to fit into the culture and realities of the local contexts, which tended to less fully reflected the intentions of the national reform.

As acceptable responses to the national reform, layers of changes were achieved or claimed by the university and department leaders. The representations of changes at the various layers were summarized in Table 5.3, from which we can observe that the intended changes were filtered or even misrepresented in the process of re-interpretation and re-contextualization in the local contexts. Some issues concerning intention and implementation arose at the university and department level, which necessitate further illustration in order to pave the way for understanding and discussing changes at the individual level.

	Intended changes	Changes claimed at university level	Changes claimed at department level
Teaching content	Competence in listening and speaking →	Comprehensive abilities in English, →	Comprehensive abilities in English, particularly listening
	Series of textbooks published	adoption of the promoted textbooks	adoption of the promoted textbooks
Pedagogy	Student-centred communicative approach; ICT teaching model →	Communicative approach encouraged →	'171' teaching model
Assessment	Formative assessment; Summative assessment →	Formative assessment (students' attendance and participation), Summative assessment →	Final examination occupies 85% and classroom performance 15%
Testing (CET)	CET is non-compulsory ; CET scores to evaluate students' listening and speaking. →	CET 4 is compulsory for all undergraduates; set passing rate for the department →	Assigning CET pass rate to individual teachers; using CET scores to evaluate teacher
Teaching Administration	A system of teaching and teaching administration document; a system of faculty development →	Resources provided; teaching innovative projects and funds →	Increasing pressure of CET on teachers

Table 5.3 Intended changes and changes claimed at university and department level (Note: arrows indicate responses to the intended changes)

(1) Limited accommodation of the teaching objectives and focus

CECR 2007 put forward explicitly that the purpose of curriculum reform is to promote students' listening and speaking abilities. In order to cultivate students' capacity of using English in authentic environment, more efforts are needed to enhance students' cultural awareness and English communicative proficiency (CECR 2007). University L adopted the textbook recommended by the government

to enhance the intended changes. However, with regard to the teaching focus, more attention was given to listening than speaking due to the increased importance of listening in new CET (35%). The priority of the institution and the department was the pass rate of CET 4, rather than students' cultural awareness and English communicative proficiency. Thus, CET, which was revised to enhance the realization of the new teaching objectives and pedagogy, was attached an imbalanced emphasis in University L, which turned out to be a major barrier for the enactment of the intended pedagogical change.

(2) Inadequate provision of support in the intended pedagogy

The changes concerning pedagogy in CECR 2007 involved utilizing Computer-and Web-based teaching to liberate teachers from heavy workload and constraints of teaching time and space. Simultaneously, student-centered CLT was encouraged, and individualized and autonomous learning was emphasized (CECR 2007). The institution regulated level-based teaching and CLT teaching model, but the multi-media classrooms were limited and no internet access in the classrooms due to resource constraints, which made the intended pedagogical changes difficult or even impossible to be realized. The Computer-and Web-based student-centered teaching model was not adopted as intended, and individualized and autonomous learning was not ensured. The pedagogy required at the university level was CLT in the traditional classrooms, and continuously the department-level regulation concerning the teaching approach was changed into the '171' teaching model, rigidly separating the teaching period into three parts. Therefore, through layers of localization and re-contextualization, the teaching model turned out to be different from the proposed pedagogy.

(3) Interpretation of the requirement of testing and assessment

To reduce the negative backwash of CET, the new CET in CECR 2007 encouraged universities to change CET from compulsory requirement for undergraduate qualification to non-compulsory, and issued score repots rather than passing certificate. Universities were provided some autonomy to set passing scores according to their students' actual English abilities (CET, 2005). However, in University L, all the undergraduates were required to take CET 4 by institutional authority. The university even set higher and higher CET pass rate for the

departmental leaders. As a result, the department had to try every means to achieve the set goal, and eventually passed the pressure to the grassroots teachers. In addition, CECR 2007 proposed to adopt formative, as well as summative assessment to enhance the learning process rather than to evaluate the product. The summative assessment in University L was reduced to focus on students' classroom attendance and performance, and the department regulated students' classroom performance occupied 15% of the final examinations. Thus, formative assessment in University L turned out to be specific regulations of students' attendance, rather than a means to assess the process of student learning and focus on students' communicative abilities.

(4) Insufficient management of the curriculum reform

The national requirements put forward explicitly that the specific universities should strengthen guidance and supervision of the whole teaching process, and improve the faculty employment and management in order to guarantee a reasonable teacher-student ratio. However, in university L, teachers tended to be totally ignored when the national policy was translated into situated regulations and activities. Regardless of the great expansion of students, limited new teachers were recruited, which led to large class size and unreasonable teacher-student ratio. The national reform demanded specific universities to establish a system of faculty development, and to enhance training and development of teachers to ensure that they could adapt to the new teaching model. The findings indicated university L launched little or even no relevant training opportunities for the teachers except for some limited innovation projects and funds. The department leaders excused themselves that the teachers were too busy to participate in seminars or workshops, thus few opportunities were provided or organized to develop teachers professionally. Instead, the teachers were challenged by the great pressure of the CET pass rate from the institutional and departmental level regulations.

Therefore, through filtering and mediating at the university level and then at the department level, the national curriculum was shifted into some concrete situated activities. Some aspects which were perceived as impractical in the local contexts were filtered out such as the Computer and Web-based teaching, while others were attached more importance than demanded by the national policy, such as CET. It is

also worth highlighting that though university and department leaders acknowledged the important role of teachers as major practitioners of the curriculum reform, they did not invest or create opportunities to help and support the teachers, even though they held doubts about them in terms of their expertise and capacities to enact the policy. The university left this fundamental issue to the department, while the department failed continuously to tackle the heart of the reform. Thus, the central key challenge was passed on to the frontline teachers.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has reported how and to what extent the national policy was mediated at the university-level and then at the department-level. The national reform was found to be fitted into the existing local contexts after levels of mediation. Tangible exam results were prioritized in the institutional agenda, and then enhanced in the department. The key element to implement the reform, that is, professional support to teachers to ascertain changes in the classrooms, was ignored purposely by the university leaders, and then by the departmental administrators, although they acknowledged the paramount important role of teachers in enacting the reform and their continuous lack of trust in teachers' expertise and capacities. The institutional and departmental level mediation of the national reform follows and serves as groundwork and situated contexts for further exploring changes or non-changes at the individual level. Without professional support and simultaneously constrained by the local contexts, how and to what extent the grassroots teachers claimed and executed the national reform at the classroom level, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 respectively.

Chapter Six Findings: What did teachers say concerning enactment of the curriculum reform?

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings identified from analysis of teachers' interviews; specifically it includes teachers' perceptions of the national curriculum reform, challenges they experienced in their attempts to enact CECR 2007, and changes they claimed as the result of the national reform (see Table 6.1). The individual teachers demonstrated many similarities in their understanding of the prescribed changes, thus their perceptions are presented collectively in Section 6.2. Differences in the perceptions are also reported and the underlying reasons for are explored. Section 6.3 discusses challenges teachers experienced in their attempts to put the imposed changes into practice in the classrooms, and this is followed by the presentation of changes teachers claimed in Section 6.4 in terms of their teaching practices and their beliefs as the result of the reform. Issues with respect to the intentions of the national reform and teachers' perceptions are discussed in Section 6.5, and then a brief summary is presented in Section 6.6.

6.2 Teachers' perceptions of CECR 2007

The frontline teachers' understandings of the CECR 2007 indicated some similarities with the institutional leaders, such as the guide role of the national reform and concerns of CET. However, as the data demonstrated in the following parts, the teachers' understanding and perceptions of CECR 2007 seems more thorough and concrete compared with the administrators, particularly in terms of the shifted teaching focus and the changes in pedagogy and CET. Patterns of teachers' perceptions of the prescribed changes were subsumed into two major groups, namely, general endorsement of the principle and conservations about the policy intent, both of which included some subcategories.

Teacher's perceptions	general endorsement of the principle	(1)improvement in content and format in the revised textbook, (2)changes in CET strengthening students' listening.
	reservations about the policy intent	(1) mismatches among the national policy strands, (2) limited changes in CET.
Challenges experienced	Challenges related to the policy (1) high professional demand of the intended changes, (2) incompatibility of the intended changes with the continuing emphasis on knowledge acquisition in the Chinese educational context, (3) backwash effect of high stake examination, Challenges related to the model of dissemination at the government and university, and department level (4)the top-down model of disseminating innovation, Challenges related to university- and department-level leadership (5) leaders' insufficient management of the reform, Challenges related to teachers (6)conflicts between teachers' core values and the philosophy under the intended changes.	
Changes teachers claimed	Changes claimed in their practices	(1) teaching content shifted from focus on reading and writing to listening and speaking, (2) employing more class activities, and classroom atmosphere became more relaxed and active, (3) roles of teachers and students changed or even exchanged at classroom, (4) the changes in student assessments, and (5) the overall teaching method changed from grammar-translation method to communicative approach.
	Changes claimed in their beliefs	Beliefs about teaching and learning changed (1)beliefs about teaching shifted from knowledge transmitting to cultivating communicative abilities, (2)beliefs about learning changed from rote memorizing to developing the abilities of communication, Beliefs about the role of teacher and learner changed (3)beliefs about learner shifted from new knowledge recipient to active participator, (4)beliefs about teachers' role changed from knowledge transmitter and dominator to facilitator and helper.

Table 6.1 What teachers said concerning the implementation of CECR 2007

6.2.1 General endorsement of the reform in theory

All the teachers in the study endorsed the theory of the reform generally, particularly with respect to the emphasis on students' communicative capacity and interactive classroom teaching, which were perceived as necessary and important in the era of social and economic change and development. As Li stated in the interviews,

> The changes prescribed in CECR 2007 are meaningful and good. You know, before the reform, students just learn how to read and write, and prepare for the examinations. This reform is just like opening a window for students, which asks them to open their mouths and express their feelings and thoughts through English. That's a good tendency in the era of socio-economic change (TI, Li, Ref. p.9:19-22).

To ensure the enactment of CECR, and to examine the teaching and learning effect of the reform, CET was reformed and new textbooks were designed respectively. The teachers acknowledged that the improvement, though limited, in the content of the revised textbooks, and the increased portion of listening in CET stimulated students' learning interest, and provided some possibilities for them to organize interactive and communicative classroom activities. The students also began to concentrate more on their speaking and listening, particularly, in listening. As Zhao noted in the interview,

> I (Zhao) think the changes in textbook are appropriate and practical for the demands of the current students. In the content, some out-of-date articles and topics were deleted and some hot topics were added. I think the textbook improved a lot in the content (TI, Zhao, Ref. p.56:20-23).

However, despite the teachers' enthusiasm for the national curriculum, they also expressed their frustrations concerning the policy initiative.

6.2.2 Reservations about the policy intent

With respect to the changes required in the policy and the relevant changes in CET and the textbooks, all the teachers expressed, more or less, frustrations and worries. In the teachers' view, the national policy intent strengthened the importance of speaking as much as listening, but there were no sections of oral test in CET or

other university-level English examinations. The mismatches among the policy components inhibited teacher changes in their classroom instructions. As Li sated in the interviews,

> The national curriculum tends to cultivate students' comprehensive abilities, particularly their listening and oral English abilities. The emphasis on listening is reflected through the increase of listening score in CET4, in which listening accounts for 35% of the total. However, speaking isn't examined in CET, so teachers and students attached little importance to speaking. The mismatch between the requirements of the national policy and the content of CET really impacted teachers' and students' interests in oral English (TI, Li, Ref. p.9:4-6).

The other three participants (i.e. Zhang, Gao and Zhao) also expressed the similar difficulties,

> The content of CET should be changed, and particularly, speaking should be included. Otherwise the CET is a bit contradictory with CECR, which emphasize more on speaking and communication. That also leads to some difficulties in cultivating students' communicative abilities in class, for students are reluctant to participate in classroom activities for they think that is useless for examination (TI, Gao, Ref. p.79: 35-37).

Apart from the mismatches between CET and the policy requirements, the teachers also stated that the contents and formats of the textbooks, which were designed to ensure teachers' teaching consistent with the intended changes, were perceived to be inconsistent with the national policy. Thus, in the teachers' view, textbooks became a barrier for them to enact the national curriculum, rather than a stimulus of the implementation of the reform. As Li said in the interview,

> We're using *New Horizon English* (3rd edition). But objectively speaking, the current teaching material is not suitable to implement the reform. …The teaching content is too old to arouse students' interests …and it's not up-dated with the development of society, particularly it over-strengthens the ability of writing and reading in language, rather than the ability of listening and speaking, which is contradicted with the national College English reform (TI, Li, Ref. p. 45: 13-16).

Due to the mismatches among the policy strands, the teachers lamented that they were confused, to some extent, with how to carry out the inconsistent requirements at the classroom level when they attempted to. As Gao said in the interview,

> The mismatches between the requirements of the national policy and the content of CET really influenced negatively our attempts to implement the national reform (TI, Gao, Ref. p.69: 6).

6.3 Challenges experienced at the individual level to enact CECR 2007

The teachers identified some similar patterns of challenges in the process of implementing CECR 2007 as the institutional leaders, such as constraints of resources, lack of confidence in students' English proficiency and classroom realities. Among these challenges, it is worth noting the continuous lack of trust among the layers of policy actors, that is, the institutional leaders distrusted teachers and students, and the teachers were not confident with the leaders at the institutional and departmental levels. Another interesting finding is that the administrators complained limited help and support received from the government, whilst the teachers lamented that little help and support had provided to them from the institutional and departmental levels.

Apart from the similar challenges, the teachers added that they were also confronted with other difficulties in implementing the curriculum reform, which included four major categories: challenges related to the policy, challenges related to the linear means of dissemination, challenges related to leadership, and challenges related to teachers. Each category contained some sub-categories (see Table 6.2).

Challenges related to the policy

Challenge 1: high demands of the intended changes

CECR 2007 prescribed an obvious shift from reading and writing (the focus of the national syllabus 1999) to speaking and listening. Such a change imparted high demands on teachers' professional abilities and classroom management skills. All the teachers expressed that they were challenged, more or less, by the prescribed changes, particularly with respect to the student-centered communicative approach,

which put a high demand on their English proficiency. Gao, who had more than 25 years of teaching experiences, tended to worry more about her English proficiency. As she mentioned in the interview,

> CECR exerted great impact on me and my teaching. I used the translation and grammar- teaching before, and taught for examinations. If students could read and write in English, I would think that the teaching goals were achieved. But now I realize that that is not enough, and I have to change my teaching. I have to cultivate students' comprehensive abilities prescribed in CECR, but there are lots of difficulties. In particular, I worry about my own English abilities, especially, my oral English (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 74:40-43).

Challenges related to the policy	(1) high professional demand of the intended changes, (2)incompatibility of the intended changes with the continuing emphasis on knowledge acquisition in the Chinese educational context, (3) backwash effect of high stake examination,
Challenges related to the model of dissemination	(4)the linear means of disseminating innovation,
Challenges related to university and department-level leadership	(5) leaders' insufficient management of the reform,
Challenges related to teachers	(6)conflicts between teachers' core values and the philosophy under the intended changes.

Table 6.2 Challenges teachers experienced in enacting the curriculum reform

All the teachers also admitted that the new teaching model required them to have high capacities and skills to manage the class, and the flexibility to be ready to adjust and readjust their teaching approaches and teaching contents to cater for students' diverse demands and needs, which caused a great tension for them, particularly, in the large-size classes. To stimulate students' learning interests and participation, colourful and rich classroom activities had to be organized, which, in

the teachers' opinion, was also in conflict with the tight teaching schedule and the intense teaching content.

Therefore, the high demand of the national curriculum on teachers' English proficiency and manageable skills imposed great challenges on the teachers, which was also exacerbated by the teaching realities in the local contexts.

Challenge 2: incompatibility of the intended changes with the continuing emphasis on knowledge acquisition in the Chinese educational context

The teachers, particularly those who were not confident with their English capacities or classroom management skills, such as Gao and Zhao, expressed their doubts about the compatibility of the mandated changes with the Chinese educational context. In their understandings, the current educational situation in China was still dominated by the Confucian heritage with emphasis on knowledge acquisition, rather than the ability cultivation. Teachers and students were used to the teacher-dominated class, and students as the knowledge recipients, thus communicative approaches advocated in the national policy were incompatible with the current education situation. As Zhao noted in the interviews,

> The biggest cultural barrier is that CLT is in conflict with Chinese way of teaching and learning. In China, teachers are regarded as Masters, which means that all the things that teacher say are absolutely correct, and teachers can't make mistakes. That is deep-rooted in the Chinese way of thinking (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 72:15-19).

With which, Gao also agreed, as she added,

> In traditional English class, teachers dominate the whole class, just like a leader. But CLT puts students at the centre of class, and it's really hard for Chinese teachers and students to adjust (TI, Gao, Ref. p.56:20-25).

Challenge 3: backwash effect of high-stake examinations, particularly CET

Although the national curriculum reform prescribed that CET was not compulsory for non-major undergraduates, it explicitly proposed that the result of CET should be an important means to evaluate the teaching effects of specific universities. In University L, the pressure received from the national policy was observed to have

relayed from the university to the department, and then from the department to the frontline teachers. Three (i.e. Li, Gao and Zhao) of the total four participant teachers stated that they suffered great pressures from CET, and the frustration was further strengthened by the incongruences among CET and textbooks and the curriculum requirement. As Gao said,

> The content of CET should be changed, and particularly, speaking should be included; otherwise the CET is a bit contradicted with CECR, which emphasize more on speaking and communication (TI, Gao, Ref. p.79: 35-37).

In the perspectives of the teachers, CET became too over-emphasized in the agenda of the university and department, which turned out to be a great burden for them. As Zhao stated in the interview,

> Our university focuses too much on CET 4, so every day we are busy with that. ……CET becomes a great focus in our teaching, hoping the concerns over it can be reduced (TI, Zhao, Ref. p.59:39-41).

It is worth highlighting that Zhang tended to worry little about CET and the relevant institutional regulations. In her understanding, students' learning interests weighed more than the pressure of external examinations. If the students were highly motivated, they would regard examinations as stimulus rather than pressure for their study. Thus, what Zhang cared most was how to stimulate and motivate the students.

Challenges related to the means of dissemination

Challenge 4: the linear means of disseminating the reform

The finding results indicated that during the process of disseminating external initiatives, authority and power were exercised by different layers of the policy actors due to the hierarchical positions they occupied. Specifically, higher officials in MoE formulated CECR 2007, then passed it to the institutions, and then to the departments, and lastly to the frontline teachers to put it into practice. In the linear means of communication channel, teachers' voices could not be heard and their frustrations and worries could not be conveyed to the upper levels. The teachers were frustrated and confused with how to deal with the competing demands from

the government and the institution, i.e. communicative proficiency from the government and high performance outcome from the university. Thus, they gradually lost their enthusiasm in the national document, and put their major concerns on the immediate requirements. As Zhang said in the interview,

> In my view, most universities and teachers in China knew the national policy and system-level curriculum changes through top-down documents, that is, from national to university-level, and then to department-level, and then to our teachers. We are at the bottom level, to some extent, we are just passive receipts and practitioners of all level polices. Sometimes we have no access to the first hand national documents, so we have to follow the regulations in our university (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 36: 2-7).

The university continued the hierarchical means of managing the national reform within the institution. At the initial stage, what the university did was to hold some university-level meetings, and introduce the national reform to the CE teachers. Some institutional regulations concerning CER were, then, made and conveyed to the teachers to execute. As Gao mentioned in the interview,

> Our university held several meetings to introduce the curriculum reform and encouraged teachers to make some changes accordingly. While we teachers, the actual implementers, had to be passive receipts of the national, institutional and departmental policies, for no one wanted to listen to our opinions. The leaders just made levels of regulations, and expected us to perform them. They seemed cared nothing about the teachers (TI, Gao, Ref. p.58: 5-8).

In addition, the teachers also complained that the departmental leaders tended to follow the institutional leaders and use the power and authority to pressure them to do some changes, rather than to provide appropriate support and seek for their concerted efforts and cooperation. As Li stated,

> To implement the national reform, some university level regulations were made, and then some departmental rules were regulated. As teachers, you know, we really want to make some changes to improve and benefit our students. But the problem is how to achieve it. You know, we need support and relevant resources. We reported the problems to the department, but it seemed that the dean did not care, what he focused

on was only CET (TI, Li, Ref. p. 119: 30-38).

Challenges related to the university- and department-level leadership

Challenge 5: teachers' dissatisfaction with the management of the reform

In the teachers' perceptions, the leaders at the university and department levels lacked the expertise of CE teaching and learning, thus, the regulations they made, in the views of teachers, were not practical in CE teaching. As Zhang stated,

> Leaders in our university, in my view, only care about the CET. But concerning English teaching and learning, they know little. We don't think they are capable enough to regulate some meaningful means to change English teaching (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.34: 10-13).

Gao, who had been working in University L for more than 25 years, expressed her lack of confidence with the leaders' capacities of managing the reform and abilities to provide teachers appropriate professional help and support required by the national policy, as she said,

> Concerning the national reform, the leaders wanted to do something, but I doubt their management abilities. You know, the limited trainings they organized for us were all about teaching psychology and theory, and we found that was not useful and helpful to put the national reform into practices in the actual and practical classroom teachings (TI, Gao, Ref. p.57: 2-3).

Challenges related to teachers

Challenge 6: conflicts between teachers' core values and the philosophy underlying the intended changes

The findings revealed that the teachers shared, at least in their claims, some similar values and beliefs about the objectives of language teaching and learning, such as they all confirmed that the major goal of English teaching and learning was to cultivate students' communicative competence and the actual usage in real environment, rather than for examinations, which resonated with the requirement of the national curriculum. As Zhang remarked in the interviews,

> You know, the ultimate purpose to learn a language is to communicate with people by using it, so it is really important to stimulate students' listening and speaking in classroom

> teaching. Moreover, in more communicative and student-centred class, students like participating in the class activities and the classroom atmosphere is very relaxing and active (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.43: 41-43).

The similarities of EFL beliefs among teachers were understandable for they were educated and educated in the same educational system. However, the finding results also indicated that the teachers tended to have blended or even contradicted beliefs of traditional Chinese cultural and educational values, such as memorization and examination, and simultaneously Western-based theories of teaching and learning, like communication and application. The underpinning rationale was more likely to be the trend of globalization and the social and economic changes in China. As Zhao noted in the interview,

> I (Zhao) began to realize that the purpose of learning English was not only for the examination, but the actual application in the authentic environment. Particularly, as the globalization and social-economic development in China, it is more and more important for students to improve their speaking and listening (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 45: 23-29).

It is worth noting that the core values of the majority teachers (three out of four) about EFL teaching and learning, particularly in terms of pedagogy and means of learning were in conflict with student-centred communicative approach required by the national reform. The core beliefs tended to have determined the final classroom practices teachers conducted. For example, Gao and Zhao thought it was necessary for students to understand and grasp English knowledge, thus, they preferred to systemic language transmission by using both English and Chinese to ensure that students really understood the teaching content. Li perceived that accuracy in terms of pronunciation and grammar was of paramount importance for students to lay a solid foundation, so she ensured that the knowledge transmission needed to be accurate and the authority role of teachers needed to be sustained in the classrooms.

6.4 Changes teachers claimed as the result of CECR 2007

Despite levels of challenges with which teachers were confronted, they all claimed that they had achieved some changes in their teaching practices and professional

beliefs as the result of the national curriculum reform. The changes teachers claimed can be classified into two major groups, namely, changes in teachers' teaching practices and changes in their EFL beliefs. Of course, changes teachers claimed were not necessarily the same as what they actually did in classrooms. The discrepancies between what they claimed and what they did necessitates a further exploration about what happened and what students experienced at the classroom level. The detailed reports of the changes teachers claimed here provided a foundation and comparison / contrast reference for exploring individual teachers' enactment of the intended changes at the classroom level, which we will discuss in Chapter 7.

6.4.1. Changes teachers claimed in their teaching practices

Based on the findings, changes the teachers claimed in their teaching practices can be subsumed into the following patterns: (1) teaching content shifted from focusing on reading and writing to listening and speaking, (2) employing more class activities, and classroom atmosphere became more relaxed and active, (3) roles of teachers and students changed or even exchanged, (4) the changes in student assessments, and (5) the overall teaching method changed from grammar-translation method to communicative approach. The categories were grouped in parallel with the main changes in the national policy intent, and also guided by the main features of CLT discussed in Chapter 2 for the convenience to compare and contrast between the intended changes and the changes teachers claimed.

(1) Teaching content shifted from focusing on reading and writing to listening and speaking

The teachers all confirmed that they followed the requirements of CECR 2007, and shifted the teaching focus from reading and writing to listening and speaking. As Li stated in the interviews,

> Based on the curriculum reform, my teaching has shifted from mainly focus reading and writing to focus listening and speaking, you know, to improve students' communicative proficiency and their understandings in western culture (TI, Li, Ref. p. 11: 2-4).

However, most of the participant teachers (i.e. three out of the total four) also mentioned that their emphasis on speaking and listening was not balanced, that is, listening was given more emphasis than speaking. The underlying reason was the backwash effect of CET and the '171' teaching model promoted by the department. As Gao noted in the interviews,

> That is, approximately from Dec. 2006, the content of CET4 changed a lot, the listening part increased to 35% in the total score. Our department then promoted a new teaching model, you know, '171' teaching model, thus, we have to separate at least 10 minutes in each class to train students' listening (TI, Gao, Ref. p.72:5-6).

