

6 Creativity-based Language Teaching for L2 Teachers in China

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ABSTRACT

China produces the world's largest number of second language (L2) learners, yet even after having learned the L2 for many years, most of them are still unable to communicate with the target-language speakers. L2 teachers in China often complain that their students are not able to engage in conversations in the L2, though they can learn vocabulary and grammar and score relatively well on tests. The main causes of Chinese students' deficiency in L2 speaking can be traced to the memorization-based L2 teaching practices and the examination-oriented educational tradition. To solve the problems with L2 teaching in China, this article proposes a *creativity-based language teaching* (CBLT) approach. Founded on the principles of *learning sciences*, CBLT promotes the creative use of the L2 as the goal of teaching. After reviewing the current state of L2 teaching practices in China, this article elaborates on CBLT, describes activities that implement CBLT, and discusses how to create CBLT assessments. The article argues that effective L2 teaching should enable learners to achieve deeper processing of the target language by involving them in learning and using the language concurrently in real-life contexts and engaging them in the creative use of the language for communication.

KEYWORDS

China, Creativity-based language teaching (CBLT), L2 learners, Methodologies, Second language

INTRODUCTION

China claims to have the largest number of second language (L2) learners in the world. By the year 2000, the number of L2 learners in China had reached 415.95 million, about one-third of China's population (Bolton and Graddol 2012; Wei and Su 2012). However, behind these large numbers of L2 learners in China is a worrying reality. After several years of L2 learning, most Chinese students are still unable to communicate with target language (TL) speakers even on daily life topics. The widely discussed "Mute English" phenomenon (e.g., Liao and Wolff 2011; Peng 2014) reflects this deficiency. L2 teachers in China often complain that their students are not able to engage in conversations in the L2 although they can learn vocabulary and grammar and score relatively well on tests. Chinese teachers and scholars have realized that the

main causes of this problem are the memorization-based teaching approaches and the examination-oriented educational tradition (Yu 2016; Zhao 2018). In a typical L2 classroom, the teacher talks, and students listen. Students are passive learners. They accept, repeat, and memorize what the teacher tells them in order to pass tests. L2 students in China put most of their effort into learning grammar and reading so as to score well on various kinds of tests of the L2. They have limited opportunities to use the language in oral communications. It is not difficult to see that Chinese students' lack of competence in the L2 speaking is an inherent problem with the traditional teaching methodologies and examination, and memorization-based educational practices.

To solve the problems with L2 teaching in China, this article proposes a creativity-based language teaching (CBLT) approach. This approach is founded on the principles of learning sciences. It is intended to help L2 teachers in China deal with the problems in the traditional L2 teaching methodologies and ineffective L2 teaching practices. In the following sections, this article reviews the current state of L2 teaching practices in China, elaborates on CBLT, describes how to design learning activities to implement CBLT, and discusses how to create CBLT assessments. The conclusion reviews the discussion of CBLT and outlines the prospects of using the CBLT approach, as well as its constraints in China's context.

THE CURRENT STATE OF L2 TEACHING IN CHINA

Although the traditional *grammar-translation method* and the *audiolingual method* (for a detailed description and discussion of these teaching methods, see Richards and Rodgers 2014; Stern 1983) have been largely discredited in the L2 field in Western countries, they are still dominant in L2 classrooms in China (Yu 2016; Zhao 2018). The grammar-translation method has its origin in the classical or traditional method of teaching Greek and Latin. As the name suggests, it emphasizes the teaching of L2 grammar mainly through translation exercises. In actual teaching, this approach focuses on developing students' reading and writing skills and on explicit instruction on grammar rules, with little or no attention devoted to speaking or listening skills. According to Stern (1983), L2 learning in this approach is viewed mainly as consisting of memorizing rules and facts in order for L2 learners to understand and manipulate L2 morphology and syntax. Learners' first language is maintained as the reference system in the L2 acquisition process and is also the medium of instruction. The grammar-translation approach is an essentially teacher-centered approach, in which L2 learners are passive recipients of knowledge.

In contrast, the audiolingual method gives primacy to listening and speaking skills. Developed in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, this method has its psychological basis in Skinner's (1957) behaviorism, which views language learning in terms of stimulus and response. The audiolingual method emphasizes the development of linguistic skills through reinforcement such as mimicry, repetition, memorization, and drills of sentence patterns. In its original form, language practice often takes place in the language laboratory. The audiolingual method was later adapted into China's L2 pedagogies, most notably with its emphasis on imitation, memorization, and pattern drills. Although this method gives primacy to listening and speaking skills, it is of very limited help in developing students' speaking skills because it treats the L2 learning process as one of habituation and conditioning with virtually no intervention of intellectual analysis.

Similar to the grammar-translation method, the audiolingual method also promotes a teacher-centered approach to learning, and both emphasize the development of L2 learners' accuracy in using the TL through memorization of the vocabulary, grammar, and sentences in the TL. Since both methods neglect the development of students' communicative competence and over stress memorization of TL grammar rules or sentence patterns, they have received much criticism and have been gradually abandoned in Western countries. However, these two methods are still dominant in the L2 classrooms in China, partly because they are easy to implement and less demanding for teachers, and also because they fit well with the Chinese memorization-based and examination-oriented educational tradition (Liu and Shi 2007).

The relatively newer language teaching methods such as *communicative language teaching*, and especially *task-based language teaching*, came into existence in response to people's dissatisfaction with the grammar-translation and audiolingual methods (Richards and Rodgers 2014). Communicative language teaching is also called the communicative approach. It is an approach to language teaching that views interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of L2 learning. Task-based language teaching, also known as task-based instruction, is a branch of the communicative approach that emphasizes the use of authentic language in meaningful tasks, such as shopping, asking for directions, and visiting a doctor. Task-based language teaching has become popular in Western countries in recent years as an effective method for developing L2 fluency. However, both communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching are in a supplementary position in China's L2 classrooms.

Unlike the traditional L2 teaching methods, communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching aim to develop students' communication abilities in the TL. Since these two methods advocate the use of authentic language to perform meaningful communication tasks, they promote students' creative use of the TL to some extent. Because of this, the Chinese government has made some policy changes in recent years to encourage such innovations in L2 teaching. However, it is not easy for these new teaching methods to be adopted in China, due to external constraints such as large classroom sizes and shortage of teaching resources (Zhao 2018) and internal constraints such as lack of qualified teachers (Yu 2001), as well as the conflict with traditional Chinese culture, in which lecturing by teachers and memorization play important roles (Hu 2002).

Despite these challenges, some pioneers in China have begun experimenting with using L2 teaching methods that are based on learning sciences principles (for a discussion of the learning sciences, see Sawyer 2014). One such method is called *project-based language learning* (PBL). PBL is derived from *project-based learning* (Krajcik and Shin 2014), in which students deal with meaningful real-life problems. Project-based learning is a form of situated learning, that is, learning in a real-life context. It is based on the finding that deeper learning results from active construction of understanding by working with ideas in real-world contexts. In project-based learning, students deal with real and meaningful questions that are important to them, similar to what scientists, mathematicians, writers, and historians do. Project-based classes allow students to investigate problems, come up with assumptions and explanations, argue for their ideas, challenge others' ideas, and try new ideas. Applying project-based learning to language teaching, teachers engage students in using the language to solve real-life problems or complete real-life projects. This allows students to use the language to ask questions, make hypotheses, come up with explanations and new ideas, discuss their ideas, collaborate, solve problems, and create artifacts. PBL promotes a situated and experiential language learning experience, that is, it promotes learning by using the language in real-world contexts.

A project in PBL can be structured or unstructured (Zhao and Beckett 2014). A structured project can go like this: the teacher selects a topic, designs activities for students, asks students to find information on the topic, and sets up the requirements that students need to meet for their final oral report. An unstructured project can go like this: students themselves decide on their project topics, organize their activities, conduct their research, and present their final products. Students need to collaborate and interact with one another to complete their projects. A study by Xu et al. (2017a), reporting on their implementation of PBL in a secondary school in Ningbo, China, indicates that PBL indeed promotes students' English language learning, content learning, and development of integrated skills. In another study by Xu et al. (2017b), a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews reveal that most of the English teachers in the nine secondary schools in Ningbo, China, where this study was conducted, have positive perceptions of PBL. Grant (2017) explored the implementation and student perceptions of PBL within an academic English writing course in Macau. His study reveals that PBL facilitates interactive language use and raises student motivation and autonomy. These studies indicate that unlike the traditional L2 teaching methods, innovative teaching methods such as PBL are potentially advantageous in improving students' creative use of the L2.

In sum, the grammar-translation and audiolingual methods are still the dominant teaching methodologies in China's L2 classrooms. Although Chinese educational policies have begun to promote communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching, these L2 methodologies are still in a supplementary position. Innovative L2 teaching methods such as the PBL are emerging in China and are generally welcomed by teachers and students, but it does not seem to be easy to break the limitations imposed by the current written examination culture in China.