(2) Teaching activities and classroom atmosphere: employing more class activities and classroom atmosphere became more active

The teachers stated that they applied more classroom activities as the result of CECR 2007, and concomitantly the classroom atmosphere became more active and relaxing than before, and students' learning interests were improved. As Zhang mentioned in the interviews,

> I (Zhang) applied very colourful classroom activities in my classes, such as, free talk, presentation, debate, group discussion and so on. Gradually, I find that students became more enthusiastic and active, and they are more likely to participate in class activities. The quality of their assignments is better and their examination scores are improved, so this positive response really inspired me. (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.47: 31-34).

Although they had to spend more time to prepare for the classroom activities and did more thinking on how to organize and arouse students' interest and participation, some teachers (i.e. Li and Zhang) admitted that they obtained more enjoyment from the active and easy classroom atmosphere, and more senses of job satisfaction because of students' active participation and the improved learning outcomes. As Zhang said,

> Apparently, teachers have to do more preparations, such as searching for more information and figuring out more classroom activities, but the following teaching process will be more relaxing and enjoyable. It is really satisfactory to enjoy the easy learning atmosphere and

> students' high enthusiasm, particularly the positive responses from students can provide teachers support and encouragement spiritually and psychologically. Though the workload is heavy, I fell satisfied and happy after a perfect English class (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.50:5-10).

Zhao added that she sometimes applied different classroom activities to different English level students. Level B students, as she explained, disliked participating in classroom activities, particularly, activities engaging individual speaking and group discussions. Therefore, she mainly used activities such as reading and listening exercises to level B students. As Zhao remarked,

> Different teaching activities to different level students: A level students –more activities involving speaking and discussion, while B level students more explaining of word usage and language points, and words or text reading (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 53: 24-26).

Gao, who was the oldest teacher among the participants, admitted the classroom activities in her teaching were not colourful enough. The features of the activities were more or less traditional, e.g. questions and answers, reading new words and listening to tapes. In her view, the classroom atmosphere was influenced by the teaching content and decided by student participation (TI, Gao, Ref. p.75).

(3) Roles of teachers and students changed or even exchanged.

Concerning roles of teachers and students, the teachers all said that due to the shift in teaching content and the application of communicative approach, the roles of teachers and students changed, or even exchanged. Students became the major role in classes, while teachers were only organizers and directors. As Li stated in the interview,

> I (Li) use less than one third time of the total time to explain some important items in terms of new words' usage and sentence patterns, and then, I gave the two-thirds time for students to practice and discuss what we have learned. Sometimes I even let students perform out the learning content in order to train their actual application of language. Through the actual use of English, students' listening ability and communicative proficiency improved a lot (TI, Li, Ref. p.16: 2-6).

Specifically, the participants claimed their roles in the classrooms were class director and organizer and helper for students (Li), guider and enlightener (Zhang), guider and director (Zhao) and director and organizer (Gao), rather than knowledge transmitter dominator and controller. Thus, the teachers confirmed that the students became the main centre and major participators in their classroom teaching. Zhang employed some vivid metaphors to illustrate her role in the classrooms,

> When students meet new and strange words, teachers are the dictionary to provide some knowledge and information; when students use the language to communicate, teachers are the lighteners to light up students' interest and participation; when students discuss or debate, teachers are the third party to organize and arbitrate (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 36:36-40).

(4) Changes in student assessments

Concerning the assessment, the teachers stated that they began to examine more in terms of students' speaking and listening in classes, rather than in their rote memorization of words and language patterns. They also confirmed that student participations and class performances were included into the final evaluation of students learning, i.e. occupying 15% of the total final examination scores. Li said that her focus of assessing students shifted from the examinations to students' communicative abilities and students' classroom participation. Gao and Zhao also mentioned that students' class performances and participation were included in the assessment. Zhang claimed that she emphasized more on speaking and listening in classrooms, and employing various classroom assessment practices, such as, free talk, summarizing main ideas, and role play to improve students' performances.

(5) Teaching method changed from grammar-translation method to communicative approach

In compliance with the national curriculum reform, the teachers said that they had adjusted their teaching methods to stimulate students' participation and learning interests. Generally speaking, most of the teachers confirmed that they were applying a more communicative approach rather than traditional grammar-translation method. As Zhang noted,

> I mainly use communicative approach in my teaching, since most of my students are in Level A. And very colourful classroom activities are applied in my class, such as, free talk, presentation, debate, group discussion (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.35:24-28).

Two teachers (i.e. Zhang and Li) also stated that the process of their adjusting and changing their teaching methods were not smooth and easy. Li mentioned that her teaching methods experienced several adjustments in order to find the most suitable and appropriate one for her students. Li began to teach in University L in 2009. At that time, no relevant meetings were conducted to propaganda the national curriculum reform. Li, as a new teacher, did not know exactly what the national reform was, but she demonstrated a great interest in communicative approach because of her own personal and learning experiences. However, the actual classroom teaching was different from her imagination and students were reluctant and resistant to participate in the interaction and communication, thus she adjusted her teaching method to accommodate the realities of the actual classroom realities and students' English proficiency. As Li noted in the interview,

> I (Li) employed CLT purposely and enthusiastically at the beginning of my teaching career instead of the traditional grammar-translation method and created an authentic English atmosphere to develop students' communicative abilities. However, I found out that too much interaction and communication was not appropriate for my students. You know, I teach Level B students, and they are lack of confidence and their English is relatively poor. Therefore, I adjusted my teaching methods, using a combination of communicative approach with traditional grammar-translation method, which, I think, suits my students (TI, Li, Ref. p.10:29-36).

Zhao added that she would like to adjust her teaching according to different teaching contents and different English level students. Specifically, while explaining new words and language points, she applied grammar translation approach more, while in listening and doing after-text exercises, she would use more communicative approach to encourage more students' participation. Comparatively speaking, she said that she applied more communicative activities in level A students, while more traditional translation method to level B students, whose main learning purpose was to pass CET in her explanation.

Therefore, the changes teachers claimed in their teaching practices were very similar to the features of CLT (as discussed in Chapter 2) and in accordance with the national policy intent.

6.4.2 Changes teachers claimed in their beliefs

The system level changes in the curriculum reform required teachers to change both their teaching practices and their beliefs. In the interviews, when asked whether their beliefs experienced some changes or not as the result of CECR 2007, all the teachers agreed that their beliefs about EFL teaching and learning had changed or were changing. The theme of belief changes emerged from data included two major categories, (1) beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning EFL: beliefs about learning changed from rote memorizing to developing the abilities of communication and belief about teaching changed from knowledge transmitting to cultivating communicative abilities; and (2) beliefs about teacher and learner: beliefs about learner shifted from new knowledge recipient to active participator and beliefs about teacher changed from knowledge transmitter and dominator to facilitator and helper.

Beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning EFL changed

First and foremost, the teachers claimed that their beliefs about EFL teaching and learning changed. Before the reform, they stated that their beliefs was teaching and learning for examinations, that is, to help students to obtain higher scores, while now they believed the purpose of learning English, particularly for the university students, was the actual use of English in the authentic environment. As Li stated in the interviews,

> My beliefs about learning English changed from teaching and learning for examination to the actual use and communication. I think English learning is not only about the subject knowledge, but also expressing thoughts and communicating in real environment (TI, Li, Ref. p. 15; 3-6).

Gao also mentioned that her attitudes towards the national reform changed from having no interest to being positive. The underlying reason was that she began to

realize that the learning purpose of a language was to use it, rather than just for high scores. Particularly, she stated that in the changing and developing social and global context, students' communicative abilities were becoming increasingly significant. As she described, English learning is 'not memorization and recitation of new words and grammar, but the usage and communicative abilities in the era of globalisation' (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 76). Zhao also supported Gao's statement. As she mentioned,

> My belief about learning English changed from focus on memorizing new words and doing more exercises to cultivating students' learning interests and explaining western culture. And accordingly my requirement of students changed from memorizing words and doing exercises to improving communicative abilities (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 52: 20-27).

Beliefs about roles of teacher and learners changed

The teachers claimed that their understandings about the nature of learner and teachers also changed. Before the national curriculum reform, they thought that teachers should be the center of the class, and students were just passive knowledge receipts due to their own experiences in schools and universities. But gradually, they began to realize that the roles of teachers and students had to be readjusted; otherwise, it was impossible to improve students' communicative abilities or to arouse students' learning interests. As Li said in the interviews,

> My understandings of the role of learner changed from learning for high examination score to comprehensive abilities. You know, some students can get higher scores in their examinations, but they cannot use English in actually environment. In my understanding, they are not successful English learners' (TI, Li, Ref. p.15: 3-7).

Similar to Li, Zhang also emphasized the important role of students in class. As she said,

> Students should be the main centre in classroom teaching, and teachers are just helpers and directors. Because English is not only a subject but also a language, the ultimate purpose of a language is to communicate. So, students should be provided more opportunities to interact with each other and with the teacher (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 38: 25-28).

Gao confirmed that that her belief about the role of teachers shifted from 'knowledge transmitter to director and organizer, and students are the centre and should play the major role (TI, Gao, ref. p. 77: 4-7). Zhao emphasized that teachers needed to adjust their roles according to different teaching contents and different English level students. As Zhao mentioned in the interview,

> I (Zhao) think teachers need to employ different teaching activities to different level students, and adjust their teaching roles to different teaching content. For instances, teachers are role models of pronunciation and knowledge transmitters in explaining new words and difficult language patterns; while in some oral practices, teachers are organizers and directors of classroom activities. So, the roles of teachers and learners depend on the teaching contents and students' English proficiency, and that indicates a teacher's mature management of classroom (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 53: 20-30).

6.5 Reflective remarks on issues of intension and teachers' perception

Although all the teachers claimed that they changed or were changing their practices and beliefs as the result of the national reform, their perceptions of the intended changes demonstrated patterns of discrepancies with the mandate. The issues of the mandate intensions and teachers' perceptions need to be identified and addressed before further exploration of the changes at the classroom level, given the perception gaps / misperceptions of the intended changes tended to lead to teachers' misunderstandings of their changes in their practices and beliefs.

Issues emerged with respect to the intended changes and teachers' perception of these changes mainly contained (1) issues related to the policy and linear means of dissemination, (2) issues related to the management of the national reform at local contexts, and (3) issues related to teachers' perception gaps of the intended changes, such as teachers' limited perceptions of the proposed changes and teachers' superficial understandings of some key concepts.

(1) Issues related to the policy and the linear means of dissemination.

As discussed in Sections 6.2, all the teachers mentioned the mismatches among the policy stands, which, in their perception, turned out to be a major factor influencing

their attempts to put the intended changes in their instructions. The issue of policy, though not new, was still one of the paramount factors that influenced how and to what extent the policy could be implemented, particularly, when the policy was mandatory and disseminated through a top-down model of change as in this study. The linear and unidirectional way to disseminate and manage the national curriculum was found to have aggravated teachers' motivations of and commitment to the execution of the imposed changes. Furthermore, the difficulties and worries with which teachers were confronted could not be conveyed to the upper levels.

(2) Issues related to the management of the national reform at the local contexts

The teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the management of the national reform in the local context. They acknowledged that it was unfair and impractical to demand CE-related knowledge from the leaders, but, they stated that the administrators should create some favorable conditions and environment to ensure the smooth and possible implementation of the national reform. In the teachers' view, University L failed to motivate collaboration and collegiality among teachers and between teachers and leaders, and also failed to seek teachers' cohort efforts to implement the national reform; instead levels of regulations were made to pressure teachers to conduct the changes prioritized in the institutional agenda, such as CET in this research study. In addition, all the teachers admitted limited opportunities of professional development were provided to them and no learning communities were organized for them, albeit they were challenged, more or less, by the high demand of the national reform; and suffered continuous distrust from levels of administrators with respect to their expertise and capacities. Thus, the key challenge of the national reform was left over to the teachers themselves to handle with. The teaching realities and conditions also aggravated their frustrations to apply the imposed changes, e.g. large class-size and limited resource.

It is worth highlighting that all the teachers stated that they would like to put the intended changes into practices if they had obtained sufficient support professionally and resourcefully from the leaders. The teachers lamented that the management of the national reform in University L wiped away their enthusiasms in conducting some high-demanded changes as required by the national policy. However, the teachers, particularly in the case of Zhang, admitted that they would

like to walk out of their comfort zone and make some changes based on their self-reflection and students' feedback even if they were confronted with multiple challenges.

(3) Issues related to the gaps between teachers' perception and the intended changes

Teachers' limited understandings of the proposed changes

All the teachers demonstrated, more or less, incomplete and insufficient understandings of the national policy. They all emphasized that there were no related seminars or workshops concerning CECR 2007 within the university and department. The trainings organized by the high education press in vocations were mainly lectures concerning teaching and learning theories, which were abstract and irrelevant to their classroom instructions. Teachers revealed limited and superficial understandings with regard to the national reform. Two teachers (i.e. Li and Zhao) even misunderstood that CECR 2007 was mainly about the changes in CET due to the importance of CET in the university and department agenda. Gao also made similar explanations when she was asked to introduce a little about the curriculum reform. She emphasised specifically on the changes in CET. Concerning the changes in pedagogy and assessment, the teachers stated that they knew little or had no interests in knowing more, as they had departmental syllabus and teaching model ('171' teaching model), which was perceived to be more concrete and practical than the national syllabus.

Teachers' superficial understandings of some key concepts

In the national policy document, there were some key concepts concerning how to teach and how to assess, such as, student-centered approach, communicative competence and formative assessment. As Fullan (2006) observes, the term travels faster and better than the understanding of the concept. All the teachers admitted that they had heard the terms mentioned repeatedly in the meetings or seminars, but they had no systematic understandings and comprehensions. This kind of 'you-don't-know-what-you-don't-know' phenomenon tended to result in, as warned by Fullan (2006), the danger and likelihood of superficiality, such as teachers' superficial understandings of some key concepts in this study.

The teachers' perceptions of the concept of CLT were found to be limited to theoretical knowledge with superficial understandings, mainly out of their own thinking or assumptions. Gao, Li and Zhao explained that CLT mainly centred on communication and interactions between the teacher and the students, which was perceived impractical to improve students' examination scores. One teacher (Zhao) even limited communication only to the classroom discussions, which were thought impossible for the large-size classes. Another teacher (Gao) considered that questions and answers between the teacher and students were also kind of CLT activities. Formative assessment, another major concept in the intended changes, was interpreted as process assessment by all the teachers. Zhao and Li even interpreted the term as continuous and ongoing small tests, which were different from one-off examinations at the end of a semester. Gao tended to associate formative assessment with students' class attendance, whilst Zhang and Li seemed to have translated the concept to student participations in the classroom activities. As the findings suggested, teachers' misunderstandings tended to have resulted in their limited changes in their classroom instructions, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

6.6 Summary

It is clear from the data presented in this chapter that the national reform was mediated at the individual level through teachers' perceptions and re-interpretation. Teachers all, on the one hand, revealed general endorsement about the theory of the policy, particularly in its aims to stimulate students' communicative proficiency. On the other hand, they also expressed their frustrations with the national policy intent, especially about the mismatches among the policy strands. Simultaneously, they were pressured and frustrated by the relevant university and department regulations. Together with limited professional support was provided to them from the above levels, the key challenge from the reform was left over to the teachers themselves. Regardless of the constraints and difficulties, the teachers all claimed that they had achieved some changes in terms of their practices and their beliefs. However, as the study argues the changes teachers enacted were not necessarily the same as the changes they claimed. The following chapter will report what have observed in teachers' classroom instructions.

Chapter Seven Findings: What did teachers do concerning enactment of the curriculum reform?

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings of how and to what extent individual teachers' enact the intended changes at the classroom level based on data analysis of classroom observations, field notes, and student interviews. Following the introduction in Section 7.1, Zhao and Gao's enactment of CECR 2007 is reported together in Section 7.2 as an example to demonstrate teachers might conduct small or non-changes under the context of curriculum reform due to various challenges and tensions. Section 7.3 and Section 7.4 utilize the other two teachers' changed / changing experiences (Zhang and Li) to illustrate specifically and respectively how and to what extent teachers changed in their instructions against the educational reform background, and the possible reasons attributing to their changes are also discussed. Issues concerning the intention and teachers' implementation arising from this chapter are presented in Section 7.5, and followed by a short summary in Section 7.6.

As noted in Chapter 5, most teachers in this study were found to have little input related to the reform, thus, they tended to rely more on their current beliefs and teaching practices to enact or not enact the top-down external initiative. If the policy happened to match their beliefs, as the case of Zhang, they tended to provide efforts in their attempts to enact the reform. Conversely, if their values were in conflict with the requirements of the reform, as the case of Gao and Zhao, they were reluctant to execute the intended changes. Teachers' limited professional capacities and abilities could also challenge the changes in their classroom practices, even though they attempted to do. However, all the teachers could make some adjustments or small changes in their teaching in terms of class organizations and classroom activities to satisfy the needs of the students and the demand of the university. Though teachers may have formed beliefs and developed practices

congruent with the policy in their teaching and learning experiences, students' resistance and classroom realities might challenge them to change in the opposite way, such as Li in this study. Thus, the changes are not necessarily in the directions of the intended changes without effective local management and supervision. Therefore, though all the teachers acknowledged the importance of the national curriculum policy, the top-down external initiative was not powerful enough to generate and drive teacher change. The findings will contribute to the literature of change theory and also enrich the knowledge of teacher change empirically and theoretically in both EFL and the international contexts.

Patterns of changes the teachers enacted at the classroom level was subsumed into similar categories as the changes teachers claimed for the purpose of comparison between what they claimed and what they did as well as guided by the guideline of the main features of CLT. Specifically, teachers' classroom instructions were summarized in terms of the teaching objective and focus, classroom activities and classroom atmosphere, roles of teachers and students, classroom assessment practices, and the overall teaching methods (see Table 7.1).

As the finding results indicated, teachers' enactment of the reform was quite different, i.e. small/non-change (Gao and Zhao), change consistent with the reform (Zhang) and change inconsistent with the reform (Li). The following sections explain respectively the extent to which the teachers enacted the reform, and how and why they enacted the external initiative in their individualized means.

	Zhang	Li	Gao / Zhao
Goals	Communicative competence; interaction and problem-solving	Finishing teaching content and achieve previous set goal	Finishing teaching content and achieve previous set goal
Activities	Role play, pair work, group work	Group work, discussion reading loudly	Reading loudly, listening to tapes
Teaching content and focus	Fluency and pronunciation; communicative competence	New words and language points	New words and language points, techniques of CET
Teacher roles	facilitator, a guide and a helper, coordinator, co-communicator; the needs analyst,	Knowledge transmitter, activity organizer and manager	Knowledge transmitter, manager, dominator
Student roles	Self-responsible for their learning; negotiator; independent learner	Knowledge receipt, listener, activity participator	Knowledge receipt, listener, note-taker
Assessment activities	Presentation, speech, Classroom participation, Listening	Presentation, small quiz focusing on listening	Dictation, writing and small quiz, focusing on listening and translation
Medium of instruction	English	Mainly English, sometimes Chinese	First English, and then translated into Chinese
Overall teaching method	Student-centred, communication-oriented, stimulating students' interest, focus on listening and speaking	Teacher-dominated, colourful classroom activities, focus on listening and reading	Teacher-dominated, CET-oriented, focus on listening and writing

Table 7.1 Summary and comparison of teachers' teaching practices

7.2 Small / Non-change change: Gao's and Zhao's enactment of CECR 2007

This section reports non-change /small change of Zhao and Gao in their teaching (see Table 7.2). As their teaching behaviors were quite similar, they were presented together rather than separately; of course, the differences in their teaching practices, if any, are also documented and the possible reasons are presented. Gao and Zhao's profiles are firstly reported to demonstrate the background and formulation of their professional beliefs and teaching practices, and followed by the observation

findings of Gao and Zhao's classroom instructions, and then the possible factors mediating their small /non-changes are reported.

Teachers' beliefs and current practice	1. Gao's : teacher-dominated and grammar-oriented learning experiences; lack of confidence in English. 2. Zhao's: teacher-dominated and grammar-oriented learning experiences; lack of systematic understanding of educational psychology and methodology.	
Outcome of Changes observed	1. Teaching goals and focus: finishing teaching content and achieve the previous set goal, 2. Classroom activities and atmosphere: traditional classroom activities and 'boring atmosphere', 3. Roles of teachers and students: teachers as knowledge, transmitter and dominator; students as knowledge receipt and listener, 4. Classroom assessment practices: accuracy and judgment, 5. Overall teaching approach: mainly teacher-dominated and CET-oriented.	
Mediating factors	Facilitating factors	(1) Students: student feedback / learning outcome, (2) Teacher: self-reflection /self-evaluation, and (3) Relationship in the workplace: exchanges with colleagues / attending to colleagues' classes.
	Inhibiting factors	(1)University-level constraints: lack of support and resources, overemphasis on CET, (2)Examinations: pressure from university-level examinations and CET, (3)Classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time, (4)Students: students' English proficiency, and Chinese students' characteristics.

Table 7.2 What Gao and Zhao did concerning the enactment of CECR 2007

Despite Gao's and Zhang's different life stories, they shared some similar experiences of learning and teaching, thus they developed similar understandings and beliefs about English teaching and learning, which impacted greatly their classroom instructions. Classroom observations and students' interviews

demonstrated that there were patterns of gaps between what they claimed and what they did in their classrooms. Overall, they achieved small or even non-change in their instructions required by the national curriculum reform.

7.2.1 Gao's and Zhao's EFL beliefs and current practice

This section presents Gao's and Zhao's profiles in terms of life stories, learning experiences, teaching experiences, and professional development, serving as the groundwork for their current teaching practices and professional beliefs, and also the foundation to compare whether any changes had achieved as the result of CECR 2007.

Gao's EFL beliefs and current practices

Gao began to learn English when she went to middle school in late 1970s. Her English teachers had limited formal and systematic knowledge in English; they mainly focused on grammar explanation and little attention was attached to pronunciation and speaking. Her learning experiences in middle school and senior school were mainly memorization of new words and doing exercises. Her teachers used Chinese to teach English as a subject for examination rather than as a language for communication. Gao admitted that her learning experiences impacted her conceptions of English teaching and learning greatly, and she gradually believed that systematic knowledge transmission should be the first priority for teachers. Later, Gao went to a normal university majoring in English, the same university as Zhang, of course around 15 years earlier. Four years of undergraduate learning of English improved Gao's language abilities, but she stated that the teachers' teaching methods left no deep impressions on her, as she struggled with her courses, particularly her oral English.

Gao admitted that she had lacked confidence in English since she began to learn it. She even noted that she was not talented in language and teaching. The reason why she chose to major in English was similar to Zhao, that is, for the consideration of future job-hunting. When Gao began the teaching practicum in the third year of university, she met some actual problems to handle, such as class organizations, student management and teaching skills. She observed some experienced teachers'

teaching and gained lots of improvement, and her understandings of teaching began to include student's needs and classroom realities. Up to now, Gao had been teaching in University L for almost twenty years, but in-service training inside and outside the university, according to her, exerted little, if any, impact on her teaching and beliefs. As one experienced teacher, Gao was responsible for her students, and expected herself to change for better.

Zhao's EFL beliefs and current practices

Compared with the other three teachers (Gao, Li, and Zhang), Zhao was more familiar with University L as she graduated here. Because of her good command of English knowledge and excellent performances in the examinations, and also because University L was short of English teachers due to the expansion in the early 2000s, Zhao was granted a position in University L after graduation. She was sent to a famous foreign studies university to further and enhance her English for one year, and then became a CE teacher in University L.

Zhao was born and grew up in the countryside like Zhang, and their experiences of English learning in primary and middle school were very similar, that is, 'dull and boring classroom teaching', 'teacher-dominated and grammar-oriented teaching methods'. Zhao learned English mainly through rote memorization and doing exercises. That is, English was learned as a subject as maths and physics, rather than as a language. But, the learning experiences between Zhao and Zhang were quite different in senior school, unlike Zhang who went a provincial key school and met a newly graduated teacher, Zhao went to an ordinary senior school, and the teachers there also focused more on grammar and examination-related exercises due to the pressure of the matriculation examination. Zhao chose English as her major in university not because of her personal interest, but out of pragmatic consideration; that is, English majors were relatively easier to find jobs at that time. However, her learning experiences in University L were also 'tedious', as English teachers in University L were not sufficient; and the class sizes were very large, around 50 students in each. Most of her teachers at that time had not received postgraduate education and their English proficiency and teaching skills were limited. Zhao admitted that one year training in a famous foreign studies university

provided her more knowledge about English, and she also experienced some student-centred communicative teachings.

However, since the universities Zhao attended were not normal universities, Zhao tended to lack systematic understandings of educational psychology and methodology and classroom management skills. Compared with other teachers, Zhao's character and personality was much more tranquil and introvert, which also impacted her teaching styles. Among the teachers, Zhao was the only one who had not obtained a master degree.

7.2.2 Limited changes observed in Gao's and Zhao's classrooms

Changes observed in Gao's and Zhao's classrooms were quite different from the changes they claimed and the intended changes. That is, small / non-changes have achieved in their practices as the result of CECR 2007, which also led to students' great dissatisfaction. Although the main data source was the observation, students' and teachers' interview data were also considered in the analysis in order to triangulate the observation findings.