THE CREATIVITY-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACH

This section proposes a creativity-based L2 teaching approach to solve the above-mentioned problems that lead to Chinese students' inability to converse in other languages. This approach, CBLT, sets creative use of the L2 as the goal of teaching. As real-life language use is often unpredictable (Kurtz 2011) and constantly involves improvisations, L2 learners need to learn how to handle unpredictable utterances and how to improvise their responses. Traditional L2 teaching approaches view accuracy as the primary goal of L2 teaching, through pedagogical practices such as imitation of the pronunciation, translation exercises, memorization of the vocabulary, and drilling of grammatical patterns. These approaches provide no practice of improvisational use of the L2 and thus are unsuitable for preparing learners for the unpredictable nature of real-life language use. In contrast, CBLT aims at fostering a deep understanding of the meaning and functions of the L2 in the learning process. In a CBLT classroom, students hypothesize and improvise with the L2 and use their available L2 knowledge to construct new utterances they have never heard of or spoken before. They use the L2 to create new thoughts, perform new tasks, and achieve new purposes. L2 learning is no longer a passive, receptive process, but a creative process. It goes hand in hand with L2 use.

To clarify the theoretical ground of CBLT, it is necessary to make a distinction between *creative teaching* and *teaching for creativity* and also between *creative learning* and *learning for creativity* by drawing on Sawyer (2015) as well as Brinkman (2010) and Jeffrey and Craft (2004). To differentiate these constructs of creativity, we can consider whether the focus of the creative element is on the method or the outcome, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Creativity in Teaching and Learning in View of the Focus on Method vs. Outcome

	Method	Outcome
Teacher	Creative teaching	Teaching for creativity
Student	Creative Learning	Learning for creativity

From the teacher's perspective, if the focus is on a creative or innovative method of teaching, regardless of the content and outcome of teaching, the construct in question is *creative teaching* (see, e.g., Maley and Kiss 2017); if the focus is on achieving creativity in students as the outcome of teaching, then the construct is *teaching for creativity*. Similarly, *creative learning* refers to the way of learning that involves creative or innovative learning methods. In this sense, the content and outcome of learning can be either creative or noncreative. For example, creative learning can mean a new, smart way for memorizing facts. *Learning for creativity*, in contrast, refers to cases in which developing creativity is the goal of learning.

Making these distinctions is necessary, not only for clarifying the arguments about CBLT but also for delineating possible CBLT activities. In this regard, all of the CBLT activities outlined in this article fall into teaching for creativity rather than creative teaching. In fact, the main concern of CBLT is not whether the teaching method is creative or not. For example, a technique to make students relaxed and comfortable by playing quiet music in L2 classrooms, called suggestopedia

(Lozanov 1978), is a creative teaching method, but it is not a method for fostering creative use of the language. The purpose of CBLT is to train students to become creative users of the language. From the students' perspective, CBLT is intended for learning for creativity, not creative learning. As a student-centered approach, CBLT tackles teaching for creativity as well as learning for creativity.

In the CBLT pedagogy, the primary goal of L2 teaching is to foster creative and improvisational use of the language. Since improvisation calls for more attention to the currently ongoing conversation and the speech context, it leads to deeper processing of the language. In this aspect, CBLT is in sharp contrast to traditional L2 pedagogies. According to Kurtz (2011, 2015), a large body of research shows that traditional L2 instruction is pre-planned and scripted, typically following an organizational pattern of teacher *initiation*, learner *response*, and teacher *feedback* (IRF). IRF discourse is the most frequent teacher-student interaction structure in today's L2 classrooms (McCarthy and Slade 2007). In an IRF-based classroom, students have very little chance for spontaneous and improvised communication. This kind of teacher-student interaction is not uncommon even in a communicative language teaching classroom. In contrast, CBLT is founded on the learning sciences principle that creativity is at the center of learning and that the purpose of learning is not for receiving and storing knowledge but rather for a deeper conceptual understanding of knowledge and for constructing and creating knowledge (Sawyer 2019). As Nathan and Sawyer (2014, p. 31) put it, "learning is more effective when learners are actively engaged in the construction of meaning and knowledge." In other words, language learning is not just for receiving and storing L2 knowledge in the mind. Effective L2 learning should involve learners in the active use of the language in creating meaning, and thus L2 teaching should aim at enabling learners to achieve deeper processing of the L2 and creative use of the L2 in communication.