Six students from Gao's and Zhao's classes were interviewed respectively. Gao's students were sophomore Level A students majoring in Accounting, including 2 male and 4 female students; whilst Zhao's were freshman Level B students majoring in Marketing including 2 males and 4 females. Because the students knew little about CECR 2007 or CLT, the interview questions were mainly about their perceptions and experiences of English teaching and learning, which indirectly demonstrated their experiences of CECR 2007 and CLT. Though Gao's and Zhao's students were different in terms of English proficiency and learning experiences (sophomore Level A students in Gao's class and freshman Level B students in Zhao's class), what they experienced in their classrooms were very similar.

(1) The teaching goals and focus

The teaching goals of Gao and Zhao were mainly to finish the teaching content and to meet the demand of examinations. The textbooks was handled as the test book, that is, the contents related to CET were attached more emphasis, whilst other parts

such as discussion and cultural background were purposely ignored or omitted. Gao and Zhao separated 10-minute from each teaching period (90 minutes) to do listening test, and another 10-minute to do translation exercises; little time or effort was given to promote students' speaking. The underlying reason, according to their explanation, was due to the increased portion of listening in CET. They provided detailed explanation to words and grammar points related to CET; concerning the words or language points or after-text exercises, which were not included in CET, they just mentioned or explained little. Furthermore, they used sentences and examples taken form the CET papers to explain and consolidate the word usage.

However, both Gao's and Zhao's students perceived that CE English teaching and learning should focus on communication and interaction, which was consistent with the national curriculum. Their students admitted that their teachers still centered on word usage, sentence structure and grammar patterns, which were very different from their imagination and expectation of CE teaching. The students complained that they were tired of learning vocabulary and grammar and preparing for examinations. As one of Zhao's students revealed,

> We are a little bit disappointed with our English class. You know, it is quite different from our imagination. We think that English learning in university should be different from high school, and we should learn how to speak. But our teacher still focused on the examination, particularly, CET. She began her teaching from the explanation of the new words, and then she started to explain and translate the text (SI, Ref. p. 152: 15-17).

(2) Classroom activities and atmosphere

Examinations and CET not only influenced Gao's and Zhao's teaching content, but also their classroom activities. They organized various classroom activities, such as dictation, loud reading, listening to tapes, and small quizzes, but these activities were mainly traditional form-focused ones, focusing on reading and writing rather than communicative proficiency. Their limited English abilities, to some extent, also prohibited them from communicating meaningfully with their students. They always provided complicated Chinese explanations in case students could not understand them or they could not express themselves efficiently in English. The

frequent application of Chinese prevented them from communicating meaningfully and naturally with their students in English. There was little interaction between teacher and students, between students and students.

Gao's and Zhao's students confirmed that their teachers attempted to employ more class activities such as dictation, reading aloud, listening to tapes and small quizzes. However, students expressed their dissatisfaction with these activities, which, in their views, could not challenge or improve their communicative abilities. The form-focused activities were also difficult to arouse students' learning interest and motivation, and therefore, the classroom atmosphere was 'dull and boring'. As one of Gao's students said,

> In our class, the teacher (Gao) organizes more activities, but they are mainly about reading the new words, reading the text or listening to the tape. It is a little boring. …..We expect more challenging activities, such as debate, presentation, discussion. We also want more opportunities to interact and communicate in English (SI, Ref. p.153: 2-6).

(3) Roles of teacher and students

Gao and Zhao mainly played the roles as the knowledge transmitters, and students as the knowledge receivers in the classrooms. The statistics demonstrated that in the duration 360-minute classroom instructions, Gao used 60 % of the time (216 minutes) to explain new words and language points, 20 % (72 minutes) to do listening comprehension, and only left 20% of the total time for students to practice speaking or reading. Zhao spoke 232 minutes (66% of the total) to explain new words and language points, 75 minutes (21% of the total) do listening comprehensions and only left 53 minutes (13% of the total time) to cultivate students' speaking. In terms of time allocated to their students, it can be seen that Gao's and Zhao's classes were mainly dominated by the teachers.

Students agreed that their teachers ware 'mainly knowledge transmitters' and they were 'knowledge recipients' and 'note takers'. According to the students, Gao and Zhao explained systemically the teaching content and require students to write down and remember the important items. In the students' perceptions, English, as a

language, should be taught and used as a language rather than a learning subject, thus they expected more communication and participation.

During the pre-class and post-class interviews, Zhao expressed her doubt about students' abilities to be independent learners, thus she attempted to transmit knowledge as much as possible in the classrooms, which was also verified by her students. Gao's students used an interesting word 'mother' to describe her as they thought that she was very strict with them and attempted to control them. As one student noted,

> We think that Gao is like our mother, as their ages are similar. She often says that our parents are far away from us, so she must take their responsibility as a mother, to insure that we are hardworking and making progress. So, we feel a little frightened and nervous in her class (SI, Ref. p. 157: 11-14).

(4) Classroom assessment practices

Gao and Zhao were seen to provide frequent oral feedbacks to their students, whilst their major concerns tended to be accuracy and judgment; that is, they focused more on the learning product rather than the learning process. They frequently asked their students to read the new words loudly. If there were any mistakes, they would correct their students immediately, and led students to follow several times to ensure the accuracy.

Gao and Zhao also utilized activities such as dictation of new words, writing and small quizzes in terms of listening and translation to assess students' knowledge acquisition and accuracy. Both teachers did not engage students to assess their peers and themselves. The students admitted that it was necessary and important to take their classroom performances and attendance into consideration when the teachers scored their performances, which occupied 15% of their final examinations. However, in the point view of the students, both Gao and Zhao failed to carry it out effectively. Gao's students' noticed that Gao attached more importance to students' attendance. That is, if students were absent once from the class two score of the total would be reduced; if twice, five score was reduced; three time absence meant failed in the formative assessment. Zhao examined her

students progressively and continuously through small tests, and the average score would be the final grade of their formative assessment.

Therefore, both Gao's and Zhao's teachings were mainly teacher-dominated and CET-oriented, and the classroom activities were mainly textbook-focused, rather than contextualized authentic communications and interactions. Their instructions were quite different from what they said; that is, great implementation gaps emerged between their instructions and the policy initiative.

7.2.3 Factors mediating Gao's and Zhao's small /non-change

Factors mediating their small / non-change could be grouped into two major categories, namely factors facilitating their adjustments (small changes such as classroom activities and teaching content) and factors inhibiting their changes, each of which contained some subcategories. The factors influencing their change demonstrated many similarities, thus, they are presented collectively, but different elements, if any, were also identified and reported.

Factors enabling Gao's and Zhao's adjustments in their teaching practices

Factors facilitated their changes included three categories, that is, factors related to students: student feedback / learning outcome; factors related to teacher: self-reflection / self-evaluation; and factors related to relationship in the workplace: exchanges with colleagues / attending to colleagues' classes.

(1)Factors related to students: students' dissatisfaction and various demands

Students' feedback and learning outcome were attached great attention in University L, and considered as very important means to evaluate teachers' teaching, thus, Gao and Zhao admitted that they were impacted greatly by student feedback. However, Zhao also stated that she was sometimes frustrated with students' various demands, and was confused with how to cope with their different and individualized demands. As she noted in the interview,

> Students' feedback really influenced my teaching. You know, every term, the students were organized to comment on the teachers. I become very frightened when I receive

> their feedback, for they have so many demands on the teachers. You know, it is too difficult to satisfy them all, but I try to adjust my teachings accordingly in order to satisfy the majority (TI, Zhao, Ref. p.56: 11-16).

Gao acknowledged that she was not confident with her English proficiency to conduct student-centred communicative teaching. However, considering the benefit that students might obtain from it, she attempted to organize more communicative activities and encouraged the students to engage. As she stated in the interviews,

> I used to teach for examinations. That is, if students could get high scores in examination, I would think that the teaching goals were achieved. But now I realize that that is not enough. Feedback from them showed that they wanted more opportunities to communicate in English. So I have to change my teaching. Now I tend to cultivate students' listening and speaking. Despite lots of difficulties, I still want to try because it is good for my students (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 74:40-45).

(2) Factors related to teacher: being tired of the teaching routines

Self-reflection was another major factor to promote Gao's and Zhao's adjustment. After teaching English many years (Gao more than 25 years and Zhao more than 10 years), they accumulated lots of teaching experiences. However, long years of teaching also made them tired of the routines of teaching, thus they expected some changes. Students' feedback enhanced their determination to make some differences. After observing some innovative classes, they, then, began to reflect and evaluate their own teachings. The process of self-reflection and self-evaluation helped them to make some adjustments in the instructions. In Gao's words,

> Many years of teaching really made me tired of following the same teaching routine, the same teaching contents and the same teaching method. I really want some changes for the sake of myself and my students. You know, I know my English proficiency may be not as good as young people, but I have more teaching experiences. You see, I observed some innovative lessons, and I also want to teach that way. I like the lively and relaxing classroom atmosphere (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 74:40-45).

(3) Factors related to relationship in the workplace: inspirations from colleagues' communicative ideas and instructions

Gao mentioned that the relationship in the workplace was harmonious and friendly, and teachers often exchanged their thinking with regard to class management and classroom teaching. They also had access to observing other teachers' classes. As Gao said in the interviews,

> The relationship in our department is harmonious and friendly. Teachers often chat with each other concerning how to arouse students' interest or how to guide into a new lesson. You know, we also talk about the new teaching method. Furthermore, we have opportunities to observe colleagues' lessons, from which we can also gain some inspirations (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 75:5-10).

Zhao also stated that the exchanges with colleagues inspired her to experiment some new classroom activities and new means to handle the teaching contents,

> I often chat with other teachers and observe my colleagues' lessons. From this, I learned a lot and got some inspirations concerning how to arouse students' interest, how to organize class and how to handle the teaching contents (TI, Zhao, Ref. p.48: 18-20).

However, Gao and Zhao had some different understandings concerning the influence from the national curriculum reform. Zhao perceived CECR 2007 as one important factor to enable her change in teaching. In her perspective, the new curriculum acted as a guideline and direction. As she said,

> Since 2006, the way I organized my class and the teaching focus has changed a lot. Firstly, the time in listening has increased from half an hour to 2 hours every week; secondly, I have more interaction and communication with students. Because of the reform, the teaching method I used in classroom changed a lot, now I mainly use communicative approach (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 56: 37-41).

On the contrary, Gao complained that she suffered great pressure from the national policy intent, and in particular, CET, which impacted negatively on her attempt to conduct communicative classroom instructions.

Factors inhibiting Gao's and Zhao's change

Factors prohibiting Gao's and Zhao's change can be subsumed into four main

groups, namely, (1) factors related to university-level constraints: lack of support and resources and overemphasis on CET; (2) factors related to examinations: pressure from university-level examinations and CET; (3) classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time; and (4) factors related to students: students' English proficiency, and Chinese students' characteristics.

(1) University-level constraints: lack of support and resources and insufficient evaluation mechanism

Both Gao and Zhao were positive towards some of the measures taken at the university level to adapt the national curriculum reform, such as more language labs built. However, they said that the institution provided limited resources and support concerning the planned changes, which made it difficult for them to actually execute the reform in their classrooms. As Zhao noted in the interviews,

> In my view, our university just promoted College English changes orally and theoretically rather than take effective and concrete measures to ensure its successful implementation. You know, the resources are limited (TI, Zhao, Ref. p.52:15-17).

To which, Gao also agreed, as she remarked in the interview,

> ---- We want to change, but without relevant resources, how can we change automatically? (TI, Gao, Ref. p.76:30-35).

In addition, in their views, the university failed to establish efficient evaluation mechanism to evaluate and assess CE teaching and learning, as Zhao stated in the interview,

> The way they evaluate teachers is to see CET passing rate rather than what teaching method we utilize or what the teaching focus is or whether the class atmosphere is active or not, so we have to work hard to improve students' CET scores (TI, Zhao, Ref. p.52:18-20).

(2) Examinations: the pressure from university-level examinations and CET

Gao and Zhao expressed great concerns over the pressure from university-level examinations and the national CET. In their understanding, the first priority of

teachers was to help students pass all kinds of compulsory examinations, otherwise, the teacher was not qualified enough. Thus, the pressure from examinations became a major barrier for them to execute the new curriculum. As they claimed, no real changes could be achieved in the classroom instructions if the content and format of examinations did not change. As they stated in the interviews,

> The content of university-level and national level examinations should make some changes, and particularly, the part of speaking should be included. You know, CET is contradicted with CECR requirements, which emphasize more on speaking and communication. That leads to some difficulties in cultivating students' communicative abilities in class. Students are reluctant to participate in classroom activities for they think that is useless for examinations (TI, Gao, Ref. p.79:35-37).

> Students have to pass their examinations, particularly the university-level exams and the national CET, otherwise they are not qualified graduate students or maybe they can't graduate. Therefore, as teachers, I think, we have to help them; otherwise, we are not qualified either. Because the contents of examinations and the national reform are contradicted, I really suffered much from it (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 53:8-12).

(3) Classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time

Another major barrier prohibiting them from executing the intended changes was classroom realities, i.e. large class-size, limited teaching time and tight teaching schedule. As Zhao said in the interview,

> I know the ideal way to improve students' communicative proficiency is student-centred teaching and more classroom activities, but the classroom realities make it difficult and impossible. There are around 65 students in my class, and the teaching time is very limited, so it is impossible to involve many activities. In addition, I have to follow the teaching syllabus, finishing the teaching content within a certain period, otherwise it would be considered as teaching accidents, which will lead to serious consequences (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 53:2-7).

Gao echoed that these difficulties arising from the classroom realities also prevented her from applying student-centered teaching method, organizing more classroom activities, and promoting individualized learning. As she noted,

> There are on average 65 students in one class. You know, it is too large for communicative student-centred teaching. If one student has one minute to speak, then I have no time to teach. Furthermore, we have lots of contents to cover under the limited teaching time. Thus, the classroom realities have to change if we want to make some real changes in the classroom (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 73: 18-20).

(4) Factors related to students: students' insufficient English proficiency and low motivation

Zhao mentioned that she had attempted to make some changes in her teaching, such as organizing more colorful classroom activities and providing more opportunities for the students to participate. However, the students had no interests, and refused to corporate and participate. Students' incorporation, lack of interest and resistance wiped away her enthusiasm and attempts to change. As she said,

> I have attempted to make some changes in my class, organizing more activities and providing more opportunities for students to speak, but they did not want to take part in. No matter how hard I encouraged them, they just kept silent. You know, after several times, I also lost my heart (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 53:15-20).

In Gao's understanding, her students' English proficiency was limited and not good enough to learn effectively in total English teaching environment and CLT approach. As she mentioned,

> Even if I want to adopt total English teaching, I don't think that my students can understand wholly. Thus, I have to adjust my teaching to students' actual English ability and ensure that they can understand. Otherwise, it is meaningless no matter how much English I speak or how many activities I have organized (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 73: 18-20).

However, Gao's students were sophomore Level A students, and most of them had passed CET 4. When the researcher reminded Gao of this, she explained that the Chinese students had some characteristics in common, such as shy, lack of confidence, introvert and poor in speaking and listing. As she said,

> Chinese students share some characteristics in common. Their speaking and listening

> is not good enough though they can do well in examinations. They are shy and introvert. They dislike speaking in public for fear of losing their face. In class, they are reluctant to participate in classroom activities, and they would like to be listeners rather than speakers (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 73: 22-24).

Zhao also attributed students' incorporation and resistance in student-centered communicative teaching to students' limited English proficiency and Chinese students' characteristics. As she said,

> My students are Level B students, that is, their English abilities are not as good as Level A students. They are not confident, and dare not express themselves in public. They care much about their face, and you know, as Chinese students, they are shy and introvert, too (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 53:22-25).

It is interesting and also surprising to find that the students were totally in disagreement with their teachers. In their views, they were open to new ideas, and expected great changes in CE teaching and learning, particularly in terms of teaching pedagogy. The students also expressed their confidence in their English abilities and eagerness to improve their communicative proficiencies, especially the students from Gao's class, who were Level A sophomores. They also expressed their 'doubts' of and 'dissatisfaction' with their 'teachers' English proficiency' and 'abilities to conduct communicative teaching'.

7.3 Change consistent with the reform: Zhang's enactment of CECR 2007

Observation data and interviews of students confirmed what Zhang claimed was consistent with what she did in the classrooms. That is, Zhang's instructions were almost in alignments with the national curriculum reform. However, it is worth noting that Zhang had not done the policy purposely or consciously; on the contrast, she almost ignored the external initiative and the regulations at the university and department level. The forces driving her changes were her self-reflection and student feedback, rather than the external national or institutional policies and regulations.

To meet the demand of the changing social and economic contexts in China and globally, Zhang had been shaping and reshaping her behaviors and beliefs concerning CE teaching and learning. Similar to other participants, she endorsed the general guideline of the national policy, whilst she also held some negative opinions about the external initiative. What made her different from other teachers was her strong motivation and courage to improve and change professionally and personally. In Zhang's words, 'if I (Zhang) think the method or teaching is beneficial for my students, I will try to use it even though there may be many difficulties and barriers' (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 43: 10-12).

This section contains similar three parts as Section 7.2 (see Table 7.3). Firstly, Zhang's EFL beliefs and current practices are presented, and followed by the observation findings of Zhang's classroom instructions based on the analysis of data gathered by classroom observations and interviews of Zhang's students, and then the possible factors facilitating and inhibiting Zhang's changes are reported.

7.3.1 Zhang's EFL beliefs and current practice

Zhang had been teaching in university L for about 10 years. From 2008 to 2011, to improve professionally, she interrupted the teaching for enrolling as a full time student to pursue her master degree in English teaching in Beijing, and during this period, she also recruited as a part time English teacher in a famous private training centre. The experience of postgraduate study exposed her to some modern teaching methodologies, such as CLT, and also more opportunities to observe some famous public classes. In addition, the teaching experiences in a private training centre enabled her to cater to the various characteristics and English proficiency of students, and also gained more abilities in class organization and management.

Zhang's beliefs and current practices	1.Communicative learning and teaching experience, 2. English as a language for communication, 3. Students as the major role and centre in classroom.	
↓ Outcome of changes observed	1.Teaching goals and focus: promoting students' communicative competence and to stimulate students' interaction and participations, 2.Classroom activities and atmosphere: colorful communicative activities and relaxing atmosphere, 3. Roles of teachers and students: teachers as facilitator and coordinator; students as active learner and self-responsible for their learning, 4. Classroom assessment practices: fluency and encouragement, and 5. Overall teaching approach: student-centred and communication-oriented.	
↑ Mediating factors	Facilitating factors	(1)Students: student feedback / learning outcome, (2)Teacher: self-reflection / self-evaluation and (3)Consistency between the curriculum reform and Zhang's professional beliefs, and (3)Social and economic changes: globalization and social-economic changes in China.
	Inhibiting factors	(1)University-level: lack of support and resources, (2)Department-level: lack of professional learning community and rigidity of the promoted teaching model, and (3)Classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time.

Table 7.3 What Zhang did concerning the enactment of CECR 2007

Zhang was born and brought up in the countryside, and she knew the difficulties of life and regarded learning as a means to change fate. She studied hard as a student and became the first girl in her small village to go to university. Her experience of learning influenced her expectation and understandings of teaching and learning. When she was a middle school student, most of her teachers had not received formal English education, therefore English learning at that time was a great headache for her, and she was 'suffocated by the dull and boring English teaching'. However, when she went to senior school, she met a very different English teacher;

a newly university-graduated young teacher who spoke English fluently and beautifully, thus Zhang was attracted to the beauty of English via the teacher. The young teacher also employed various classroom activities to stimulate students' interests and boost their confidence. Zhang began to dream that she could become this kind of teacher later. The enjoyable learning experiences influenced her conceptions of English learning and teaching, and also stimulated her formation of professional beliefs.

She went to a key normal university, and learned English and English teaching methodology systemically, which laid a solid foundation for her later career as an English teacher. The communicative and interactive classroom atmosphere deepened and consolidated her beliefs that 'the nature of English teaching was to develop authentic language environment and stimulate students' learning interest' (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.37). She also realized that that English teachers should teacher English through English, for English was a language for use and communication. Zhang's experiences as a trainer in a private training centre and her deeper understanding of modern teaching methodology in post-graduate study enhanced her appreciation and application of CLT in her instructions. She believed that students should play 'a major role in English learning', and 'they are not only the recipient of new knowledge, but also the participator of the teaching process.' (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.36:1-4).

7.3.2 Outcome of changes observed in Zhang's classroom

Zhang's students who were interviewed were Level A freshman majoring in Computer Science, including 4 males and 2 females, and the interview questions were mainly asked about their perceptions and experiences of English teaching and learning, which indirectly demonstrated their experiences of CECR 2007 and CLT. The students complained in the interviews that the university and department had taken no account of students into consideration when the regulations were made. Level-based teaching, in their views, demonstrated more negative than positive effects because they were using the same textbook, the same teaching content, the same teaching method, and the same assessment and evaluation. The only difference among the different level students, in their eyes, was 'Level A students

were more confident and Level B students became more self-abused and lack of confidence' (SI, Ref. p. 138: 7). Concerning the '171' teaching model promoted in the department, the students thought it was 'rigid and boring'. Neither the university nor the department took the students into consideration in their top-down innovation disseminations, which tended to have resulted in students' resistance to the top-down reforms.

The following section reports what the researcher observed and what the students experienced in Zhang's classrooms. The category of changes was grouped into similar groups as changes she claimed in her practices and the intended changes, containing teaching content and focus, classroom activities and atmosphere, roles of teachers and students, and classroom assessment practices.

(1) Teaching goals and focus

Zhang's teaching goals were to promote students' communicative competence and to stimulate students' interaction and participations. Zhang adopted a flexible teaching goal according to students' responses; that is, to Zhang, student's participations and interactions weighed more than the word usage and language points. As Zhang noted in the interview,

> Interests are the best teacher for students. In class, I (Zhang) attempt to stimulate students' learning interests and their participation. If students are interested in what they are learning, they would develop great motivation to learn it. Otherwise, no matter how much knowledge the teacher transmits to them, they would have no intention to absorb and master the knowledge (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 34).

Zhang's students also perceived that CE English teaching and learning should focus on listening and speaking, and cultivating proficiency in authentic communicative and interaction, which was in alignments with the national policy. In their views, the abilities to communicate in English were far more important than passing exams from the long-term perspective. As one of Zhang' students said,

> CET is important when we are hunting jobs, but the abilities to speak and communicate in English are more important for our career promotion and further abroad studies (SI,

Ref. p. 146: 38).

Zhang focused on life-related and communication-oriented topics and discussions to explain the learning content. For example, when she explained some new words in the text, she used life-related sentences to communicate with students rather than abstract word usage appeared in the examinations (Field note, Jan. 3, 2013). She attempted to adopt various activities to boost students' speaking and listening abilities, and strengthened fluency rather than accuracy in the process of interaction. As one student noted,

> We fell in love with our English class at the first time when we had it. It was exactly was what we had expected. Our teacher (Zhang) spoke English fluently and created more opportunities to encourage our participation (SI, Ref. p. 146: 12).

(2) Classroom activities and classroom atmosphere

Zhang applied various colorful communicative activities in her classroom teaching such as pair work, group discussion, free talk, debate, meaning summary and role play. She made her choices of activities and teaching methods according to students' needs, and was ready to adjust them accordingly. For example, in one afternoon class, when Zhang noticed the students were sleepy and tired, she stopped explaining the text, and then organized some interesting games, one of which was to ask one student to describe one person in the class, and the rest students figured out whom he/she described. The atmosphere of the class changed immediately, and the students demonstrated great interests and eagerness to participate (Field note, December 12, 2013). As one student mentioned in the interview,

> Zhang organizes many kinds of class activities, such as free talk, role paly, debate, discussion, and short play. That really stimulates our interest to learn English. The classroom atmosphere is very enjoyable (SI, Ref. p. 132: 12-13).

The students also confirmed that Zhang's classes were very flexible, and she always negotiated the teaching contents and methods with them or even changed the teaching contents according to students' learning realities and interests. Thus,

Zhang's prior concern was to stimulate students' learning interests and promoting their English proficiency. As one of Zhang's students said,

> In our class, Zhang sometimes asked us what we wanted to know, and adjusted the teaching according to our demands rather then followed exactly the textbook. In the afternoon classes, if we were tired and sleepy, she would introduce some interesting English stories or organize discussion and debate (SI, Ref. p. 137: 34-39).

Not surprisingly, in Zhang's class, the students communicated meaningfully and worked cooperatively with the teacher and their peers in authentic and natural English.

(3) Roles of teacher and students

Zhang demonstrated great trust in her students, and she discussed the teaching contents and teaching methods with her students and attempted to allow them to be responsible for their own learning. Zhang's classroom teaching was not only directed by her, but also guided by students' demands and responses, and she was ready to adjust her teaching at any time according to the students. Zhang acted as a negotiator, a facilitator, a helper, a director, an activity organizer and the needs analyst, whilst her students were active participators and the actual owners of their classes. In addition, Zhang gave the students more freedom to choose the appropriate teaching contents and the teaching methods. Students in Zhang's class also perceived themselves as active participators and playing the major role. They also claimed that they were independent learners and responsible for their own learning.

During the 360 minutes of observation time, Zhang was seen using 23% of the total (82 minutes) in explaining language patterns and texts, whilst 77 % of the total teaching time (278 minutes) to cultivate students' communication and interaction. In terms of time allocated to the students, we can say that students were the centre and played the major role in Zhang's classes.

(4) Classroom assessment practices

Effective formative assessment practices include questioning, feedback and peer-

and self-assessment (Black et al., 2003). In the classroom observation, Zhang was seen to provide frequent oral feedbacks to her students. Particularly, Zhang not only pointed out the areas needed improvement, but also stimulated students' motivation and provided some meaningful ways on how to improve. Obviously, Zhang went beyond accuracy and provided students with detailed and individualized advice on how to promote and enhance their learning.

Zhang also used classroom participation and performance to encourage students to earn their scores, which in turn stimulated students' motivation and interests. As one student from Zhang's class said,

> Our teacher (Zhang) encouraged us to earn our scores through participating in classroom activities. That is, if we volunteer to answer questions or actively join in the discussion and free talk, the teacher would reward one score to us. You know, students really care about their grades, thus, we become more and more actively involved in classroom activities (SI, Ref. p.138: 2-5).

However, little evidence was found in observation data that Zhang engaged students meaningfully in self- and peer-assessment, which was also confirmed by the students. Zhang attempted to engage the students in pair work and asked them point out each other's strength and weakness in their pronunciation and intonation. However, the students tended to focus more on each other's strength, while reluctant to mention each other's weakness.

Therefore, it can be argued that Zhang's priorities were to stimulate students' learning interest and cultivate their communicative capacities. Zhang's class was communicative-oriented, and student-centred, which was closely consistent with the requirements of the national curriculum.

7.3.3 Factors mediating Zhang's change

The findings indicated that multiple factors influenced Zhang's classroom teaching, which can be summarized as two major categories, namely, factors facilitating change and factors inhibiting change. Each contains some sub-categories.

Factors facilitating Zhang's change

The factors facilitated Zhang's changes can be summarized as follows: (1) factors related to students: students' positive feedback / improved learning outcome, (2) factors related to teacher: self-reflection / self-evaluation of the unsatisfactory learning and teaching outcomes, (3)factors related to consistency between the curriculum reform and Zhang's professional beliefs, and (4)factors related to globalization and social-cultural changes in China: the trend of globalization and social-economic changes in China,

(1) Factors related to students: students' positive feedback / improved learning outcome

Zhang acknowledged that her teaching was influenced significantly by student feedback. She even mentioned that students' satisfaction and enjoyment was her first and foremost concern. As she said,

> The most important reason for my changes in teaching is students' needs. I don't think that I have very innovative and adventurous spirit, but to achieve better teaching and learning outcomes and active classroom atmosphere, I must change (TI, Zhang, Ref. P.117.1-4).

Student's enthusiasm towards the communicative interaction and active participation in the classroom activities provided Zhang more determination in applying the student-centred communicative approach. Furthermore, the improved learning outcome and students' learning motivation also gave her more confidence in continuously changing and adjusting her teaching according to students' demands and needs. As she stated in the interview,

> After using communicative approach in my class, I find that students become more enthusiastic and active, and they are more likely to participate in class activities. The quality of their assignments is better and their examination scores are improved, so this positive response really inspired me (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.47:31-34).

(2) Factors related to teacher: self-reflection / self-evaluation of the unsatisfactory

learning and teaching outcomes

The second major factor facilitated Zhang's change was self-reflection and self-evaluation. As a devoted and responsible teacher, Zhang frequently reflected and evaluated her own teaching. If some teaching practices benefited or would benefit her students, she would evolve accordingly in terms of the teaching practices or even her professional beliefs.

However, Zhang strengthened that the process of her change in her teaching behaviours and beliefs was full of frustrations. At the beginning of her career, she aimed to finish the set teaching goals in terms of new words and language patterns, and followed the traditional translation teaching method. But after one year, she found that students' learning outcome was inconsistent with her high expectations. Together with students' unsatisfactory responses and feedback, she suffered great turbulence and began to reflect her teaching deeply. After continuous self-reflection and constant communication with the students, she started to search for 'the more suitable teaching methods' for her students. Through two or three years searching, she began to form some specific understandings and teaching styles. However, she complained that she had to struggle by herself as she obtained little support from the colleagues and the administrators. As she remarked in the interview,

> At the beginning of my teaching, I have no complete set of teaching philosophy. You know, it was a very rigid teaching procedure, following the steps one by one designed before classes, namely, lead-in, and then explaining new words, and then analysing the text. There was little communication with the students, and no attempt to stimulate students' interest in learning, and little reference to the cultural backgrounds. Eventually, I found there was a huge gap between students' learning effect and my expectations, thus I began to adjust my teaching on the basis of students' needs. Now, I think I have my own set of teaching philosophy and teaching practices (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 116:10-16).

(3)Factors related to the consistency between the curriculum reform and Zhang's beliefs

When asked whether the national policy had impacted and challenged her teaching

and thinking, Zhang claimed without any hesitation that the influence was very little and limited.

> I cared little about the policy, you know. I just wanted to do something really helpful and meaningful for my students. The changes in my teaching and educational beliefs mainly came from my self-reflection and students' feedback and their learning outcomes (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.115: 41-44).

However, it could be identified from the classroom observations and students' interviews that Zhang was doing consistently with the policy requirements. When the researcher mentioned this to her, Zhang seemed quite confident that she was doing the reform because the policy coincidently matched her beliefs about CE teaching and learning. As she noted,

> Policy was promulgated by educational experts according the current social and economic demands and students' needs. Thus, the policy maker and I coincidently shared similar understandings concerning the English teaching and learning. While, if the new curriculum mismatches my principles, I would totally ignore it (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.115:32-35).

Zhang admitted that the national policy gave her more confidence to continue the student-centered communicative approach in her teaching, as she remarked in the interview 'the national reform conforms that what I believe about English and what I'm doing in the classrooms are in the right direction. That really makes me happy, confident and proud' (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.116: 2-3).

(4) Factors related to the globalization and social-economic changes in China

Zhang stated that her changes were also enhanced by the trend of globalization and the social-economic changes in China. With the globalization, English became more and more important in information exchange and international trade. Thus, Zhang thought that students' English proficiency had to meet the requirement of the new trend. As Zhang stated in the interview,

> The trend of globalization opens more and more opportunities for international

> exchanges, such as information and technology. Thus, English proficiency will become more and more important. We need to realize it and focus on students' communicative abilities (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 44: 23-27).

In addition, with the social and economic development and further opening-up, China has experienced some social-cultural changes. The development of information and technology made it possible for the teachers and students access to some innovative ideas. Under the broader context of change, Zhang said that teachers and students had to make some changes in order to meet the demand of the changing society and world. As she said,

> The world is changing, and China is changing, so we have to change. Particularly, English teacher have learned more about western theories, and most of them become more open and curious to new changes. In addition, Chines students are becoming more confident and extrovert (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.44: 32-35).

Factors challenging Zhang's change

Although Zhang cared little about the outside barriers inhibiting her change, she also acknowledged that the process of her change was full of difficulties and frustrations due to layers of challenges, specifically including (1) university-level: lack of support and resources, (2) department-level: lack of professional learning community and rigidity of the promoted teaching model, and (3) classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time.

(1) University-level: little help and limited support from the university

To ensure smooth application of the new curriculum, specific universities were required to provide necessary resources and equipment for the teachers, such as multi-media classrooms, language labs, and available Internet access etc. However, Zhang complained in the interviews that University L provided teachers little help and limited support to ensure the adoption of CECR 2007.

> As administrators, I think they should provide concrete and practical help and guide besides the general requirements of teachers….. Firstly we need public resources to provide free platforms for students and teachers to use collaboratively, such as virtual classroom and public classes and so on. Secondly, we hope that we have more chances

> to improve ourselves professionally. Furthermore, we need more exchanges with other universities, that is, to learn from each other and develop together (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.46:34-43).

(2) Department-level: lack of learning community and rigidity of the promoted teaching model

Though the atmosphere in the workplaces was harmonious, and teachers were friendly to each other, Zhang lamented that there was no professional community in the department or in the university, where teachers could regularly discuss issues concerning teaching and learning together and learn current educational theories and pedagogies. Thus, for most of the time, the teachers were isolated and could only interact with each other occasionally through mundane talks, which, in Zhang's view, provided limited help for teachers' professional development.

Concerning the teaching model promoted by the department, Zhang stated that '171' model was too rigid in actual application, such as the listening materials were pre-set based on CET, and students showed 'little interest in the dull and boring listening exercises', thus the 10-minute listening turned out to one part of 'classroom routine' (TI, Zhang, Ref, p. 45), rather than a strategy to improve students' listening abilities. The rigid promotion of '171' teaching model inhibited the teachers from the implementation of student-centred communicative approach and focus on speaking and listening simultaneously as required by the national reform.

(3) Classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time

Another factor challenging Zhang's change at classroom teaching was large class-size and limited teaching time. Similar to other teachers, Zhang also complained in the interview that the large class-size class made it difficult to apply CLT and organize more classroom activities.

> There are around 70 students in each class. This class-size is too large to apply communicative students-centred approach, for it is really hard to organize and manage the whole class and ensure each one to participate and also we have so much content to learn within limited and required teaching time (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.76:22-26).

However, unlike Gao, Li and Zhao, Zhang actively sought out relevant solutions in order to solve the problem and provide more opportunities for the students to participate and communicate, such as pre-set learning groups, students' self–study of some contents, and on-line English chatting. Thus, through leaving some teaching contents for the students to do self-study and providing some discussion topics for students' learning group, Zhang was able to organize more communicative activities. As she stated, 'learning and teaching needs to be combined. Teachers and students should trust each other and shoulder the responsibilities collectively' (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.77:12-15).

7.4 Change inconsistent with the reform: Li's enactment of CECR 2007

Classroom observation and student interviews indicated that Li, like Zhang, also experienced some changes in her teaching and beliefs, but the changes demonstrated a reverse direction from the requirement of CECR 2007. That is, she changed from more student-centred communicative teaching to the traditional grammar translation method with some elements of communicative activities. Li formed some progressive beliefs concerning CE teaching and learning from her life and learning experiences, and she benefited a lot from student-centred communicative teaching when she was a student. She believed that English should be learned through communication and interaction. Together with her experiences as an interpreter in some international conferences, she had a strong belief that the purpose of learning a language was to communicate in an authentic English environment. However, the teaching realities and students' negative feedback changed her understandings and teaching practices reversely. In addition, as she was at the similar age to her students, she tended to keep her authority consciously in the classrooms in order to manage the students.

This section reports and demonstrates what Li did concerning the implementation of CECR 2007, specifically including Li's EFL beliefs and current practices, changes observed at Li's classrooms, and factors mediating Li's change (see Table 7.4).

7.4.1 Li's EFL beliefs and current teaching practices

Li grew up in a well-educated family, and she began to learn English in a private English training centre at the age of 5. The teachers there used interactive and communicative teaching methods and colourful teaching activities to attract students and stimulate students' learning interests, thus her early learning experiences were really joyful, which enlightened her understandings of language teaching and learning. When she went to primary school, that is, in early 1990s, English reform had been launched all over China. The school to which Li attended was a key provincial school, and the English teaching there was very progressive and student-centred. Li was elected as English representative for her excellence in English. She gained much confidence in her English learning from her teachers' trust, peers' admiration, and her excellent English performances. Therefore, she chose English as her major when she went to the university. In her memory, the university teachers' teaching was much different from the schools; that is, they focused more on culture and background knowledge of language, and systematic explanation of English skills in terms of reading, writing and speaking. The acquisition of English knowledge and western literature and culture broadened her horizon, and extended her beliefs that language teaching learning needed to take into account the specific background and cultural contexts. That is, language could not be understood and acquired without specific understanding of the culture and context.

Li was a student leader ever since her education, hence her abilities to organize and manage students were strengthened and improved, which laid a solid foundation for her later classroom management skills. During postgraduate study, she volunteered to be an interpreter for some international meetings. Those experiences enhanced her beliefs that the main use of language was to communicate with the native speakers. After graduation from the university, she became an English teacher in University L. Due to her excellence in management, she became a student consultant. Her experiences as a student leader, interpreter, and student consultant developed and enhanced her appreciation of students' needs and interests. However, she mentioned that she had to be serious and strict in the classrooms in order to demonstrate her authority as her age was similar to her students, which was quite different from her daily life easy-going character and personality. In addition, the

university from which she obtained her bachelor and master degree wasn't a normal university, thus she did not learn much concerning teaching and learning psychology and methodology. She also lacked teaching practicum before she entered teaching profession. These experiences, in her perception, impacted significantly on her teaching conceptions and practices.

Zhang's EFL beliefs and current practice	1.Communicative and interactive learning experiences, 2. English for communication 3. Accommodation of students' English proficiency and a combination of traditional translation method with some communicative activities	
↓ Outcome of changes observed ↑	1. Teaching goals and focus: to finish the teaching content and the previous set goals 2. Classroom activities and atmosphere: rich classroom activities and relaxing atmosphere, 3. Roles of teachers and students: teacher as knowledge transmitter and activity organizer and manager; students as knowledge receipt, listener and activity participator, 4. Classroom assessment practices: accuracy and judgement, 5. Overall teaching approach: traditional grammar translation method with some communicative activities.	
Mediating factors	Facilitating factors	(1) Students: mutual growth of both teacher and the students, (2) Teacher: self-reflection, (3) Relationship in the workplace: exchanges with colleagues / attending to colleagues' classes
	Inhibiting factors	(1) Policy-level: mismatches among policy strands, (2) University-level: lack of support and resources, (3)Department-level: lack of professional learning community and rigidity of the promoted teaching model, (4)Classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time, and (5) Teachers: heavy workload

Table 7.4 What Li did concerning the enactment of CECR 2007

7.4.2 Changes observed in Li's classroom

The category of the changes observed in Li's classroom was subsumed into similar categories as the changes she claimed based on evidence gathered from classroom observation and student interview. The participants of Li's students were sophomore Level B students majoring in engineering, including 3 boys and 3 girls.

(1) The teaching goals and focus

Li's teaching contents and focus were prominently dominated by the set goals such as explaining new words, analyzing the language points and doing after-text exercises, rather than adjusting to the responses of students. When Li was asked to describe a successful lesson, she mentioned that 'evaluating a successful lesson is to see whether the previous set objectives are achieved or not, and the planed content is finished or not' (TI, Li, Ref. p.65). Thus, achieving the previous set goals meant the classes were conducted successfully to Li.

The students from Li's classes also indicated that Li set clear teaching and learning goals before each lesson, and her classroom teachings were aimed to finish these goals, such as memorization of word usage, sentence structure and grammar patterns, which were perceived important in examinations. As one of Li's students revealed,

> At the beginning of each class, our teacher Li tells us clearly the purpose of learning the unit and the goals to achieve after learning it. When we finish learning a whole unit, she will use several minutes to summarize what we have learned, and what we should remember (SI, Ref. p. 127: 11-15).

With the introduction of '171' teaching model, the students mentioned that more time was given to listening comprehension, which was confirmed by the classroom observations. That is, in each class (duration of 90 minutes), Li would separate 10 minutes to do listening comprehension and 10 minutes to summarize the main points learned in the period as required by '171' teaching model.

(2) Classroom activities and classroom atmosphere

Similar to Zhang, Li conducted many colorful communicative activities in the

classroom teachings such as presentation, debate, reading aloud, listening to tapes and games. Her students also expressed their interests and excitement in participating in various types of activities. As one student stated in the interview,

> Our teacher (Li) organizes colorful activities in class such as presentation, debate, reading, listening, games, which are really interesting and enjoyable. I particularly like English debate. You know, we are eager to express our thoughts and win the debate. So we think quickly and speak out clearly in order to be meaningful and persuasive (SI, Ref. p. 129: 23-27).

Nevertheless, Li seemed to lack trust in her students' English proficiency, and the underlying reason, in her explanation, was that they were level B students. Thus, she used both Chinese and English as the medium of instruction, though her English was good enough. The frequent application of Chinese prevented her from communicating meaningfully and naturally with her students in English.

(3) Roles of teacher and students

Li was seen mainly delivering subject-related knowledge to her students, and her students were listeners and recipients. She also acted as organizers and directors to manage and direct students' classroom activities. When the students made mistakes in pronunciation or grammar, she was a corrector and judge to correct students' mistakes immediately and pointed out where they needed to improve.

Li's students also regarded her as the role model to follow in terms of pronunciation, while they are listeners and followers. As one student said,

> Li likes to read the news loudly, and then let us follow in chorus. You know, her pronunciation is very clear and beautiful, and we can correct ours by following her (SI, Ref. p. 129: 28-30).

The students added that Li was also like a coach to them. Whenever they made some mistakes, Li would point out and correct them immediately. She was very serious and strict with her students. They admitted that they were a little afraid of

Li, though they were at similar age (SI, Ref. p. 130:3-5). To this, Li explained in the post-class interview,

> I (Li) am afraid that my students do not take me seriously as a young teacher lack of teaching experiences and at their similar age. So, I have to wear a serious face in class, but after class, the students often call me 'sister'. Our relationship is very close and intimate (TI, Li, p. 112: 13-15).

(4) Classroom assessment practices

The common assessment practices Li utilized were dictations of new words and small quizzes in terms of listening and translation, which mainly involved in rote memorization, knowledge acquisition and accuracy, rather than communicative proficiency and fluency demanded by the national curriculum. In addition, Li asked questions from time to time in order to check whether students understand or not. As one student noted,

> Whenever we make some mistakes, she would stop us and let us repeat the words. Then she will give the correct answer, and let us follow. We sometimes fell embarrassed for making so many mistakes and being stopped so many times (SI, Ref. pp. 130-131: 31-4).

Therefore, Li seemed to combine communicative activities with traditional grammar translation method, that is, using some communicative classroom activities to stimulate students' interests, but the major focus was still systematic knowledge transmission.

7.4.3 Factors mediating Li's changes

Li claimed that she had experienced some changes since she became a teacher. According to the functions these factors preformed in her changes, they can be divided into two major categories, namely, factors facilitating Li's change and factors inhibiting Li's change.

Factors facilitating Li's change

The factors enabled Li's changes included (1) factors related to students: mutual growth of both teacher and the students, (2) factors related to teacher: accommodation of students' English proficiency and teaching realities through self-reflection, (3) relationship in the workplace: inspirations from experienced teachers' classroom management and systemic transmission of the knowledge.

(1) Factors related to students: mutual growth of both the teacher and the students

Li stated that her teaching was influenced significantly by her students' feedback. In her view, young people were full of innovative thoughts and ideas, thus she learned a lot from her students in the teaching process. As Li said in the interviews,

> My students have access to a lot of innovative things, which really can lighten me up and give me lots of sparkles. So teaching and learning is a process of mutual growth (TI, Li, Ref. p.13:41-43).

(2) Factors related to teacher: accommodation of students' English proficiency and teaching realities through self-reflection

As the accumulation of teaching experiences, Li began to reflect what she did, and then accommodated some new inspirations in her teaching. As she said, she began her teaching with the belief that English should be taught communicatively in authentic English environment. However, the classroom reality and students' English proficiency brought her to the ground, and she realized that 'what mattered most in the real classroom was not how English should be taught, but how it could be taught' (TI, Li, Ref. p.108). As she said,

> I began my teaching with great enthusiasm that English should be taught in a communicative way and in authentic English Environment, like what I had experienced in my learning. But my expectation and imagination turned out to a total illusion and failure. You know, my students are Level B students and their English is poor. I enjoy speaking English in class, but they cannot understand, so what can I do? I organized kind of classroom activities, but they dislike participating in. I felt that I have to teach based on the realities of my students rather than my beliefs and imagination (TI, Li, Ref. p.108: 3-10).

Self-reflection, thus, enforced her to take into account the teaching realities and adjusted her own teachings to meet students' needs. As Li mentioned,

> At the end of my first teaching year, I began to change my teaching practices. The most important reasons was that I continuously reflected my teaching and to meet my students' needs (TI, Li, Ref. p.109: 35-37).

(3) Relationship in the workplace: inspirations from experienced teachers' classroom management and systemic transmission of the knowledge

Another factor that facilitated Li's change in her teaching was the relationship in the workplace. Li said that she liked chatting with her colleagues, and attending to their lessons. From the mundane chat and classroom observations of the experienced teachers, she got some new understandings about CE teaching and learning, which ultimately catalysed her change in her practices, that is, to combine communicative activities with systematic knowledge transmission. As she said,

> We teachers often chat about how to arouse students' interest or how to guide into a new lesson. We also have the opportunity to observe each other's lessons, from which I gained some inspirations about teaching. In particular, I learned a lot from some experienced teachers, such as how to manage the classrooms and how to transmit the knowledge systemically (TI, Li, Ref. p. 4:25-27).

Factors inhibiting Li's change

Factors challenging Li's change mainly included (1) policy-level factors: mismatches among the policy strands, (2) university-level factors: limited resources and limited trainings provided to the teachers, (3) department-level factors: isolation of teachers and lack of professional community, (4) factors related to classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time, and (5) factors related to teachers: pressure from the heavy workload.

(1) Policy-level factors: limitation of the policy document

Li mentioned that CECR 2007 exerted some negative influences on her changes, as she summarized as (a) CECR 2007 served more rhetoric function than actual

application; (b) there was no specific direction of the reform to guide the implementation; (c) the national policy took no account of teacher's reality, such as heavy workload and tight teaching schedule; (d) the national policy was not culturally appropriate, that is, after years of teaching and learning in a centralized system and hierarchy culture, both teachers and students were accustomed to the traditional lecturing method (TI, Li, Ref. pp. 23-26).

First and foremost, Li stated she was frustrated with the national reform policy and struggled between applying it or not, and ultimately, she chose to follow the general direction of the policy and ignore the concrete contents. As Li noted in the interview,

> The national curriculum tends to cultivate students' comprehensive abilities, particularly their listening and oral English abilities. That is good and necessary. … However, speaking isn't examined in CET, so teachers and students attached little importance to it. The mismatch between the requirements of the national policy and the content of CET really influenced me and also my student (TI, Li, Ref. p.9:4-6).

(2) University-level factors: limited resources and limited training provided to the teachers

Li admitted that students could benefit from more student-centred communicative teaching, and she also would like to attempt the changes. However, the limited support from the institutional leaders and limited resources, together with the limited training inside and outside the university washed away her enthusiasm. As Li mentioned in the interview,

> Though our university has promoted several reforms concerning English teaching up to now, no formal in-service trainings are provided. We teachers feel puzzled on how to implement them in our teaching even we want to (TI, Li, Ref. p.5: 15-16).

(3) Department-level factors: isolation of teachers and lack of professional community

Though the atmosphere in the workplaces was harmonious, and teachers were

friendly to each other, Li, similar to Zhang, also complained that no formal professional community in the university or department, and the teachers were isolated. As Li stated in the interview,

> I think, the department should organize professional community and meetings regularly for teachers. You know, we only can chat occasionally about our teaching, but for most of the time we are isolated, which is very limited to improve ourselves (TI, Li, Ref. p.25: 22-28).

(4)Factors related to the classroom realities: large class-size and limited teaching time

Like other teachers, Li was also frustrated with the classroom realities, particularly, large class-size and limited teaching time. She said in the interviews that she preferred to organize more communicative activities, but the large class-size class made it impossible.

> There are 60—70students in one class, which is oversized for CLT. When I divide students into several groups to have a discussion of a given topic, the ideal is 5-6 students in one group and all together 3-4 groups. That is, 30-40 students in one class is more manageable and suitable. The oversize of students results in the fact that at least 20-30 students have no opportunity to speak out their thoughts or opinions or unable to participate in classroom activities (TI, Li, Ref. p. 3: 18-20).

Limited teaching time and tight teaching schedule also enhanced the difficulties for her to employ student-centered CLT in the classroom teaching. As she noted,

> When I arrange a module for the students to communicate and discuss, I don't know exactly how much time that will use. If the students are very interested in the topic, and I can't control the time, for they want to discuss more. That will waste a lot of time, which means that I can't finish the teaching goal. That really makes me frustrated and embarrassed (TI, Li, Ref. p. 13: 18-21).

(5) Factors related to the teacher: pressure from heavy workload

Heavy workload was another factor that prevented Li from achieving some changes in her practice. She admitted that every day she was immersed in preparing and

teaching the lesson, and correcting and checking students' writing and small quizzes. She could spare no extra time and energy to improve professionally. As she stated in the interview,

> Every day on average, I have 5 hours teaching, and then I have to check students' writing and quizzes. That is too much for me. I have very limited time to prepare for the class now. You know, if the pressure is not so heavy, I can design the classroom activities and classroom scenes more suitable for each student according to their characteristics. I have more time to observe some innovative classes. But now, I have no time and energy to think about the details in the classroom teaching, not mention to make some innovative attempts and changes (TI, Li, Ref. p.3: 21-26).

7.5 Reflective remarks on issues of intention and implementation

Some issues emerged at the individual level concerning the intended changes and the implementation of the national reform, which necessitate further elaboration in order to obtain a full and holistic picture of how and to what extent changes were enacted as the designed in the classrooms, and why some changes achieved, while others not. Issues identified in this chapter mainly contained (1) issues related to gaps between changes teachers claimed and changes observed, (2) issues related to teachers' various responses to the national policy, and (3) issues related to the power of policy in teacher change.

7.5.1 Gaps between changes teachers claimed and changes teachers did

As we have discussed in Section 6.4, all the teachers claimed that they changed or were changing as the result of the national curriculum reform. However, evidence from the classroom observations and students' interviews indicated that there were categories of discrepancies between changes teachers claimed and changes they conducted. Generally speaking, changes Zhang claimed nearly matched what she did and what the reform required, but changes the other three teacher (i.e. Gao, Li and Zhao) claimed mismatched what observed in their classrooms and also the intended changes (see Table 7.5).

	Changes intended	Changes claimed	Changes observed	Match/ mismatch
Zhang	Student-centered communicative approach, focusing students' listening and speaking	Teaching method changed from grammar-translation method to communicative approach	Communicative-oriented, and student-centred	match
Li			Traditional grammar translation method with some form-based activities	mismatch
Gao & Zhao			Traditional grammar translation method with some communicative activities	Mismatch

Table 7.5 Changes intended, changes teachers claimed, and changes observed

Multi-level factors were found to have attributed to these mismatches, but the major one tended to be teachers' different perceptions of the external initiative due to their synchronic understandings and values of EFL teaching and learning.

Gao and Zhao spend more time in listening comprehension and employing some classroom activities. However, their classroom instructions indicated small or even non-change, that is, their instructions were still teacher-dominated and examination-oriented rather than student-centered communication-oriented. Their teaching method was traditional grammar translation method, rather than the communicative approach as they claimed and the reform demanded. Therefore, implementation gaps emerged between their teaching practices and the national reform in terms of the teaching content, the pedagogy and the assessment practices (see Table 7.6).

	Substantial Changes Gao/Zhao claimed	Little Changes observed at Gao's and Zhao's classroom	Match/ Mismatch
Teaching contents and focus	Teaching content shifted from focus on reading and writing to listening and speaking.	Focusing on reading, writing and listening	Mismatch
Teaching activities and classroom atmosphere	Employing more class activities and classroom atmosphere became more relaxed and active.	Dictation, loud reading, listening to tape, small quizzes, dull and 'boring atmosphere'	
Roles of teachers	A negotiator, a facilitator, a helper, a director, an activity organizer	Systemic knowledge transmitter, a dominator, an authoritative figure	
Roles of students	Active participators, major role	Knowledge recipients, note taker, listener, follower	
Classroom assessment practices	Incorporation of students' participation and performance into assessment.	Dictation of new words, writing and small quizzes	
Overall teaching methods applied	Teaching method changed from grammar-translation method to communicative approach.	Traditional grammar translation method with some form-based activities	

Table 7.6 Comparison between changes claimed and changes observed (Gao and Zhao)

(Note: arrows indicate different responses to the changes claimed)

Li did some of the changes as she had claimed, particularly, in terms of colorful classroom activities (see Table 7.7). However, in terms of other aspects such as changes in the teaching contents and focus, roles of teacher and students and application of CLT, Li just paid lip services rather than actual application of them. Though Li employed various classroom activities and the classroom atmosphere was more relaxing and active, her instruction methods and teaching focus had not changed as she claimed. The overall teaching in Li's class was found to be teacher-dominated traditional grammar translation method with some communicative activities, different from what she claimed and what the national policy required.

	Changes Li claimed	Changes observed in Li's classroom	Match/ Mismatch
Teaching contents and focus	Teaching content shifted from focus on reading and writing to listening and speaking. Communication-oriented	→ To finish the teaching content and the previous set goals, focus on reading and listening Examination-oriented	Mismatch
Teaching activities and classroom atmosphere	Employing more class activities and classroom atmosphere became more relaxing and active.	Presentation, group discussion, debate, loud reading, listening to tape. Active atmosphere	Match
Roles of teachers	A negotiator, a facilitator, a helper, a director, an activity organizer, the needs analyst.	→ Systemic knowledge transmitter,an activity organizer, a judge, a coach, model role	Mismatch
Roles of students	Active participators, responsible for their learning, major role	→ Knowledge recipients, participator, listener, follower	
Classroom assessment practices	Incorporation of students' participation and performance into assessment.	→ Dictation of new words, writing and small quizzes	
Overall teaching methods applied	Teaching method changed from grammar-translation method to communicative approach	→ Traditional grammar translation method with some communicative activities	

Table 7.7- Comparison between Changes claimed and changes observed (Li)

(Note: arrows indicate different responses to the changes claimed)

On the contrary, Changes Zhang claimed were nearly in consistence with what she did in the classrooms and what the policy demanded (see Table 7.8). However, it is worth noting that Zhang was not doing the national policy purposely. Her teaching was in alignment with the national reform just because her professional beliefs were happened to match the intended changes, as she said in the interviews,

> If the requirement of the national curriculum was against my understanding of teaching and learning, I would pay no attention to it, no matter it is national or institutional (TI, Zhang, Ref. p.115:36-37).

	Changes Zhang claimed	Changes observed in Zhang's classroom	Match/ mismatch
Teaching contents and focus	Teaching content shifted from focus on reading and writing to listening and speaking.	To promote students' communicative competence and stimulate students' interaction and participations.	Match
Teaching activities and classroom atmosphere	Employing more class activities and classroom atmosphere became more relaxing and active.	Pair work, group discussion, free talk, debate, meaning summary, role play, reflexing and active	
Roles of teachers	A negotiator, a facilitator, a helper, a director, an activity organizer, the needs analyst.	A negotiator, a facilitator, a helper, a director, an activity organizer, the needs analyst.	
Roles of students	Active participators, responsible for their learning , major role	Active participators, responsible for their learning and the actual owners of their classes	
Classroom assessment practices	Incorporation of students' participation and performance into assessment.	Feedback, classroom performances and participation	
Overall teaching methods applied	Teaching method changed from grammar-translation method to communicative approach	Communicative-oriented, and student-centred	

Table 7.8 Comparison between changes claimed changes observed (Zhang)

Therefore, although what Zhang did nearly matched what she claimed and what the reform required, she had no intention to enact the intended changes purposely. She tended to do what matched her beliefs and values and ready to adjust / change her teaching to benefit her students.

7.5.2 Issues related to teachers' response to the national policy

The national curriculum reform required CE teachers to change their teaching practices to enhance students' communicative proficiencies, and simultaneously their EFL beliefs and conceptions, which implied that teachers need to improve professionally to ensure the implementation of the national policy. The teachers in this study demonstrated general endorsement of and positive attitudes towards the theory of curriculum reform. However, they perceived it impossible to enact the reform without support and help from the government and the organizations. The difficulties were exacerbated by the competing demands at the different levels and the multiple contextual constraints, e.g. communicative proficiency in the national policy and high examination results at the university and department levels.

However, the individual teachers' teaching practices were found to be consistent with their EFL beliefs in spite of the constraints and challenges they were encountered. For example, Gao and Zhao believed firmly that the objectives of EFL teaching and learning was to transmit knowledge systemically and to pass examinations, thus their teaching was knowledge transmission and examination-oriented. Thus, it can be argued that the teachers were delivering their instructions mainly based on their conceptions and the classroom realities, rather than driven by the force of the national policy. Therefore, the teachers demonstrated limited, if any, conscious responses in implementing the top-down policy.

7.5.3 Issues related to the power of the national policy in teacher change

Multi-level factors were found to have influenced individual teachers' practices and their conceptions. The enabling factors mainly included teachers' self-reflection, students' feedback, and the relationship in the workplace, whilst the prohibiting ones mainly attributed to the management of the national reform and the work environments and conditions in the local contexts, such as university- and department-regulations and the teaching realities and students' characteristics. Only one teacher (Zhao) mentioned that the national reform enhanced her changes in the classroom, but as the evidence revealed in Section 7.2, she achieved small or non-changes in her teachings accordingly. The other three teachers (i.e. Gao, Li, and Zhang) ignored or rejected the function of the reform in their changes. Gao even

stated that what the national reform imposed on her was mainly tensions and challenges, which was beyond her capacity and expertise to handle, concomitantly, small changes were made in her classrooms. Li changed in the opposite way from the external initiative in order to accommodate the classroom realities and students' interests, though she tended to hold some progressive beliefs similar to the policy due to her personal life and learning experiences. Zhang's change was in line with the reform, but her major catalyst to change was self-reflection, that is, her values and conceptions of CE teaching and learning, which were shaped and reshaped in the constant changing context nationally and internationally, happened to accord with the national policy.

Although teachers in the current research were from the same university and the same department and in similar classroom realities, their way of perceiving and implementing the national policy were quite different due to their individualized theories-in-use. To ensure the possible enactment of the policy, it tends to be paramount to uncover the theories underpinning teachers' teaching practices, and narrow down the mismatches between teachers' theories-in-use and the philosophies underlying the national reform, and to enhance teachers' expertise and capacities through continuous professional development. Otherwise, the curriculum reform was unlikely to be enacted as intended without teachers' participation and change.

Therefore, none of the teachers changed / no-changed because of the national reform. It suggests the enactment of the national policy (CECR 2007) is not a matter of simple implementation but the result of a more complex process which may change the original reform intention. The enactment of a systemic curriculum reform was mediated through interplay of multi-level forces and challenges, and that the major impetus for how teachers made sense of and enacted reform related more to the strength of their current values and practices and students' feedback, rather than the power of external initiatives. Without localised management, curriculum reform itself was, therefore, insufficient to ensure changes in practice.

7.6 Summary

The finding results presented in this chapter indicated the national policy was translated into individualized classroom activities based on teachers' values and the classroom realities. Two teachers (Gao and Zhao) were found to have executed limited aspects of the external initiative in their classrooms except for more focus on listening. The changes they achieved were small and superficial compared with the substantial changes demanded, hence, great gaps arose between what they claimed and what they did and between the intention and implementation. Li, as a young teacher, began her teaching career with enthusiasm about the student-centred communicative teaching, which was consistent with the national policy. However, she experienced some challenges and difficulties from the classroom realities and students' resistances, thus she adjusted her teaching practice and beliefs in a reverse way as required by the national curriculum. Zhang's story was quite different from them, that is, what she did mostly matched what she claimed and also the requirement of the national policy. However, the main factors enabling Zhang's change were students' feedback and her self-reflection, rather than the top-down curriculum reform. Thus, the national curriculum reform, as an external initiative, failed to stimulate any substantial changes in teachers.

Chapter Eight The paradox of change as unintended or unchanged

8.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters analyzed and discussed policy enactment under the conceptual umbrella that policy execution is a complex and interactive process of interpretation and re-contextualization at three levels, namely, macro-level (policy), meso-level (university and department), and micro-level (individual). The tensions and challenges within and between each level were also presented in detail. Individual teachers' stated changes and their actual classroom practices were analyzed, and the gaps between what they claimed and what they did were documented.

Based on the finding results, and simultaneously guided by theories of change and theories of policy enactment reviewed in Chapter 2 and chapter 3, this chapter will focus on two major aspects (see Table 8.1). It firstly explores the nature of teacher change against the backdrop of national curriculum and key factors influencing teacher change. Then, it moves forward to discuss the interplay of multi-level challenges involved in individual teachers' enactment of the top-down external initiative at the classroom level.

The study, in particular, points out the importance of teacher change in enacting curriculum reforms. Without relevant changes and improvement in teachers' teaching and thinking, the intended changes are less likely to be implemented, and students are unlikely to benefit in the intended ways. The results resonate with the relevant literature concerning the difficulties and complexities of teacher change, e.g. Tsui (2003), Jones & Fong (2007), Water & Vilches (2008), Ahn (2009) and Zhang & Liu (2014). The challenges are found to be exacerbated when teachers' beliefs and values are in conflict with the philosophy underlying the intended changes, such as CLT (western-originated curriculum imported into EFL context). Teachers' beliefs and contextual realities are found to function as filters through

which the new curriculum is reinterpreted and re-contextualized, and eventually impact teachers' enactment of the reform at the classroom level.

Factors enabling teacher change	1.The influence of contexts on teacher change: macro-level context: the socio-cultural changes, meso-context: organizational influences on teacher change, 2. Individual-level factors : teachers' beliefs and current teaching experiences, Teachers' self-reflection
Multi-level tensions challenging teacher change	1.Macro-level filters : issues related to policy and means of dissemination 1) limitation of the policy document, 2) inconsistency among the policy strands, 3) the linear means of policy dissemination, 4) limited support from top-level policy makers and the government. 2.Meso-level filters: leadership and local management 1) ineffectiveness in adapting the intended curriculum, 2) insufficiency in providing teachers support, 3) hierarchical dissemination of the top-down policy. 3.Micro-level filters: workplace management and classroom realities 1) peripheral role in designing university level regulations, 2) limited accommodation of the policy messages. 4.Individual-level challenges 1) the mediating role of teachers' professional beliefs and values, 2) the impact of teachers' professional capacities, 3) students' characteristics and English proficiency

Table 8.1 Summary of factors influencing teacher change

In addition to confirmation of the relevant literature, the research results also nuance and advance our understandings about teacher change and curriculum reform. Firstly, teacher change is the interplay of multi-level challenges, though the impact of each level might be various. The large-scale curriculum reform is unlikely to initiate changes in teachers' teaching and thinking without organizational management and individual teachers' motivation and engagement. Secondly, teachers may claim, consciously or unconsciously, more changes than

what they have actually made due to various reasons, thus it necessitates a longitude investigation into the process of teacher change through triangulated research methods. Thirdly, a top-down linear model of change, though is perceived culturally appropriate in a centralized system like China (e.g. Markee, 1997), is proved to be ineffective and insufficient to ensure substantial changes in teachers' teaching and students' learning.

This chapter provides the preface, also, to the final chapter which will claim that the research provides new knowledge of the limited effectiveness of existing models of systemic change where they do not take into account the need to acknowledge the roles played by cultural tradition and teacher agency.

8.2 Teacher change and curriculum reform

The findings in this research study, on the one hand, confirmed the literature that teachers were resistant and reluctant to change (such as the cases of Gao and Zhao), particularly when the changes were mandated and imposed by the external policy makers. However, the findings, on the other hand, also indicated that teachers were able to make small changes / adjustments in their teaching, such as organizing more classroom activities and focusing more listening practices, even though teachers were challenged by the intended changes in terms of their capacities and professional beliefs (i.e. Gao, Li and Zhao). Some of teachers even could make great changes in their teaching practices and professional beliefs against the backdrop of the external initiatives, although they had no intentions to implement the national reform consciously and purposely, such as Zhang in this study.

All the teachers in this research study demonstrated their willingness to change their practice for the sake of their students and to adapt to the changing social and cultural contexts. Teacher change, whether minor or great, indicated some characteristics of idiosyncratic and individualized orientation, that is, teachers tended to develop and improve professionally and individually through self-reflection and accumulations of teaching experiences even under limited external professional support. Various factors were found to have contributed to teacher

change, which can be subsumed into three major categories, specifically factors related to macro- , meso-, and micro-context (see Figure 8.1).

8.2.1 The influence of context on teacher change

The complexities of teaching and the variabilities of the multi-level contexts worked together to justify the perception of teachers as thinking, reflective and autonomous professionals (Richardson & Placier, 2001). All teachers, in this study, were found to have reflected continuously upon the teaching environment and realities to make possibly appropriate decisions and adjustments in their classrooms in order to benefit their students and adapt to the changing context.

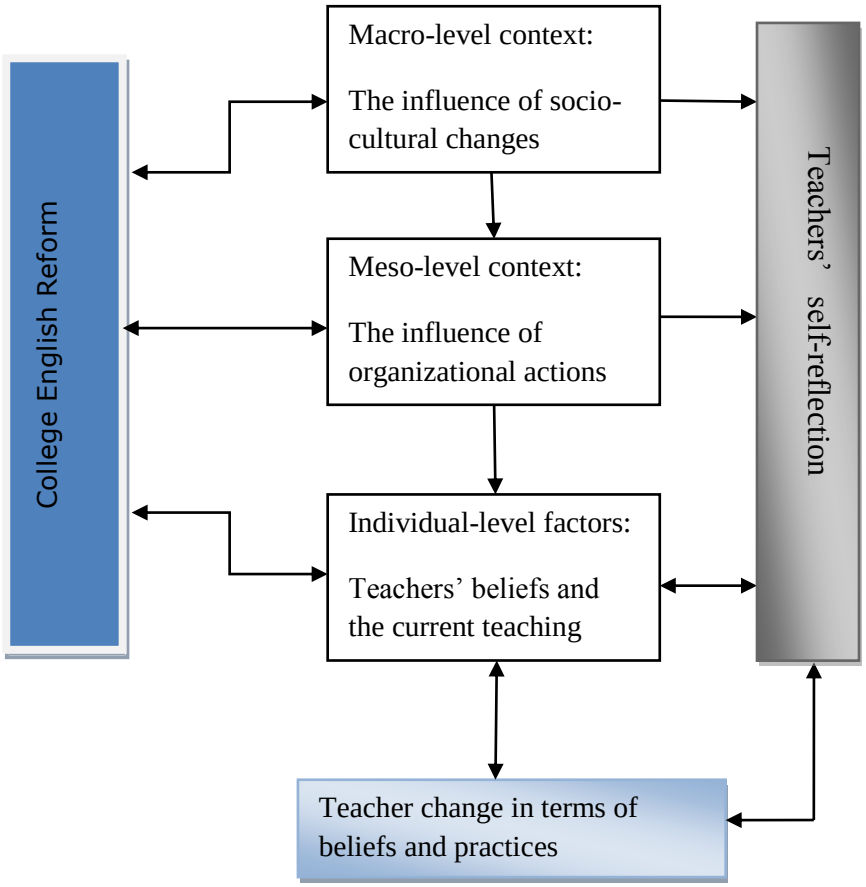

Figure 8.1 Factors enabling teacher change

Macro-level context: the socio-cultural changes

As noted in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, some studies (e.g. Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Penner, 1995; Li, 1998; Hu, 2002) contend that the western-originated communicative approaches mismatch EFL context. The social-cultural context and cultural conflict is perceived as one of the main reasons leading to the failure of the implementation of CLT in China (e.g. Ellis, 2003; Hu, 2005). However, this study suggests that the requirements and demands of graduates' English proficiency have changed significantly in China in the 21st century with further opening-up policy to the outside world and the trend of globalization. As some research findings (e.g. Zhang, 2005; Zheng, 2005; Han, 2008) indicate some Chinese English teachers have applied student-centered communicative-oriented teaching approaches in their classrooms, such as Zhang in this study. Zhang focused on stimulating students' interest, creating contextualized teaching activities, and providing many opportunities for the students to make decisions for their own learning. Interviews of the students, also, demonstrated that they welcomed life-related communicative teaching. Simultaneously, they were confident that they were capable of adapting to this approach. Most interviewed students even mentioned that their primary and secondary school teachers had already applied CLT in the classrooms. Students' beliefs and values about language teaching and learning tend to have experienced great changes in the light of the global and educational changes in China (Tan, 2011). Particularly, with the trend of globalization and internet information, many foreign cultural values have flown into China, and great changes have occurred socially and culturally. Limited understandings of the social and cultural changes might limit the adoption of the western-originated curriculum, and mediate teachers' perceptions and enactment of the student-centered curriculum at the classroom level, such as the cases of Zhao and Gao in this research.

Limited understanding of the social and cultural changes likely led to misconceptions of the current educational context. As in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and chapter 3, some studies (e.g. Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Penner, 1995; Li, 1998; Hu, 2002; Ellis, 2003) attributed the difficult adoption and insufficient implementation of communicative approaches in China to the Confucian educational tradition, which, they argued, was incompatible with the Western way of language teaching and learning (Penner, 1995). However, the findings in the

research study, together with other similar research findings (e.g. Zhang, 2005; Han, 2008; Zheng & Davison, 2008), indicated that the current educational context in China is the hybrid of Western and Chinese tradition, that is, Confucian heritage coexists with the Western way. Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge that the blending feature of the current Chinese educational context; and the cultural differences between China and the West are permeable, rather than impenetrable (Han, 2008; Tan, 2011). However, the misconception of the contemporary Chinese educational context deeply affected Zhao and Gao in this study. They doubted the compatibility and practicality of communicative approach in their actual classroom teaching, thus, they continued to transmit knowledge and dominated in their classrooms to ensure the teaching and learning sufficiency. Conversely, Zhang attempted to permeate the 'cultural wall' through negotiating and responding to her students, rather than resumed to the teacher-dominated lecture-style teaching, though she also encountered some difficulties.

Meso- context: organizational influences on teacher change

As Little (1981) contends, school is not the context but the heart of change. The literature highlights that certain aspects of school (university) context, such as structure, supervision, intake of students, cause teachers to change in particular ways (Richardson & Placier, 2001). This study also confirmed the important role of the organizational context on teacher change. To ensure the possible smooth implementation of CECR 2007, the national policy intent prescribed some requirements on specific universities concerning how to administrate and how to work at their own pace to adapt the national reform to the local circumstances as well as for the local needs and interests.

University L in this study attached some public importance to the national curriculum reform. The university leaders stated that they did what they could do under their specific circumstances to ensure an acceptable response to the top-down policy. Concomitantly, some changes were claimed at the university- and department-level, while others were not due to various difficulties and challenges experienced. In the perspectives of the institutional administrators, the preconditions for executing the reform were ensured, and some resource support, though limited, was provided. The teachers also acknowledged the efforts and

preparation work the university and department made to ensure the possible adoption / adaptation of the national curriculum reform. However, the changes at the institution level tended to have focused on changes in the procedure, such as paper-based guidelines and some physical conditions, rather than deep changes in the culture or providing the teachers professional support, although the leaders lacked confidence of teachers' expertise and capacities to enact the intended changes. Thus, the organization (university) provided some preconditions for the possibility of enacting the reform at the classroom level, whist in the view of teachers, the efforts tended to be insufficient to ensure some real changes in the core of instruction.

8.2.2 Teacher belief and the current teaching experiences

The findings indicated that teacher beliefs functioned as filters through which new phenomenon and information were perceived and interpreted (Pajares, 1992; Allen, 2002). Teachers' professional beliefs influenced their perceptions and interpretations of an educational reform and decided their attitudes towards and perceptions of it, and eventually impacted how and to what extent it was enacted at the classroom level. In the current study, teachers' diverse beliefs led to their idiosyncratic understandings and perceptions of the national policy intent and the situated contextual regulations. In this study, Zhang was confident of and excited about the intended changes, since in her perception, they were compatible with her current beliefs, values and teaching practices. Although Zhang was also frustrated with the inconsistency among the policy strands like other teachers, she tended to be less concerned as she believed that the teaching content and the teaching method could be negotiated and co-constructed with the students. Moreover, Zhang's current beliefs and values were generally in alignment with the intended changes in terms of teaching and learning goals, communicative-oriented teaching methodology, and advocacy of summative and formative assessment, hence her instructional stance was found to be student-centered and communication-oriented, albeit she tended not to do the policy purposely.

In line with the literature, the teachers were thrown into perturbances when they experienced tensions and confusions in their teaching (Shaw et at., 1991). These

perturbances made them reflect and rethink their teaching practices and their teaching philosophies, which was a crucial point for the teachers to change. Zhang experienced the tensions at the initial stage of her career when she realized that teacher-centered, examination-oriented teaching could not stimulate students' learning motivation and improve their learning outcome. With the accumulation of teaching experiences, she managed to involve students more in the teaching and provided more opportunities for the students to take responsibility for their own learning. Through continuous self-reflection and feedback from the students, Zhang began to achieve more communicative and interactive classroom atmosphere and higher learning enthusiasm and better learning outcomes of the students.

8.3 Policy enactment is the interplay of multi-level challenges and tensions

The findings confirmed that policy enactment is a process of iterative refraction (Supovitz, 2008), and levels of changes / adaptation are involved as the reform walks its way through multi-level local settings. Through layers of interpretation and re-interpretation of the reform, the intended changes were filtered and readjusted to fit in the existing culture and current practices. As a result, the enacted curriculum turned out to be quite different from the intended, or even towards an opposite direction without proper and sufficient local management. All the teachers in this study experienced some changes, minor or great, in the context of the national curriculum. However, the changes most teachers achieved were far less than the changes they claimed. In other words, teacher changes were incremental, rather than significant and radical required by the national policy. The frontline teachers' enactment of the external initiative at the classroom level was found to be the interplay of multi-level forces and tensions, albeit the impacts of the challenges of each level were various (see Figure 8.2).

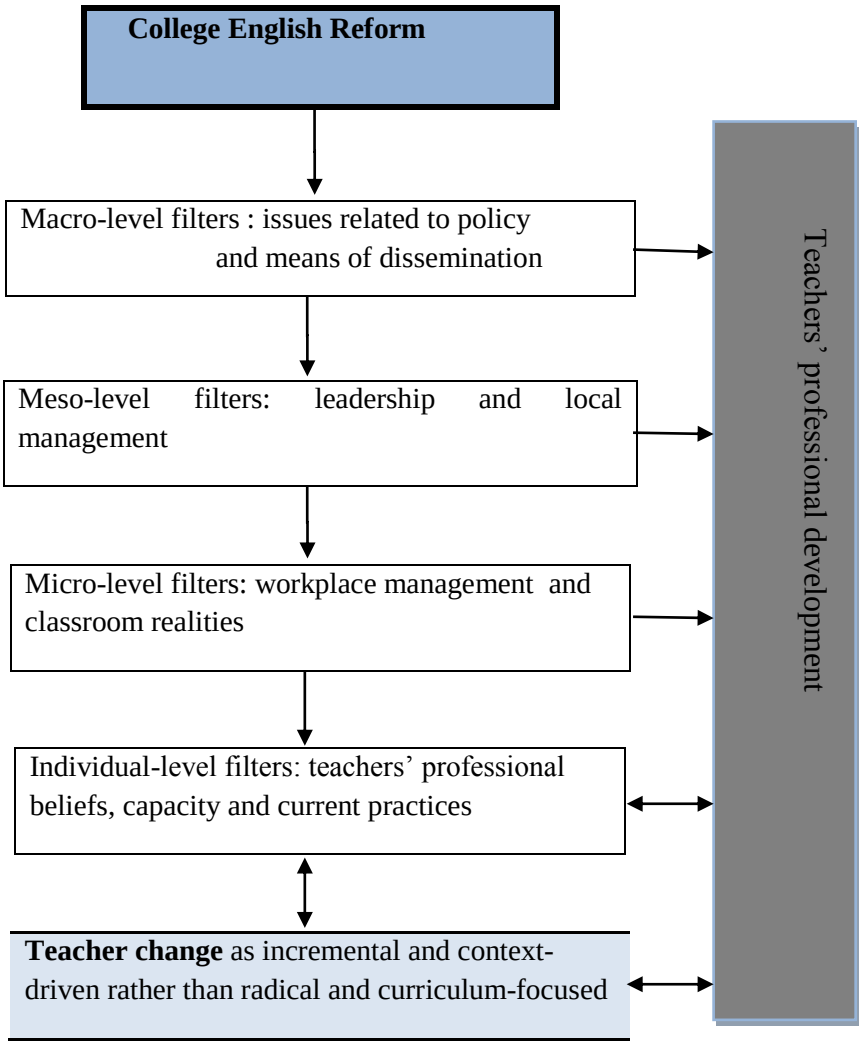

Figure 8.2 Interplay of multi-level filters in the process of policy enactment

Multiple level challenges exerted significant influences on how the policy intent was interpreted and reinterpreted by the multi-layer policy actors and how it was contextualized and re-contextualized in the local contexts. The implementers' limited understanding of the changes in the current cultural and educational context led to their limited implementation of the intended changes at the grassroots level. Teachers, as front-line policy implementers, were found to be reflective and active practitioners, rather than passive policy victims, even within a centralized educational system like China. They constantly reflected their teaching practices upon student feedback and discussions with colleagues, but simultaneously, they

also held entrenched beliefs about teaching and learning as a result of their life stories, educational background, and experiences of learning and teaching (Freeman, 2002; Tsui, 2003; Zheng & Davison, 2008; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Thus, the enactment of the systemic reform was mediated through the interplay of forces and challenges; and the major impetus for how teachers made sense of and enacted the reform related more to the strength of their current beliefs and practices and students' feedback, rather than the power of the external initiative.

The following sections unpack separately the multi-level tensions and ultimately how the interplay of them attributes to the individualized features of teacher's perceptions and enactment of the intended changes.

8.3.1 Macro-level Challenges

Policy, which is designed to solve problems, may, become a problem itself (Elmore, 2011), such as CECR 2007 in this study. CECR 2007 was promulgated to provide colleges and universities with a guideline for national CE instruction. However, in the perceptions of the teachers and administrators, there were some limitations in the policy document, and the policy strands were inconsistent. The finding resonated with claims of some other research studies (e.g. Gao, 2007; Wang, 2006). Desimone (2002) and Spillane et al. (2002) concur that policymakers need to formulate clear, specific, and consistent directives with helpful procedures so that the policy would be more likely to be executed as intended. Morris and Scott (2003) add that many policies fail to be implemented because they are ambiguous or insufficiently specific. As warned by the researchers, issues concerning the national policy in this study turned out to be one major factor hindering the actual adoption and enactment of CECR 2007 at the local levels.

Limitation of the policy document

The attributes of change and innovation impact the process of implementation and dissemination significantly (Rogers, 2003; Fullan, 2010), no exception to CECR 2007. As noted in Chapter 2, CECR 2007, compared with the objectives and contents of the 1999 syllabus, had several shifts, namely, a shift from the focus on language knowledge to the focus on all-round competence; a shift from teacher-

centred teaching and learning to student-centred teaching and learning; a shift from test-orientated teaching and learning to competence-orientated teaching and learning. These shifts indicated that the predominant theoretical basis in CECR 2007 was constructivist approach, specifically, communicative competence and learner-centred approach and learner autonomy (Ruan et al., 2009). However, despite the mention of some Western and modern concepts, there were also some specific emphasises on the traditional skills in CECR 2007, such as the reading and translating speed was precisely prescribed. The combination of constructivist approach promoted and the traditional skills required in the national policy intents enhanced ambiguities of the policy intent, which impacted negatively on the actual implementation for the administrators and frontline teachers.

In addition, CECR 2007 tended to lack explicit explanation of theoretical rationale underpinning the requirement or sufficient evidences from empirical research. This reference was confirmed by some policy makers (see Gao, 2007; Wang, 2006). In a study to explore teachers' responses to challenges in the changing context of tertiary English teaching, Gao (2007) interviewed one policymaker of CECR 2007, who frankly admitted that in the process of designing CECR 2007, its philosophy and rationale had not been established and it was not solidly based on empirical studies.

Fullan and Miles (1992) warn of 'faulty maps of change', that is, reforms are taken on without either a careful assessment of its strength and weakness, or of how or whether it can be integrated with what is already going on in the process of implementation. The findings in this study demonstrated that this issue existed in the process of enacting CECR 2007. After two years of trial implementation, the top-down CER began to launch nationwide at the tertiary level in China. However, no explicit assessment of the project in terms of its strength and weakness was examined, and no specific problems in the process of implementation were identified. Conversely, the official report in 2006 just outlined some initial successful experiences in the experimental institutions, some general problems in terms of teaching resources, and some general suggestions for further implementation. Then, the nationwide CE reform was launched in 2007, and the non-experimental universities were expected to replicate or borrow some

successful experiences from the experimental ones, but the significant differences and varieties among the universities indicated that it was impossible and impractical, as the university level leaders posited in the current study. Concerning the policy itself, there were no comments, no changes and no improvements between the trial document and the final version of CECR 2007.

Inconsistency among the policy strands

The findings elaborated that there were some discrepancies within the national policy initiatives, which might attribute to the respective tasks undertaken by the three committees at the national level, that is, the Syllabus committee, the Textbook committee, and the Testing committee. Textbooks and CET, which were designed to enhance the application of the reform, but, eventually, became 'barriers', or even 'major difficulties' (TI, Li, Ref. p. 34) to apply the intended changes at the classroom level. In addition, the textbooks and CET were inconsistent in terms of content and format, which became 'a heavy headache for the teachers concerning how to combine CET and the teaching content and teaching methods effectively' (TI, Zhao, Ref. p. 54). These mismatches aroused 'tensions and anxiety' among the teachers (TI, Gao, Ref. p. 76), and consequently challenged the actual application of the reform at the grassroots level.

As reviewed in the relevant literature, the issue of inconsistencies in the policy initiative was not new. Some researchers have documented similar findings in CER 1999, and argued that inconsistency was one of the major factors influencing the implementation of the reform (e.g. Zhang 2001; Yang, 2001; Zhu 2002; Wu 2003; Gao, 2007). Although CECR 2007 demonstrated some attempts and efforts to resolve the problems through revising the textbooks and CET in terms of content and format, the mismatches were still obvious. The findings echoed some other research studies concerning CECR 2007 (e.g. Zhang 2008; Wang 2010). Fullan (2007) points out that the characteristics of innovation are important factors influencing the actual implementation. The importance of policy coherency is also highlighted by some other educational researchers (e.g. Fuhrman, 1993; Elmore, 1997; Fullan, 2007, 2010). Much of the failure of some policy efforts to improve education can be attributed to inconsistency among the policy initiatives (Fullan, 2007, 2010). Education policies, thus, need to be congruent, to send the same

messages, and to avoid contradictions to ensure the actual enactment at the grassroots level (Fuhrman, 1993).

The linear means of policy dissemination

Fullan (1994) points out that the necessity of coordination of top-down and bottom-up approach of change in the process of policy implementation. MacBeath (1999) reiterates the importance of mutual communication between top-down and bottom-up in the process of enacting educational changes. Markee (1997) strengthens that combined efforts from the top and the grassroots level are needed to guarantee the sustainability of innovations. These warns notwithstanding, the national curriculum reform in China has demonstrated a linear hierarchical model of dissemination. The formulation of the educational policy was rested with the policy makers of MoE, and then the policy was conveyed to the specific universities through national and provincial conferences, and then to the leaders in the institutions, and lastly to the frontline teachers to execute in the classrooms. The linear top-down approach of change failed to convey the frontline problems to the institutional leaders and then up to the policy makers. Although various tensions (e.g. local constraints and classroom realities) emerged in the process and recognized by the local practitioners, they were unlikely to be resolved without the help from the above levels. The findings confirmed some empirical research studies of the ineffectiveness of top-down model of change in China (e.g. Zhang, 2008; Wang, 2010; Hu & McGrath, 2012)

Limited support from the top-level policy makers and the government

Furthermore, the dissemination of the top-down curriculum reform was limited to several sporadic seminars organized in summer or winter vocations, as claimed by some other research studies (e. g. Han, 2008; Zheng & Davison, 2008; Hu & McGrath, 2012; Zheng, 2012). The insufficient dissemination channel mediated the diffusion of the curriculum innovation at the institutional and individual level. The university-level administrators in this study admitted that they had participated once or twice in the seminars organized by the policy makers and had very limited understandings about the national reform. The department-level leaders were passed on the reform through the university-level administrators, and they showed little or even no interests to explore more about the national policy. To the

department-level leaders, the national reform was ‘too general and abstract’, and it was only ‘ideal objective’, and ‘too ideal to be applied in the specific context’ (DLA, Ref. p.97). The indifferent attitudes of the middle managers towards the national curriculum were in accordance with the findings of some other research studies (e.g. Zhang, 2005; Han, 2008; Hu, 2008). The perception and attitudes of the administrators influenced the translation and contextualization of the national policy. Although the grassroots teachers expressed their general willingness to carry out the requirements of national policy to benefit their students, they were unsatisfied with the knowledge-transmitted and theory-based disseminating format, which was limited in promoting their professional development and stimulating their pedagogical changes.

8.3.2 Meso -level challenges (the university level in this study)

In line with the research reviewed in Chapter 3, the effectiveness of leadership was one of the key factors to ensure the successful implementation of educational changes (Day et al., 2000; Donaldson, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Elmore, 2005, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2008), which was also confirmed by the research findings in the present study. Institutions as parts of the educational system, along with individual teachers, are main change implementers, thus, they need to shoulder their responsibilities in the concerted efforts of systemic changes.

The relevant challenges arising from the university level have been described in detail in the Chapter 5. Based on these descriptive findings, it can be observed that the national reform was not implemented and managed effectively due to the insufficient leadership and also the local constraints. Concomitantly, patterns of challenges and tensions emerged, which can be subsumed into three major groups, namely, ineffective adaption of the national policy, insufficient support provided to the department and the frontline teachers, and the hierarchical way to disseminate the top-down policy. These tensions imposed negative influences on the administrators’ interpretations of the national policy and the concrete actions taken at the institutional level to execute the national policy intents. To ensure the large-scale reform to be delivered at the classroom level, the institutional leaders,

together with the frontline teachers, should have the will and capacities to carry out the policy (McLaughlin, 1987), and build the internal capacity to hold teachers and students accountable for themselves (Elmore, 2005). However, the findings in the present study revealed that the administrators not only lacked in the motivation and capacities to respond to the intended curriculum meaningfully and productively, but also failed to provide the teachers sufficient support and equip them with the will and capacity demanded by the reform.

Ineffectiveness in adapting the intended curriculum

How the policies are interpreted and enacted is mediated by the situated factors, since institutions in different contexts might have different capacities, potentials and limits (Lauder et al., 1998). Enactment, thus, relies on to what extent the new policy initiative matches the existing ethos and culture of the institutions, and correspondingly, how much changes that might cause (Ball et al, 2011).

University L in the current study, on the whole, demonstrated limited enthusiasm to the actual application of CECR 2007. The institutional regulations indicated that the leaders had little interest in enhancing the driving forces to adopt the reform effectively; instead, they attempted to translate the reform to fit the cultures and structures already established in the university. The results were in alignment with some other research findings (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998; Gordon, 2001; Patterson, 2002; Squire et al., 2003; Strahan, 2003; Elmore, 2004). The university attempted to do what could be done concerning the national policy within the situated contextual constraints and cultures, rather than what should be done to ensure the smooth and successful adoption of CECR 2007. If authoritative interpretations were misguided (Ball et al., 2012, p. 49), the policy enactment consequences / outcomes could be quite different. What the university cared about was the desired outcome —good scores on CET, thus, CECR 2007 was not adopted as envisaged.

Madsen (1994) contends that ambiguous policies can result in multiple interpretations and create much confusion within the organization. The policy messages might also be distorted as they filter down through layers of policy actors (Lefstein, 2005). In the present study, the institutional administrators interpreted the national policy on the basis of the institutional priorities. The intended changes

were shifted into the relevant institutional level regulations with regard to the main components of the national policy, namely, what to teach, how to teach and how to assess. Consequently, the reforms may look very different in different institutions and achieved different ends that might have little to do with their original intent (Gordon & Patterson, 2008). This phenomenon informed of the importance of collaboration and cooperation between the policymakers and the implementers during policy development and policy implementation (Hope & Pigford, 2001).

Insufficiency in providing teachers support

To ensure the successful enactment of educational reforms at the institutional level, teachers need continuous professional development, particularly when the reform engaging new skills and knowledge (Fullan, 2007), as CECR 2007 in the current study. However, the research findings indicated that the professional development programs for the teachers were far from sufficient, which resonated with other researchers' claims (e. g. Hu, 2005; Wang, 2006; Zheng, 2010).

McLaughlin (1987) suggests that teachers should be provided human, financial, and material support to facilitate the enactment of educational reforms. In the current study, the specific universities are explicitly required by the national reform to establish a system of teacher and teaching management, and to ensure the appropriate ratio of teachers and students, and a qualified staff team. University L tended to have failed in fulfilling these requirements, and provided limited training opportunities for teachers due to some practical difficulties, such as teachers' heavy workload in the views of the institutional leader. Even in the limited training programs, the teachers were delivered some theoretical knowledge rather than the pedagogical support, such as how to teach communicatively and how to conduct formative assessment demanded by the national reform.

In addition, University L provided limited and insufficient resource and material support for the teachers. The language labs and multimedia classrooms were far from sufficient to ensure the teachers to conduct information and technology-based classroom instructions. For most of time, the teachers had to conduct chalk-and-talk traditional classroom teaching, which, in the view of teachers, prevented them from nurturing autonomous and individualized learning. Furthermore, there was no

institutional professional learning community in University L, for most of the time, the teachers were isolated and separated in their attempts to improve professionally. Moreover, there were no evaluation and superintendent mechanisms to supervise and evaluate the enactment of CECR 2007. Therefore, without the administrators' sufficient support and management, the teachers were unwilling or unable to devote time, effort and 'emotional investment' necessary for successful enactment of a particular curriculum reform (McLaughlin, 1987).

Ball and Bowe (1991) concur that leaders need to create school-wide (university-wide in the present study) participation and consensus in alignment with the overarching external changes. To do so, it necessitates need analysis of teachers and provides timely relevant support concerning their difficulties and demands in their professional development to fulfil the national policy. However, no bottom-up attempts to stimulate teachers' participation or motivation were launched in University L, instead, levels of hierarchical rules were regulated to pressure the lower level to carry them out. As for the teachers, changes imposed outside can threaten their values, beliefs and norms (Fullan, 1999), as found in this study. Thus, it is worthwhile highlighting the importance to develop a shared vision of reform university-wide and to design a curriculum under the umbrella of the intended changes with concerted efforts of the teachers. To ensure the sufficient enactment of educational reforms, it also tends to be necessary to develop a culture of collegiality and collaboration, to encourage wider participation and to prevent the individualistic orientation among the teachers.

Hierarchical dissemination of the top-down policy

Pal (2006) argues that policy implementation is not exclusive, and as long as the direction goes in right with the intended policy, any form of implementation is acceptable. Due to the unique circumstances and culture, it is impractical or even impossible for the specific universities to translate the external policy into practice without mutual adaptation. CECR 2007 granted some flexibility and autonomy to individual universities for designing 'a scientific, systemic and individualized CE syllabus to guide their own College English teaching' in accordance with the Requirement and in the light of their specific circumstances (CECR 2007, p.1). Therefore, the policymakers of CECR 2007 left some freedom and flexibility for

individual universities to enact the national reform under the local circumstances as well as for the local needs, rather than expect them to demonstrate complete fidelity in implementing the proposed curriculum. However, University L tended to have failed in performing the autonomy and flexibility and also in adapting effectively the national policy to their situated context.

The university leaders were seen to continue the linear model to disseminate the national policy within the institution, and made relevant regulations for the department and teachers to follow. Teachers, the actual policy implementers, were attached little attention, and the teaching realities were purposely ignored. Thus, it might be worthwhile considering opening a two-way communication channel within the organization and nationwide, through which the university level leaders can work with the department leaders and the frontline teachers to build a shared vision and design teaching and learning appropriate to the specific local context with the guidance of the national curriculum, to engage the teachers in their professional development, and meanwhile to ensure that students' needs and teachers' worries can feed back timely and be resolved efficiently.

8.3.3 Micro -level challenges (department-level)

Morris and Scott (2003) contend that, within centralised organizations (such as University L) challenges often exist when transmitting policy intent from most senior level through the middle-level managers to the grass level teachers. Departments at the tertiary level in China are situated between the institutional and individual level, thus they are expected to translate the national policy mandate and the relevant institutional regulations in the context of teachers' knowledge, beliefs and abilities. However, the policy messages might be distorted as they filter through various levels of the educational administrations (Spillane et al., 2002; Lefstein, 2005). In addition, the situated context and realities at the workplace might also complicate the enactment of a national policy.

The challenges emerging at the micro-level context (the department level) in this study constituted two major themes, one of which reinforced the claim that the departmental leaders were constrained at the university level when translating the

national policy into the situated local practices (Morris & Scott, 2003; Wang, 2010), and the other was that the departmental leaders tended to accommodate the policy messages in a limited manageable means, thus, the implemented curriculum at the department level turned out to be quite different from the original national initiative, particularly in terms of the teaching content and pedagogy.

Peripheral role in designing university level regulations

As observed in this study, the departmental leaders were mired in the conflicts in following the national policy, and meanwhile adhering to the relevant university-level regulations. The dean lamented his powerless in making relevant institutional regulations and in creating a favorable condition for the teachers. He also complained the challenges imparted by the university administrators, such as the increasingly higher CET passing rate.

As noted in Chapter 5, CET was prioritized in the agenda of University L, and concomitantly used as one of the most important criteria to evaluate the department management and CE teachers' teaching effectiveness. The university artifacts and intranet were full of information of CET in terms of strategies for getting higher scores or reports of how to prepare for CET. On the contrast, limited help or support was provided to the teachers concerning the new teaching model. The teachers were even puzzled at the meanings of some concepts such as autonomous learning, CLT, student-centered teaching, not to mention the actual application of the new teaching model. Furthermore, no effective mechanisms to evaluate the execution of the prescribed teaching approach also mediated teacher's motivations and enthusiasm. The constraints were exacerbated by the situated realities such as the limited number of CE teachers, the large class size, and limited resources. Facing these challenges imposed from the institutional level, the departmental leaders demonstrated their powerless. They, also, tended to account for the university rather than the government, thus they indicated eagerness to meet the demand from the university, whilst lack of interest in the national curriculum intent. The conflict was enhanced when there were discrepancies between the national policy and the relevant concrete actions to carry out the policy intent. Thus, unsurprisingly, under the pressure of the institutional agenda, what the department focused on was also the good scores on CET, as its important role in evaluating the

departmental management by the university leaders.

Limited accommodation of the policy messages

Policy may speaks differently to different levels of policy actors within the institutions with regard to their status, experiences and ages, even the same people might interpret policy differently with regard to different time and situation (Supovitz, 2008). Specifically, in this study, the teaching model was shifted from the ICT-based communicative approach in the national curriculum to CLT in the institutional level, then to the '171' teaching model in the department. That is, the teaching period was mechanically divided into three parts, which seemed quite different from the national requirement. However, in the view of the department leaders, '171' teaching model was much clearer and more simple compared with the student-centered communicative teaching model, and easier for the teachers to understand and apply in their classroom instructions.

The department level regulations indicated that the department leaders relayed the pressure of CET from the university to the frontline teachers; that is, the individual teachers were assigned certain passing rate of CET. Under the guidance of the national CE policy intent and the university-level implementation plan, the CE department readjusted the regulations concerning CE teaching and learning, and then some specific actions were taken. However, the regulations and actions taken at the departmental level were mostly in consistence with the institutional regulations rather than the requirement of the national curriculum reform. When confronted with the external policy intent, the department leaders, like the university-level administrators, attempted to fit it within the culture of the workplace, rather than to cooperate it actively and effectively with the cohort efforts from the classroom teachers.

It is also worthwhile noting that the departmental leaders tended to continue the top-down linear model to disseminate the national and institutional rules to the grassroots teachers, and through the departmental rules and regulations to pressure the teachers to enact them. In the workplace, the priority was the interest of the institution and the department, rather than for the good of the teachers and students. Teachers' and students' voices were ignored, though the teachers were the actual

implementers of the curriculum and the ultimate goal of curriculum reform was to improve students' learning. The teachers were expected to build their capacities to meet the requirements of the curriculum reform and manage the conflicting demands of the multi-level contexts by themselves alone, which inevitably resulted in tensions and challenges in their attempts to enact the intended changes in their classrooms.

8.3.4 Individual-level challenges

In addition to the challenges arising from the macro-, meso- and micro- contexts, individual-level factors also attributed to the complicated process of policy enactment, which mainly contained teachers' professional beliefs and values, teachers' professional and pedagogical capacities, and students' English proficiency and characteristics.

The mediating role of teachers' professional beliefs and values

The participant teachers were all from the same university and the same department, and confronted with the same situated context and situations, but their perceptions and enactment of the same national policy varied greatly at the individual level, though admittedly there were some differences and variations in specific classroom realities. On the basis of the research findings, the study suggests that factors at the individual level tend to impact greatly on teachers' enactment of the intended changes. As noted in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, some empirical research studies (e.g. Richardson, 1994; Tsui, 2003; Yung, 2003; Zheng, 2008) have demonstrated teachers' conceptions and beliefs influence significantly their teaching practices. The findings in this study echoed this claim, and revealed that teachers' classroom instructions were greatly mediated by their beliefs based on their personal experiences, their experiences of learning and teaching and their conceptions of CE teaching and learning (Tsui, 2003; Zheng, & Davison, 2008). Gao and Zhao, though different in age, shared some similar experiences of learning and teaching, hence they developed similar understandings and beliefs about CE teaching and learning. For instance, they both believed that systematic knowledge transmission and examination-preparation should be the major priorities; unsurprisingly, their classroom teachings were found to be teacher-dominated and examination-oriented.

In line with the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the curriculum reforms may not achieve the prescribed results if teachers' beliefs are inconsistent with the ideas underpinning the innovation (Nunan, 2003). Most teachers in this research study (i.e. Li, Gao and Zhao), tended to hold multi-dimensional beliefs, which included the constructivist beliefs proposed by the curriculum reform (such as, communicative approach, students' participation and classroom interactions) and the traditional beliefs (e.g. rote memorization of English words and grammar patterns, systemic knowledge transmission, and authority of teachers). The findings concurred with other relevant studies of teachers' blend beliefs in the context of curriculum reforms (e.g. Waters & Vilches, 2008; Zhang & Liu, 2014). The underlying reasons tended to be the current educational context in China, a hybrid of traditional Confucian heritage and western philosophy. Teachers' hybrid of constructivist and traditional beliefs gave rise to their complicated conceptions of the intended changes, and then led to the combination of traditional grammar teaching method and CLT in their instructions, which were also confirmed by students' classroom experiences.

With regard to the institutional and departmental regulations, Zhang, as well as the other three teachers, expressed their discomfort with the over-emphasis of CET passing rate and the rigid '171' teaching model stimulated by the department. However, Zhang stressed that 'closing the classroom doors, no one except the teachers and students know what happened' (TI, Zhang, Ref. p. 45), thus, she tended to follow her beliefs to teach rather than be bothered by levels of the policies and rules. On the contrary, the other teachers (Li, Gao and Zhao) were very concerned about the institutional regulations. In particular, they suffered great pressure from the CET passing rate, finishing the teaching content and abiding the '171' teaching model. The reasons underlying their worries were likely to be that they matched closely their understandings of teaching and learning, that is, to finish the set goals and pass examinations. Thus, the way teachers conducted their teaching tended to be their personal choices out of their beliefs and values in the isolated teaching environment.

The impact of teachers' professional capacities and agency

Teachers' general lack of pedagogical competence and yet-to-improve English proficiency further aggravated the difficulties and challenges to enact the prescribed changes, which concurred with the research studies reviewed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (e.g. Spillane et al., 2002; Wang, 2008; Yan, 2012). Zhang in this study was more confident with her English proficiency and classroom management abilities, thus, she appeared more open to the new teaching models. Classroom observation and students' interview verified that her confidence was meaningful and trustworthy. However, Zhao and Gao demonstrated lack of fluency and smoothness in their English, and from time to time they had to turn to Chinese for their explanation and teaching. Consequently, Zhang's classroom organization was much more efficient and effective than Gao and Zhao, and students in her class were more involved and more voluntary to participate in the classroom activities. Zhao and Gao also intended to make some changes in their classrooms, such as involving more classroom activities and more classroom interactions, however, their English proficiency and classroom management skills prohibited their significant changes.

Teacher's agency, their abilities to pursue what they value (Archer, 2000), also impacted the enactment of the intended changes. The filtering process of the policy initiative at layers of contexts (i.e. university- , department- and classroom-level in this study) provided some opportunities for the teachers to creatively adjust the reform to their teaching realities (Priestley, 2010). However, half of the teachers (Gao and Zhao) were reluctant to walk out their comfort and confidence zone and make some substantial changes in their teaching. Teachers' reactions and response to similar difficult situations were also quite different. Facing students' dissatisfaction, Zhang and Li were able to examine and reflect the problems and communicate with students continuously, and were ready to adjust their practices to meet students' demands. They, therefore, achieved some great changes in their teachings, although their changing directions were quite different; that is, one of which (Zhang) was in the consistence with the reform; conversely, Li moved towards the opposite. Li admitted that she was frightened by her former students' resistance to her communicative teaching, and turned back to traditional translation methods to avoid the risk, though her current students welcomed communicative

method. On the contrary, the other two teachers (Gao and Zhao) demonstrated limited capacities to critically shape and reshape their responses to the problematic situations. They utilized less risky solutions to satisfy students' interests and demands, such as more listening practices and more classroom activities.

Teachers' difficulties from their English proficiency and pedagogical skills, together with their capacities to tackle difficult situations, also reflected the inadequate professional development and insufficient support they have received. Without the concerted efforts among various policy stakeholders, the teachers were less likely to put the intended changes into practices, particularly when their professional capacities could not match the mandate requirements.

8.4 Summary

This chapter discussed the multi-level challenges involved in the process of enacting a systemic curriculum reform at the classroom level, and argued that curriculum enactment was the interplay of multi-layer tensions. It tends to be one-sided to strengthen issues at one level and ignore the others. However, teachers, who were at the lower level in a hierarchical system, like China, and confined by layers of constraints, were not passive policy victims. They constantly reflected their instructions based on self-evaluation and feedback from their students, and readjusted their teachings and thinking accordingly to meet students' needs and the immediate classroom realities. Although the teachers were exerted some impact by the external policy initiatives, the major impetus for their change was their self-reflection and students' feedback, rather than the power of the national curriculum reform. The final chapter will present the major findings and illustrate the corresponding contributions to the literature and knowledge.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the major findings of the study, and the corresponding contributions to knowledge. The first section is summary of the answers to the research questions, and followed by discussion of significance and contributions of the research. Then issues and implications emerged from the study are explained. The chapter concludes with implications for future research studies.

9.2 Major findings of the study

As introduced in chapter 1, this study aims to answer four main research questions.

1. What are the changes the College English Reform in China intended to achieve?
2. What are the gaps between teachers' perceptions and the intended changes?
3. What are the gaps between teachers' perceptions and enactment?
4. What are the major issues in the enactment of the College English Reform?

This section is organized according to the research questions. The relevant discussions aim to summarize the key findings and to provide a solid foundation upon which to draw the final conclusions.

9.2.1 The intended changes in the national policy

The objective CECR 2007 was to develop students' all-round abilities in English, particularly their communicative competency, which indicated a shift from the CES 1999 in building students' strong ability in reading and fair abilities in listening, speaking, writing and translating. The new curriculum also aimed to enhance students' intercultural and autonomous learning abilities. The reform set out new teaching goals as promoting students' communicative competencies. New teaching

approach (CLT with integration of ICT) was encouraged to ensure the realization of the proposed goals. Correspondingly, the textbooks were revised and the content and format of testing and assessment (CET) was adjusted. Furthermore, teachers were not only required to change their teaching approaches, but also to alter their teaching philosophies and beliefs in order to put the intended changes into practices.

9.2.2 Gaps between teachers' perceptions and the intended changes

All the teachers in this study revealed positive attitudes towards and general endorsement about the general aim and objectives of the national policy. However, most of them demonstrated doubts and negative opinions concerning the actual execution of the national reform. In their understandings, the current educational situation in China was still dominated by the Confucian heritage with an emphasis on knowledge acquisition, rather than ability cultivation. In their perspectives, the teachers and students were accustomed to teacher-dominated classes and students as the knowledge recipients, thus communicative approaches advocated in the national policy were incompatible with the current education situation. Furthermore, similar to the administrators' lack of trust in teachers, all the teachers also expressed their suspect and distrust in the leaders' leadership and management abilities to handle the mandated changes effectively, and they, also, questioned the relevant institutional and departmental regulations with respect to the external national policy intent.

Patterns of perception gaps emerged between the proposed changes and teachers' perceptions of these changes, which mainly contained teachers' superficial understandings of the national policy, limited perceptions of some key concepts concerning teaching pedagogy, and discrepancies teachers perceived among the major reform strands. Textbooks and CET, which were promulgated and revised by the MoE to enhance and ensure the execution of the curriculum requirements, turned out to be one of the major difficulties for the teachers to enact the intended changes at the classroom level.

9.2.3 Gaps between teachers' perceptions and enactment

Multi-level challenges were intertwined to influence how the systemic curriculum reform was enacted at the classroom level by the frontline teachers. On the one hand, many factors worked concertedly to facilitate teachers' positive attitudes towards the intended changes, such as the direction of national curriculum reform, harmonious workplace culture, teachers' constructivist beliefs and self-reflection, and students' feedback. On the other hand, levels of contextual tensions and challenges caused confusions and challenges in teachers' effective enactment of the external initiative, such as the inconsistence among the policy strands, ineffective local management, classroom realities, Chinese students' characteristics and teachers' English proficiency. Thus, most of the teachers failed to enact the policy effectively and purposely at the grassroots level in terms of what to teach, how to teach and how to assess. The overall features of most teachers' current practices (three out of four) were teacher-dominated and test-oriented rather than student-centered communication-focused as required by the curriculum innovation, though, there were some communicative activities in their classrooms.

Close comparison between what the teachers claimed and what they did indicated that there were several categories of mismatches in terms of the teaching focus, teaching methods, roles of teachers and students, and classroom activities. All the teachers claimed that they had shifted their teaching from the traditional grammar translation method to the communicative approach. However, the changes observed in teacher's teaching practices were far less than they had stated due to the tensions and challenges from the multilevel contexts. Most teachers' classrooms (three out of four) were mainly teacher-dominated and CET-oriented though with some elements of communicative activities. Thus, though all the teachers experienced some adjustment in their teaching behaviors and their beliefs, the changes they conducted were mostly incremental and context-driven rather than radical and curriculum-focused.

9.3 Major issues identified in the process of policy enactment

The research findings demonstrated that various issues were involved in the process of enacting a systemic curriculum reform in China. To ensure the smooth

and successful enactment of an external initiative, it tends to be imperative to address them and figure out the possible solutions. The major issues identified from the research findings mainly contained issues concerning the policy, social-cultural issues, issues of the top-down model of change, and issues of teacher development.

9.3.1 Issues concerning the policy

This study informed of the importance of perceiving policy as a discursive process full of multiple creative and social interactions (Ball et al., 2012), rather than fixed and closed government documents (Ozga, 2000). It needs collaboration and communication among all policy makers to ensure a coherent policy document, which is the premise for the smooth and successful execution of policy intent (Rogers, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Ball et al., 2012); otherwise the policy may become a problem, rather than a solution (Elmore, 2011). In the present study, the policy documents of CECR 2007 indicated a modernized and forward looking, and making reference to some contemporary English language teaching concepts, such as communicative competence, individualized learning, student-centered pattern, and formative assessment, but the contents of the reform also highlighted its content-driven and eclectic theoretical nature, which concurred with some other study findings (e.g. Wang, 2002; Feng, 2003; Gao, 2013). Without explicit explanation of how these diverse elements formed into a coherent theoretical underpinning for the national curriculum, the policy text risked the misinterpretations on the parts of institutions and teachers (Gao, 2007; Wang, 2013). The mismatches identified among the national policy stands, together with the lack of the implicit theory of change directing and guiding how to disseminate the intended changes to specific institutions and classrooms, caused further confusion and challenges for the middle-level managers and frontline teachers to translate the abstract documents into situated activities and concrete classroom practices.

Educational reforms, as Luke (2011) argues, are complex and embedded contextual, cultural, and historical stories, thus, it is necessary to take into account social-cultural and contextual factors when formulating and contextualizing innovations and reforms. With regard to the curriculum reform in China, it may be worthwhile for the policy-makers considering forming a collaborative team with specialist

knowledge and expertise in ELT theory and practice, and developing a coherent policy statement sensitive to specific Chinese institutional context based on sufficient empirical research studies (Gao, 2013).

9.3.2 Cross-cultural issues in enacting western-oriented curriculum

Luke (2011) warns of the danger and complexities in borrowing and importing polices across nations and cultures. The difficulties and challenges in enacting western-originated curriculum in EFL context are also well-documented in the relevant literature. However, change is a mantra for the modern age (Priestley, 2011). In particular, the past two decades have witnessed great changes in China socially, economically, culturally and politically, therefore, it is necessary and important to examine and understand a phenomenon from dynamic perspectives.

The study indicated that great changes have occurred in current China with the trend of globalization and technology development. Some empirical studies (e.g. Zhang, 2005; Zheng, 2005; Han, 2008) also confirmed that some Chinese English teachers have applied student-centered communicative-oriented approach successfully in their classrooms. The case of Zhang in this study seemed to resonate with this argument. Zhang focused on cultivating students' communicative competence and encouraging students' independent learning, and her instructions were student-centered and communicative. Interviews of the students also demonstrated that they welcomed communicative and interactive classroom teaching, and they were confident that they were capable of this approach.

Though there are some cultural constraints and cross-cultural differences, pedagogical changes could be conducted within the constraints. The findings in the research study, together with similar research findings (e.g. Gao, 2007; Han, 2008; Zheng & Davison, 2008; Chan & Rao, 2010), revealed that the current culture in China is the hybrid of West and Chinese tradition, that is, Confucian heritage coexists with the Western way. Some deep-embedded traditional Chinese culture does exist, and, to some extent, influence ideas imported from the West, such as the culture of examination. However, some changes have occurred within the changing context, thus it tends to be imperative to acknowledge that the current Chinese

educational context is the coexistence of Chinese tradition Confucian heritage and Western educational traditions, and the cultural differences between China and Western world is permeable, rather than impenetrable. Misconceptions of the contemporary Chinese cultural and educational contexts and limited understandings of the social-cultural changes might impact negatively on the adoption of the western-originated curriculum within the institution, and eventually influence teachers' perceptions and enactment of a student-centered curriculum at the classroom level, such as the cases of Zhao and Gao in this research.

9.3.3 Issues concerning the model of change

The research study confirmed that the enactment of a top-down external initiative was a process of iterative refraction (Supovitz, 2008), full of multifaceted challenges and tensions, which were inherently complex and incontrollable from the top. The large-scale systemic reform was eventually filtered down through layers of interpretations and localized re-contextualization. Despite actions were taken at the mac-, meso-and micro-level to adopt the reform, no significant changes were achieved due to various constraints. Thus, the reform was eventually fitted into the existing culture and the current practices.

However, the study also highlights that the frontline teachers are not passive victims of the multi-level tensions. Their agency interacted within the culture and social and material structures of the institution, and as a result, they enacted the reform in their idiosyncratic and individualized means. They tended to adhere to the policy consistent with their beliefs, and achieved some changes due to students' feedback and their own reflections regardless of the national policy or university level rules. The departmental regulations influenced their classroom organizations, but their teaching content and teaching methods were decided mainly by their conceptions. Thus, the enacted curriculum turned out to be quite different from the intended changes of the national policy. Therefore, the top-down centralized model of change was proved to be ineffective, even within a centralized hierarchical educational system, such as China. The result was contradictory with some claims that a top-down approach was culturally appropriate in a hierarchical system (e.g. Henrichsen, 1989). Conversely, the findings were in line with some

empirical research studies of the ineffectiveness of a top-down model of change in China (e.g. Zhang, 2008; Wang, 2010; Hu & McGrath, 2012; Chen & Day, 2014). The rationale underpinning is more likely to be that under this flawed change model, organizations and the frontline teachers have little control and limited input over the external initiative and its implementation (Chen & Day, 2014). Simultaneously their tensions and difficulties cannot be conveyed to the upper levels, thus the national policy is more likely to be re-interpreted and re-contextualized, which might be diverted from the reform course.

However, it is worthwhile highlighting that a bottom-up model of change is also ineffective in China. As Fullan (1994, 2007, 2010) contends the bottom-up model of change is fraught with fundamental deficiencies. Organizations are not likely to initiate changes without the external stimuli, and they do not take productive actions when they have the opportunity to control the change process. The similar findings in this study echoed this argument. Before the initiation of CECR 2007, MoE had launched almost 4 years (from 1998-2002) experiment to revise the old college teaching syllabus in nine universities, and encouraged them to reform CE teaching in their own way to tackle the general dissatisfaction with English teaching and learning. However, after 4 years, limited changes had achieved and problems were still there, even if not worse.

Thus, it may be worthwhile constructing an inclusive model of change which combines a top-down policy initiative and bottom-up site-based management and improvement, that is, through the blend of centralized-decentralized forces to improve the effectiveness of policy enactment and management. As Fullan (2006) observes, neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies for education reforms work, what is required is a more sophisticated blend of the two. The organization, on the one hand, can acquire the driving force from the national policy to initiate the changes, and on the other hand, they also can obtain support from the government in terms of resources to build and enhance the internal capacity to enact and sustain the intended changes. Effective revitalization is likely to occur when the top-down benefits obtained and bottom-up change efforts motivated (Fullan, 2010). The consensus from the national policy and the concerted efforts from the institution

and the frontline teachers are more likely to make it possible to ensure the successful enactment of the policy intent at the classroom level.

9.3.4 Issues concerning teachers' professional development and agency

The findings in this study confirmed the importance of teachers' enthusiasm and capacities in taking up the new curriculum. As claimed by Moreno (2007) and Gu and Wang (2006), the implementation of curriculum reforms depends significantly on the in-service teacher professional development. The implementation gaps identified between the policy level and the grassroots level contributed greatly to the discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and the underlying principles of the intended changes, which resonated with other relevant studies (e.g. Zheng, 2012; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Therefore, as claimed by Zheng (2012), bottom-up studies are greatly needed to expose what the current beliefs underpin teachers' practice, then to distinguish the gaps, if any, between teacher beliefs and the underlying philosophy of the curriculum reform, and then further on to empower teachers in constructing their personal theories in alignment with the intended changes through reflections of their classroom instructions and the follow-up actions.

The inadequate professional support for the teachers and insufficient professional development of teachers also exacerbated the challenges and difficulties to execute the proposed changes at the grassroots level (also see Lu, 2007; Wen & Ren, 2010). Particularly, a top-down knowledge-transmission approach of in-service teacher education was perceived too theoretical and theory-oriented to provide teachers some practical help to translate the theory into practices. Thus, it may be worthwhile developing co-learning communities consisting of teachers and researchers and teacher educators, through which effective cooperation among the teachers and educators and researchers can be enhanced and the gap between theory and practice can be bridged. Continued support and follow-up are needed to provide teachers an ongoing guidance and direction to make some adaptations, and simultaneously, to maintain the direction of the intended changes (Guskey, 2000).

Moreover, as suggested by Priestley (2010), the interaction of teacher agency within the social and cultural and material structures of school would encourage the

enactment of curriculum and possible changes in teacher thinking and practices. Thus, it may be worthwhile considering enhancing teachers' agency through collaboration and collegiality within and across schools (universities and departments), and encouraging and empowering teachers to engage actively in innovating their instructions. Teachers, maybe also, need to take possible opportunities to improve and develop themselves in terms of subject knowledge, pedagogical capacity and classroom management skills, taking curriculum reform as an opportunity to upgrade their professional capacities rather than the challenges imposed by the policy intent. Observing and sharing classroom practices are also helpful to improve teachers' learning and facilitate some positive changes in the classroom instructions. Zhang in this study conducted more student-centered and interactive classroom teaching, thus sharing the classroom teaching might stimulate other teachers' motivation to conduct teaching this way.

9.4 Significance of the study

This study contributes to a better contextual and cultural related understanding of theories of change and theories of policy enactment. When western-originated theories are applied in a different cultural context and educational system, such as China in the current study, it is necessary to address the cultural differences and to explore their appropriateness and practicality, rather than take it for granted that theories popular in the West are suitable in the non-western cultures. In addition, this study indicates that the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices are dynamic and interactive rather than the dichotomy of consistence or inconsistence. The changes the teachers claimed may be quite different from what they did, both of which are not necessarily in the direction of the intended changes due to levels of constraints and challenges. These findings shed further insights on understanding and exploring teacher change and curriculum reform. These significances are unpacked in detail in the following sections.

9.4.1 Extending knowledge of theories of change

The findings in this study indicate that theories of change are culture-embedded and context-oriented, and theories (such as complexity theory), which are popular and

appropriate to explore the process of change in the west, might not be appropriate in a different system (such as China).

Complexity theory, as a theory of change, evolution and adaptation, provides a non-linear and holistic approach to understand the phenomena instead of a linear and cause-and-effect model. Hence, it posits some appropriateness in analysing the changes involved in the complex process of enacting a systemic curriculum reform in a Chinese university, since universities are complex systems, and they have to learn, adapt and change in order to survive (Morrison, 2005). To explore how a curriculum reform (a complex phenomenon) is enacted in a university (a complex system) involves a combination of several layers of complexities (e.g. social system, educational system, curriculum changes, and institutional context) and also multi-level policy actors (e.g. the policy-makers, the institutional administrators and teachers) and their interactions and connections. Therefore complexity theory posits some suitability in exploring the complexities involved in the process of policy enactment, which also resonates with Fullan's (1991, 2001, 2007) argument, that is, utilising complexity theory to make sense of the complex and uncontrollable process of educational changes.

However, complex theory was proved to be inappropriate in investigating the implementing process of a top-down systemic curriculum reform in a centralized system and a diversified social-cultural context, such as China in this study. As the findings indicated, the uncertainty and unpredictability involved in the process of enacting CECR 2007 were not so dynamic and complex. Specifically, the institutional and departmental leaders tended to continue the centralized model to manage the national policy, and made some top-down regulations for the frontline teachers to execute as administrative orders. Thus, the changes emerged at the meso-and micro-levels were found to be small and superficial, and mainly achieved through the authority power rather than self-organized emergency. Therefore, employing complexity theory, a dynamic, cyclic and holistic approach, to understand a centralized hierarchical top-down model of change like CECR 2007 in China, seemed inappropriate culturally and politically.

A top-down model of change, which has been claimed as culturally appropriate in centralized systems by some researchers (e.g. Henrichsen, 1989; Markee, 1997), was, however, also ineffective in a hierarchical educational system, such as China. The findings indicated that the process of enacting a top-down external initiative was mediated by multi-level tensions and challenges, and the perception gaps emerged among different layers of policyholders, and eventually the implementation mismatches occurred between teachers' classroom practices and the national curriculum. The teachers tended to adhere to the changes consistent with their beliefs, or achieved some changes due to student feedback and their own reflections, rather than the power of the national level policy. However, as stated in Chapter 2 and Chapter 8, the bottom-up model of change was also proven to be ineffective in China. Thus, the consensus from the national policy and the concerted efforts from the institution and the teachers may make it possible to ensure the successful enactment of policy intents at the classroom level in China. With respect to how to revitalize the effectiveness of educational changes, and how to motivate bottom-up change efforts, it necessitates further consideration and exploration of specific contexts culturally and politically.

9.4.2. Nuancing theories of policy enactment

Though the research contexts of Ball et al. (2012) and Supovitz (2008) are different from the present study, western schools and a Chinese university respectively, some theoretical and methodological support was found appropriate and practical in their theories to explore the complex trajectory of a systemic curriculum reform in China, such as theorising policy as a process, policy enactment as interpretation and re-contextualization and the iterative refraction of policy enactment. CECR 2007, as a policy process, provided the possibilities and opportunities to explore the multi-level stakeholders' interpretations and re-interpretations of the policy, i.e. the policy-makers, the middle-level administrators (university-level and department-level leaders) and the front-level teachers, the process during which the meanings of policy were mediated or even changed in the subjective and cognitive processes. In addition, the external initiative was contextualized and re-contextualized and translated into the localized and contextualized activities by layers of local contexts, such as macro-level context (system-level), meso-level context (university- and

department-level) and micro-level context (classroom-level) in this study. Multi-level factors and challenges were found to have influenced the enactment process, and subsequently the enacted curriculum turned out to be different from the intended curriculum. Thus, perception gaps and implementation gaps were identified in the process of iterative refraction.

In addition to the confirmation, this study also extends and nuances our understandings of policy enactment, e.g. the importance of perceiving it from an institutional perspective, the necessity of taking into account leadership, culture and structure, the differentiated impacts on teacher change and how the changes/non-changes at one level interacted and influenced the other ones. Firstly, it is of paramount significance to take into account the educational and cultural differences in examining curriculum reforms. As the educational system in China was hierarchical, levels of policy actors needed to be examined based on their authorities and powers, such as the top-level policymakers, the institutional leaders, the departmental administrators, and the grassroots level teachers. Secondly, as noted in Section 9.4.1, it is imperative to acknowledge the cultural and contextual differences. However, it is also significant to adapt a dynamic perspective while examining the cultural and contextual issues in the context of large-scale reforms and changes. Some perceptions, such as cross-cultural issues are the main barriers to enacting Western-originated curriculum, need to be re-adjusted with the trend of globalization and social-cultural and political changes in current China. The case of Zhang in the present research indicated that student-centred communicative approach was not inappropriate or impossible in EFL context. This result supported some other research findings, such as Zhang (2005), Zheng (2005) and Han (2008). Limited understandings of the social-and cultural changes might constrain the adoption of western-originated curricula within the institution, and mediate teachers' perceptions and enactment at the classroom level, such as the cases of Zhao and Gao in this research.

Furthermore, the research findings revealed that multi-level challenges were intertwined to shape teachers' individualized classroom instructions. On the one hand, many factors worked together to facilitate teachers' positive attitude towards and adherence to the intended changes, such as the guideline of the national

curriculum reform, harmonious workplace culture, teachers' constructivist beliefs, teachers' self-reflection and student feedback. On the other hand, levels of contextual tensions and gaps caused confusions and challenges in the actual classroom instructions, such as the inconsistency between the policy strands, gaps between institutional regulations and the national policy intent, classroom realities, Chinese students' characteristics and teachers' English proficiency. The study, thus, suggests that the enactment of a centralised reform is mediated through an interplay of forces and challenges and that the major impetus for how teachers make sense of and enact education reforms relates more to the strength of their current values and practices and student feedback, rather than the power of external initiatives. Without localised management, centralised curriculum reform itself is, therefore, insufficient to ensure changes in practice.

9.4.3 Enriching understanding about teacher change

The findings of this study reinforced the notion that teachers are key change agents in the process of education innovation enactment, and teacher beliefs and agency mediated significantly their perceptions and enactment of curriculum reforms. This research also enriches our understanding concerning teacher change and curriculum reform as follows.

Firstly, the relationships between teacher beliefs and their teaching practices tended to be much more complicated. Generally speaking, teachers' articulated beliefs matched the requirements of the national policy intent. However, the teachers seemed to hold some contradicted beliefs at the same time, that is, a hybrid of constructivist and traditional beliefs, which resonated with some empirical studies (e.g. Zheng, 2006, Han, 2008). Furthermore, the stated beliefs tended to be different from the beliefs-in-use which guided teachers' teaching behaviours. Thus, it is imperative to expose teachers' belief-in-use, rather than rely on their articulated beliefs in exploring the relationships between teacher belief and their teaching practices and the implicit theory guiding their instructions.

Secondly, the findings signified that the relationship between changes in beliefs and changes in practice was interactive and synergistic. As noted in Chapter 3, a

major problem around teacher change is about whether changes in beliefs proceed or follow changes in practices. Some researchers suggest that changes in beliefs follow changes in practices (e.g. Guskey, 1986, 2002; Mevarech, 1995; Prawat, 1992; Richardson 2001), whilst others hold that changes in beliefs precede changes in practices (e.g. Bailey, 1992; Golombek, 1998; Fullan, 2001). The findings of the study indicated that the relationship between changes in belief and changes in practice was much more complicated and dynamic rather than the linear process of proceeding or following. When the teachers were confronted with the new requirements in CECR 2007, they filtered out the new information which was contradicted with their beliefs and the current teaching practices. However, when the teachers realized that the intended changes might benefit their students, they would attempt some adjustment in their teaching practice, such as shifts in teaching focus and adopting some communicative activities, even though they suffered tensions and challenges. Students' positive feedback and learning outcome enhanced their enthusiasm and confidence, and stirred their reflection and extended their conceptions, and then they would confirm their understandings through employing more and further changes in their teaching. Thus, the relationship between changes in beliefs and changes in practices was interactive, dynamic and synergistic, which confirms and also extends similar research results (e.g. Peterman, 1993; Richardson & Anders, 1994).

Thirdly, the teachers might claim more changes than they really made consciously or unconsciously due to various reasons, thus it necessitates a longitude investigation into the process of teacher change through triangulated research methods. The research findings demonstrated clearly that the changes teachers claimed in their beliefs and teaching practices were far more than what they actually made in their classroom instructions. The underlying reasons attributed to teachers' 'false clarity' of the intended changes, misconceptions of their beliefs and their teaching practices and purposely complying with the national reform. Thus, it is significant to observe teacher's teaching behaviours when examining teacher beliefs and teacher change, together with exploring students' learning experiences rather than merely listen to teachers' articulation; otherwise, the results obtained may be invalid and insufficient to explain the actual happenings in the classrooms and changes in teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices.

Last but not least, teacher change is the interplay of multi-level challenges, although the impact of each level might be various. The large-scale curriculum reform is unlikely to initiate changes in teachers' teaching and thinking without organizational management and individual teachers' motivation and engagement. Top-down linear models of change, though have been perceived as culturally appropriate in a centralized system, is ineffective and insufficient to ensure substantial changes in teachers' teaching and students' learning. A combination of teacher-centred bottom-up approach and top-down policy initiative and dynamic and circular model of dissemination is in need to ensure the effective execution of the intended changes at the classroom level.

9.5 Implications for practice

As stated above, the process of policy enactment was the interplay of multi-level forces, which included various constituent factors that interacted with each other, such as the policy intents, dissemination approach, contextual factors and teachers' professional development. Thus, some suggestions and recommendations are proposed for the future practices concerned with educational change and curriculum enactment.

●Make policy intents more consistent and congruent

Policy is a process rather than preserved policy documents (Ball et al., 2012). The process of policy making involves multiple political and social struggles and communications, no exception to the national policy intent CECR 2007 in the present study. The national curriculum reform included three main strands, namely curriculum, textbooks and testing, and the latter two were supposed to enhance the realization of the national curriculum. However, the three main parts were promulgated in three separated departments in China, that is, the Syllabus committee, the Textbook committee, and the Testing committee. The revised text book and new CET, which were designed to enhance the implementation of curriculum requirements, turned out to be barriers to realize the intended changes. Furthermore, the regulations made at the university and department level were also inconsistent with the prescribed changes. CET, which was the only tangible way to evaluate CE teaching, was put on imbalanced strength and emphasis in the

institutional agenda. Consequently, listening, which occupies 35% in CET was given more attention by the teachers and students, whilst speaking was neglected due to no national assessment, which was against the objective of the national curriculum to promote students' communicative competences. The examination-oriented teaching also mediated teachers' application of the student-centered communicative approach.

●Adopt teacher-focused dissemination approach

The national policy experienced various layers of reinterpretation and re-contextualization before it reached the front-line grassroots teachers. During this process, the national policy experienced some changes and adjustment according to the middle level managers' cognitive process and priority concerns; and at the same time it was mediated and reshaped by the situated contextual factors. Thus, what reached the teachers might be a simplified or modified policy rather than the original national curriculum. Furthermore, teachers' classroom practices were greatly shaped by their perception and understanding of the intended changes, their beliefs and professional development. Therefore, it is important and necessary to adopt a teacher-focused dissemination approach since teachers are the actual policy implementers.

There is also a great need to analyze teachers' teaching practices and discover the implicit theory underpinning them, and then compare teachers' current beliefs and teaching practices with the intended changes, which helps to identify teachers' concerns about and difficulties in the enactment of the planned changes, and to prepare the teachers for the curriculum innovation and increase their awareness and reflection of their current instructions. If the teachers realize the benefits of the intended changes, and their strength and weakness of their teachings, they might be more likely to execute the prescribed changes. The teachers need more opportunities to develop themselves professionally according to the requirements of the curriculum reform based on their reflections of their current teaching. Effective communication channels between the grassroots teachers and the middle-level managers and the top-level policy makers should be open. The policy makers need to allow teachers to voice out their concerns and understandings about the policy, and the middle-level managers need to get teachers involved in making the

institutional regulations concerning the CE teaching, otherwise the actual problems met by the front-line teachers cannot reach the administrators and the policy makers.

●Make professional development programs more effective

Teacher-training programs are very significant to develop the teachers professionally and qualify them with the new curriculum requirements. However, the research findings indicated that there were many problems concerning the training content and format at the tertiary level in China. Many training programs focused on transmitting subject matter knowledge through theory-oriented seminars and workshops, which were difficult to stimulate teachers' interests and promote their practical knowledge and capacities. Thus, future training programs should include more information concerning the latest curriculum changes, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of students, and knowledge of self. Only in this way can teachers achieve a holistic professional development and be well-prepared for carrying out the intended changes. Furthermore, the teachers should also be provided more opportunities to discuss and experience other successful teachers' classes so that they can reflect their own beliefs and practices and explore more possibilities to improve themselves professionally.

●Create more favorable contextual conditions

As discussed in Chapter 8, the multi-level contextual forces and factors exerted great impact on the classroom enactment of the prescribed changes, thus it is imperative to create more favorable contextual conditions at the multi-levels to support and ensure the successful and effective enactment of the national curriculum.

First, it is important to perceive the current social-cultural and educational context correctly. With the trend of globalization, many foreign cultural values have flown into China. The cultural differences between China and the West are permeable, rather than solid. The current Chinese socio-cultural and educational context is the hybrid of Chinese Confucian traditions and the Western educational traditions. Limited understandings of the social-and cultural changes might limit the adoption of the western-originated curriculum within the institution, and mediate teachers'

perceptions and enactment of a student-centered curriculum at the classroom level.

Second, school / university authorities should adopt the national policy fully and take effective measures to carry out the intended changes. More interactive and collegial school / university culture should be created so that the teachers can feel free to participate in various seminars and express their opinions and exchange their teaching experiences with the colleagues. Relevant help and support should be provided to the teachers in time; and teachers' achievements should not be evaluated by merely the examination scores.

Third, the workplace should adopt the national and institutional policies flexibly based on the situated situations. Rigid promotion of certain teaching model (such as '171' teaching model in this study) without analyzing the actual teaching realities might inhibit rather than enhance the enactment of the planned changes. To implement the student-centered communicative approach, creating favorable English speaking environment is necessary. Limited teaching time and large-class size should also be improved to ensure the effective enactment of the intended changes.

9.6 Implications for future research

As noted above, this study has added some original knowledge to theory of change and policy enactment, and enriched our understanding about curriculum reform and teacher change, particularly in the context of China. However, the current research has some obvious limitations, and many issues need to be addressed in the further studies.

●The enactment of external initiatives at the classroom level tends to be a complex process. The present study has only examined four case teachers' classroom teachings in one specific university. It cannot be concluded that they represent exactly all other teachers in the university on how the curriculum reform is enacted. Thus, more participants are needed in order to obtain a more holistic and comprehensive picture of curriculum enactment at the tertiary level.

●The current research was conducted only in one university, which happened to be non-experimental in the national curriculum reform. There might be great differences from the experimental and other non-experimental universities in the process of curriculum enactment in terms of available resources, external support, institutional politics, culture, and educational development. Thus, further studies should be conducted in different universities, including experimental and non-experimental universities, key and ordinary universities, universities form different provinces and regions in order to get thorough and complete understandings of the enactment of the national curriculum reform in China.

● Data in this study were collected in one and a half years ago. Currently, in order to promote students' practical abilities and communicative proficiency in English, CET and CE textbooks have experienced some changes in terms of format and content, and the discrepancies and mismatches among the national policy strands have been addressed. Thus, more longitudinal research studies are needed in the future to better understand the complex process of the enactment of the prescribed changes, and the influences of the newly revised textbook on the classroom teaching and learning.

●More studies of teacher change and their roles as change agents are needed in the future. Teachers are the actual implementers of curriculum innovations at the classroom level. However, the contexts in which teachers develop their particular theories and strategies are often ignored (Hargreaves, 1994). Although this study has illuminated, to some extent, the complexities of teacher change and their individualized ways to interpret and enact the intended changes, more research studies are needed in wider contexts in order to better understand teachers' perceptions and implementation of the innovations, and how teachers change and develop in the complex and dynamic contexts of educational change.

●The policy actors examined in this study were limited to the middle-level administrators and the frontline teachers. Students' role was limited to validate and testify teachers' teaching experiences. Thus, future studies need to include many other stakeholders, such as policy makers, teacher educators, principals and working staff. Students should be examined as change agents and let their voice

heard in the process of curriculum enactment, anyway, the ultimate purpose of curriculum reform is to improve students' learning outcome.

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Appendix A



A Brief statement of Research Aims and Proposed Methods of Data Generation

Researcher's Name: Aiqin Yu

Researcher's ID Number: 4175589

Course of Study: Nottingham-Beijing PhD in Education

Title of Research Project: How system level curriculum reform in English language teaching is enacted in a Chinese university

This study aims to examine how College English Reform is enacted in a Chinese university through the lens of Communicative Language Teaching implementation at classroom level. I intend to explore the following five research questions:

1. What are the changes the College English Reform in China intended to achieve?
2. Are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions of the changes and the intended changes?
3. At classroom level, are there any gaps between teachers' perceptions and enactment?
4. What are the issues in the enactment of the curriculum reform, in particular, the Chinese model of CLT?

This research involves case studies of four Chinese teachers. The adoption of case study strategy in this research is suggested by the methodological implications of the constructionist epistemological stance and interpretivist theoretical perspectives. In order to provide a more holistic picture of how teachers interpret and enact CLT at classroom level, I intend to use qualitative methods. The methods which are adopted for data collection in this research are document review, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

Appendix B



A Brief Statement on Gaining Access

Researcher's Name: Aiqin Yu

Researcher's ID number: 4175589

Course of study: Nottingham-Beijing PhD in Education

Supervisors: Professor Qing Gu Professor Christopher Day

Title of Research Project: How system level curriculum reform in English language teaching is enacted in a Chinese University

In this research, University L is chosen as the case site. As a staff member who has worked for over 15 years in the University, the researcher has built strong relationships with the staff. It is relatively easy for the researcher to gain access to the department for data collection, and obtain support from the department leader and the potential participants. However, the easy access, and familiar relation with the participants can also be the limitation to the trustworthiness of the data. In order to overcome this, the researcher attempts to occupy the position of both insider and outsider. The researcher has been teaching in University L for many years, and has developed relationships with the case teachers. Therefore, this insider role not only allows the researcher to be accepted more rapidly and more complete by the participants, but also allows her to gather a greater depth to the data. On the other side, it is necessary for the researcher to keep an outsider status in the current research, because the participants and the researcher do not necessarily share complete sameness within the same working place. Specifically, in the present research, the researcher has been teaching English literature to postgraduates, whereas the case teachers are College English teachers to undergraduates, therefore they are using different teaching materials, owning different teaching intentions, and teaching different students. Furthermore, the College English reform, which the present research will focus on, is mainly concerned about non-English major undergraduates, therefore it is reasonable for the researcher to keep an outsider and researcher status.

Four teachers are selected as the cases in this research:

- one female teacher with less than 5 years of teaching,
- one female with between 5 and 10 years of teaching ,
- one female male between 10 and 15 years of teaching
- one female more than 15 years of teaching.

The rationale behind the selection is that College English has witnessed three reforms since it began. The teachers of more than 15 years teaching have experienced all these changes, the teachers of 10 -15 years three times, the teachers of 5-10 years twice, and teachers of less than 5 years teaching only once. Through examining their perception and enactment of College English Reform, specific challenges and impacts of College English Reform can be traced, furthermore cross comparison can be drawn on to understand more explicitly about overall teachers' enactment of curriculum changes regardless of their ages and teaching experiences. Four teachers meeting the criteria are willing to participate in the research.

Appendix C



LETTER AND PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Sir/Madam:

"How system level curriculum reform in English language teaching is enacted in a Chinese university" is the title of this research. The aim of this study is to explore to what extent system level curriculum reform is enacted at classroom level, through an example of CLT. According to survey of papers published in the key Chinese academic journals, there have been very few studies on exploring how the system level curriculum reform is enacted at classroom level by examining the CLT use, which though of particular availability to a specific university, may also have wider relevance to similar circumstances. Particularly, the research will focus on how teachers respond to the pedagogical changes which are not only top-down, but also imported from West, and simultaneously how their beliefs and identities are influenced by the changes. Your participation in this study will provide valuable insights into the research.

If you are interested in taking part in this study, and after having confirmed this through your written consent, you will be required to:

(1) Participate in three face-to-face interviews which will be audio taped.
(2) Participate in four classroom observations which will be audio taped

This study is purely for research and academic purpose. Information gathered will be treated with strict confidence and will only be reported in anonymous form. Findings from the research may be published, but your identity will remain confidential.

You have the right to contact me for any further information about the research and you may withdraw from this research at any stage. Attached herewith is a consent form explaining your rights as research participant. Please read and provide your signature to indicate your willingness to participate in this research (a copy of the consent form will be given to you).

I look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,
Aiqin Yu

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Appendix D



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title： How system level curriculum reform in English language teaching is enacted in a Chinese university

Researcher's name: Aiqin Yu

Supervisors' names: 1) Professor Qing GU 2) Professor Christopher Day

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interviews and classroom observations.

- I understand that data will be stored in a secured database. This data will be treated confidentially and will only be accessed by the researcher, the supervisors and the examiners.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Research Participant:

Signature: **Print name**:

E-mail: **Date:**
Phone Number:
Contact details:

Researcher: Aiqin YU – School of Education, the University of Nottingham.
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Appendix E

Interview Protocol of Administrators

Interview with university-level administrator (around 40 Minutes)

1. Can you tell me something about the University?
2. Are there any changes in College English teaching ever since the year of 2004?
3. In your understanding, what is the most effective way for students to learn English?
4. In your view, what is the best way to teach English in the class?
5. What is your idea of a successful English lesson?
   Can you give me an example of one of the successful English lessons that you had?
6. How do you understand the College English Reform?
8. What is your attitude towards the teaching method, CLT in CECR?
9. What factors do you think facilitate or inhibit the adoption of CLT in our university?
10. Does CET influence the use of CLT in classroom teaching?
11. Are there any actions/ measures taken in our university to implement CECR 2004?
    If yes, what are they?
    If not, why not?

Interview with department-level administrator (around 40 Minutes)

1. Can you tell me something about the department?
2. Are there any changes in College English teaching since the adoption of CECR 2004?
3. In your understanding, what is the most effective way for students to learn English?
4. In your view, what is the best way to teach English in the class?
5. What is your idea of a successful English lesson?
   Can you give me an example of one of the successful English lessons that you had?
6. What is your attitude towards the College English Reform 2004?
7. What factors do you think facilitate or inhibit the adoption of CLT in our university?
   Is there any teaching method regulated or encouraged in our department?
   If yes, what is it?
8. In your opinion, do you think that CET influences the use of CLT in classroom teaching?

Appendix F Interview Protocol of Teachers

Part one: teacher belief and change (around 1 hour)

1. How should a language be taught in your view?
2. How should English be taught to Chinese college students in your understanding?
3. Why do you think English should be taught this way? How is your belief about language teaching / foreign language teaching/ English teaching formed?
   1) To what extent, it is influenced by your personal biography/ personal experience?
   2) To what extent, it is influenced by your learning experience as a student?
   3) To what extent, it is influenced by your teaching experience as an English teacher?
   4) To what extent because of the impact of College English Reform?
   5) To what extent, you form this belief because of university policy?
   6) To what extent, you think you should teach this way because of students' preference?
4. Has your belief of English teaching ever changed? Or do you think English should be taught this way at the beginning of your of your teaching?
5. If any changes in your belief, what are they?
6. When did these changes happen? Why did you have these changes at that time? // what is the most important reason for that change?
7. Do you think your beliefs of teaching English has been changing continuously? What are reasons for the change?
8. In your memory, once you have changes in your belief, can you change your teaching behaviours accordingly in your classroom teaching?
   If yes, to what extent? Can you give me an example?
   If not, what are the possible reasons that stop you from changing your teaching practice in the classroom?
9. How do you valuate these changes or (the inconsistency between your changes in belief and no change in teaching behaviours?)
10. Can you apply your belief of language teaching in your actual classroom teaching? Can you explain in detail which part of your belief can or can't applied or have more difficulty to apply in classroom teaching?
11. What are the reasons that stop or encourage you to apply your beliefs of language teaching in our classroom teaching?
12. Among all these reasons, what is the most important reason in your understanding?
13. Do you want to add something to what we have discussed?

Part Two: Teaching model/ methods (around 1 hour)

1. Are there any teaching methods/ models encouraged as your university or department/ If yes, can you explain it in much more detail?
2. How is this teaching model carried out in your department?
   How and when it regulate, through meetings, seminars or workshop?
   Any written form of this teaching method was delivered to teachers?
3. To promote this teaching model, any measures have been taken in your department? If yes, what are they?
4. Can you tell me the reasons to promote the teaching model in your department? Do you think that purpose can be achieved or not? Why?
5. What kind of teaching model do you actually use in your everyday classroom teaching? Why do you use this model?

6. Do you use different teaching methods when you teach different level students?
   If there are some differences, can you explain the difference concerning
   1) Teaching method
   2) Teaching content
   3) Teaching goal
7. Do you think this teaching model (171) match your teaching belief? Why and how?
   Can you give an example?
8. How do you think of this teaching model? Do you like it or not, why?
   From your observation, do students like this teaching model?
9. Do you want to add something for the teaching model?
10. Do you want to add something to what you have said?

Part Three: Interpretation and implementation of CLT / CER (around 1 hour)

1. Can you explain what CLT is in your own words?
   1) In your understanding, what are the key points of CLT?
   2) What are the advantages and disadvantages to use CLT to your university students?
   3) What is the role of teacher in the classroom? What is the role of student?
   4) What are the class activities often used in CLT teaching?
   5) Do you think there is cultural barrier to apply CLT in China?
      Can you give an example?
2. Why do you have this understanding? Or through what channel do you get this understanding?
3. In your classroom teaching, do you use CLT? If yes, since when, where you began to use CLT?
   And why did you begin to use this teaching model?
4. Do you have any difficulty in using CLT at classroom teaching?
5. If you apply CLT in your classroom teaching,
   1) To what extent, it is influenced by your learning experience as a student?
   2) To what extent, it is influenced by your teaching experience as an English teacher?
   3) To what extent, do you think, it is because of the impact of College English Reform?
   4) To what extent, you apply CLT because of university policy?
   5) To what extent, you think you should teach this way because of students' preference?
   6) Is the implementation of CLT influenced by students' English levels?
   7) Is the implementation of CLT influenced by teaching hour or large class size?
6. Among all these reasons, what is the most important reason for you to use CLT?
   Do students like CLT?
7. In your view, does CLT match your belief of language teaching? If yes, in which way?
   Can you give an example?
8. To imply CLT, what are the strong or weak points for you?
9. What are the advantages or disadvantages in your university or department to promote CLT?
   Can you explain in detail?
10. Have you ever received any help or encouragement from the University or department to promote CLT? Can you explain in much more detail?
11. What other help do you need or do you want from your university or department?
    Can you explain in much more detail?
12. Does the teaching model (171) promoted in your department match CLT, in your understanding?
    Why or why not?
13. Can this teaching model facilitate or constrain the implementation of CLT? Why and how?
    Can you give an example?
14. Anything more you want to say about CLT and its implementation?

Pre-classroom observation Interview (15 minutes)

1. Do you have a teaching syllabus? Did you make it, or your department?
   Or you just follow the College English Syllabus? Can you tell me the reasons?
2. What is your teaching goal in this lesson?
3. What are the specific teaching contents? Concerning, grammar, vocabulary, or language skills or cultural knowledge?
4. What teaching materials you will use?
   Are there any complementary materials you are going to use?
5. How do you teach grammar, vocabulary, language skills and culture?
   Specifically what are the teaching methods?
6. What are the teaching activities you will employ?
7. What kind of class assessment you will use?

Post-classroom observation interview 1 (20 minutes)

1. Why use this specific teaching activity?
2. Why teach grammar, vocabulary, language skills in a way that is different from what you have described before the class
3. Why do you use these specific teaching methods?
4. Can you tell me the reasons to choose the teaching activities?
5. How do you comment your class? To what extent, do you think you have used CLT?
   Why did you use this specific method?

Appendix G Interview Protocol of Students

1. Can you briefly introduce your English learning experiences?
2. Are there any changes of the teaching methods in your English lessons?
3. Are there any teachers you will not forget? Can you tell me the reasons?
4. Are there any differences in the teacher's teaching method between university and school? If any, what are they? Do you like the changes? Why or why not?
5. What is your motivation to learn English?
6. In your view, are you an effective and successful English learner? Why or why not?
7. Does examination, particularly CET influence your way of learning English? Can you give me an example?

Post –class Interview for students (around 1 hour)

Students' beliefs about EFL learning and learners

1. From your point of view, what is the most effective way to learn English?
2. In your understanding, what makes English learning difficult or easy for you to learn?
3. What kind of role students should play in English class?
   Do you think students should just listen to teachers and memorize the content?
   Do you think students should participate in class activities?
4. In your view, what kinds of students are successful English learners?
   What kinds of students are not? Why?
5. Does the English teaching meet your expectation and needs? Why or why not?
6. Do you want to add something to what we have discussed?

Students' beliefs about EFL teaching and teachers' roles

1. In your view, what is the best way to teach English?
2. What do you think is the ideal way of correcting students when they make mistakes in their oral presentation and in written work?
3. Do you like group and pair work in classroom teaching? If yes, why? If not, why not?
4. How do you think about the use of L1?
   Do you like teachers to use their first language in your classes? When and why?
   What do you think of the advantages and disadvantages of the use of L1?
5. What kind of teacher is an effective teacher in your understanding?
   What kind of role do you hope your teacher play in your English class?
6. Have you heard of CLT? Can you describe CET in your own words?
7. Are you satisfied with the English education? Why or why not?
8. Do you want to add something to what we have discussed?

Appendix H Classroom Observation Framework (COLT Scheme)

General Information

Instructor: Observer:

Date: Time:

Classroom: Students:

Teaching material:

Time	Section	Time assignment		Student participation			Teaching content			Medium of instruction		
		Teacher	Students	whole	groups	Individual	grammar	listening	speaking	English	Chinese	Mix

Appendix I Example of Coding Classroom Observation Data (COLT)

General Information

Instructor: Gao Observation No. 1

Date: 04/12/2012 Time: 8:00---9:30

Classroom: Room 302 Erya Building Students: Sophomore/ Accounting

Teaching material: Unit 3 New College English

Time	Section	Classroom talk		Student participation			Teaching content			Medium of instruction		
		Teacher talk	Students	whole	groups	Individual	grammar	listening	speaking	English	Chinese	Mix
8:00-8:10 10 mins	Listening practice			√				√				√
8:10-8:16 6mins	Dictation of the new words	√		√				√		√		
8:16-8:22 6mins	Review structure of the text	√		√			√					√
8:16-8:46 30mins	Learning the new words	√		√		√	√				√	
8:46- 9:22 26 mins	Explain the text material sentence by sentence	√					√					√
9:22-9:30 8mins	After text exercises	√	√			√	√		√			√

Appendix J Example of Classroom Observation Data Analysis (Zhang)

Teaching contents and focus	Teaching content focusing on listening and speaking.
Teaching activities and classroom atmosphere	Employing more class activities : question and answers, listening, loud reading, discussion Classroom atmosphere became more relaxing and active.
Roles of teachers	A negotiator, a facilitator, a helper, a director, an activity organizer, the needs analyst.
Roles of students	Active participators, responsible for their learning , major role
Classroom assessment practices	Incorporation of students' participation and performance into assessment.
Overall teaching methods applied	Student-centered, communicative and interactive method

Appendix K Example of the Overall Data Analysis Matrix

Teacher's perception and implementation of CECR 2007

1.Attitudes towards CECR	Positive attitude and endorsement of CECR	There's this kind of changes in CECR, and that's a good tendency. Before, students just learn how to read and write, and prepare for the examinations. This reform just like opening a window for students, which enables them to open their mouth and express their true feelings and thoughts through English. That's a good tendency.' Ref. p.9/19-22		
2.Perception of CECR	Contents of CECR	Aims and goal Ref.p.9/4-5	Improving students' communicative abilities.	This change is mainly reflected through the increase of listening score in CET4. That's listening accounts for 35%, which means that listening and oral English is attracted more attention than before. ''Ref.p.9/ 4-6
		Change in teaching material Ref. p. 3/ Ref. p.9/8	Not suitable to the current students	'We're using New Horizon English 2nd edition. There are no changes in the teaching material since 2006. But objectively speaking the current teaching material is not suitable to the students' Ref. p.9/8
		Change in pedagogy Ref. p. 9	Developing students' speaking and listening ability	This reform just like opening a window for students, which enables them to open their mouth and express their true feelings and thoughts through English. That's a good tendency.' Ref. p.9/19-22
		Change in assessment Ref. p. 9 /4-6	1)No obvious changes Ref.p.9/24 2) Content of College English Test (CET4) changed a lot Ref. p. 9 /4-6	That is, approximately from Dec. 2006, the content of CET4 changed a lot, the listening part increased to 35% in the total score. So CET4 attaches more importance to the cultivation of listening and speaking abilities.' Ref.p.9/ 5-6
	Comment on the characteristics of CECR	Good intention, but limited implementation Ref. p.11/ 15-27; Ref. p. 13/12-25	However, I think there are, to some extent, some limitations in implementation. Furthermore, I think these reforms have not brought real and complete changes in English teaching and learning. …. And also the enhancement of listening and speaking is not reflected in CET 4 examination. Furthermore the teaching material is out of date, and unable to attract students. Ref. p.11/ 15-27	
	Influences on Classroom teaching	Positive influence Ref. p.9/19-22 Ref. p. 10/ 15-	1).Improving students' communicative proficiency through CLT 2). Requirement of students shifts from reading and speaking to listening and speaking 3)Stimulating students' interest	
		Negative influence Ref.p.3/ 10-12 Ref. p. 4/ 5-6	1)Limiting the teaching content 2)Influencing students' motivation in speaking	
2. Beliefs about EFL learning and teaching	Beliefs about learning and learner	Beliefs of learner Ref.p.6/ 12-14 Ref. p.6/ 16-19	1). ' Students play a major role in English learning, whereas teachers just show them directions and stimulate their interests.'Ref.p.6/ 12-14	
	Beliefs of teaching and teachers	Beliefs of teacher Ref. P. 7 /12	The role of the teacher is to guide or help the students in English Class. ' Ref. p. 7 /12	