The defining characteristics of CBLT are as follows. First, this approach views L2 teaching as a process of developing integrated L2 knowledge in L2 learners. Since L2 learning happens in situated learning contexts, CBLT leads to L2 knowledge in a network of rich associations, suitable for dealing with new situations, unlike traditional L2 instruction, which leads to piecemeal, disconnected, and decontextualized knowledge of the language. Second, in CBLT, L2 learning and L2 use occur at the same time. There is not a learning-use sequence, as in traditional pedagogies, in which L2 learning precedes L2 use, in a layer-by-layer manner. Third, CBLT engages students in the creative use of the L2 both in the classroom and in the real world, contrasting with the traditional methods, in which language use is confined to the classroom. Finally, the learning activities promoted in CBLT are situated, improvisational, and parallel activities. *Situated* means that the learning activities take place in real-life contexts. *Parallel* means that the activities are sliced across different levels rather than being arranged in a layer-by-layer or serial way, as in the traditional approaches. These concepts will be further discussed in the following section.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CBLT

CBLT Activities

To implement CBLT in the L2 classroom, Kurtz (2011, 2015) suggests a flexible, situated conversational framework for guided improvisations, which includes three parts: (a) a brief scripted lead-in, serving as an icebreaker and warm-up to reduce speaking inhibitions among learners, (b) an unscripted main part with one or two communicative cues from the teacher for improvisational conversations, and (c) a scripted final part as a communicative 'emergency exit,' a strategy for ending the conversation if the participants do not wish to continue. The unscripted main part leaves enough room for a wide range of spontaneous exchanges of ideas and explanations, based on prior knowledge and skill. In providing the conversational cues, the teacher should take into account the local social and cultural contexts to make the improvisations engaging, interesting, and connected with the real world. In this way, this framework provides a flexible yet safe environment

for teacher-supported improvisational conversations among students. The specific tasks that Kurtz has designed vary in accordance with students' level of L2 proficiency. Those that are suitable for lower-level students provide a more detailed guiding structure, thus giving students more support. Those that are appropriate for more advanced students have a more open and flexible guiding structure, thus giving students more room for improvisations.

To engage students in the creative use of the L2, Perone (2011) uses improvisational games to provide guiding structures. He describes some rules that improvisers have practiced to produce effective improvisational performances. The rules ensure that students collaborate to move the dialogue forward. For example, the "Yes, and" rule requires that the student improviser not only respond positively to the other improviser by agreeing to what he or she says but also make an effort to continue the dialogue by adding to it and extending it.

Learning activities like these provide opportunities for students to undertake more authentic and creative use of the L2. In addition to using improvisations (Kurtz 2011 2015; Perone 2011; Sawyer 2011), CBLT draws on ideas, for example, from the following sources of learning sciences research: (a) project-based learning (Krajcik and Shin 2014), (b) cognitive apprenticeship (Collins and Kapur 2014), and (c) vertical teaching (Sawyer 2019). The following sections of this article will describe and discuss some activities that illustrate how the different sources of learning sciences research can be used in implementing CBLT.

- *Cross-Layer Reading*

In this activity, students read an article or a web page in the L2 in order to write a summary. The article or web page should be carefully selected. It should be interesting to read, and it should contain a few unknown words and new sentence structures. The teacher should not provide any explanation of the vocabulary or grammar beforehand. Students are encouraged to ask their instructor or classmates whenever they encounter a new word or a new structure. They can also consult dictionaries and grammar books if they are interested in doing so, but it will be much easier if they use online dictionaries such as Google Dictionary and Youdao Dictionary and online books such as Chinese Grammar Wiki. The design of this activity is grounded on Sawyer's (2019) *vertical teaching* theory. In vertical teaching, students learn top-level integrated knowledge and lower-level discrete knowledge at the same time. This activity illustrates such an approach to L2 teaching. It is unlike the conventional practice in which teaching always starts from lower-order knowledge (such as vocabulary and grammar) and then progresses to higher-order skills (such as performing novel communicative tasks). In the CBLT approach, the teaching starts from higher-order communication needs, in this case, writing a summary. Students have to slice across higher- and lower-order knowledge to understand the article. Unlike in traditional practice, the vocabulary and grammar here are not specifically taught. Rather, students can always ask their instructor or classmates or consult a dictionary or book. In CBLT, this kind of scaffolding is available whenever students have the need. Students have the freedom to make their own choices regarding whether they want to learn the vocabulary or grammar items at the moment. In this way, vocabulary and grammar learning occurs at the same time and in actual contexts.

- *Apprenticeship Training*

This activity is based on the *cognitive apprenticeship* model of teaching and learning (Collins and Kapur 2014). Cognitive apprenticeship deals with learning complex problems in diverse contexts to foster generalization. It differs from the traditional apprenticeship, which is characterized by cultivating physical skills confined to particular work settings. Cognitive apprenticeship provides situated learning so that learners can obtain knowledge in actual contexts and use knowledge during learning. Such learning environments lead to the use of knowledge in new situations, generalizations, and creative applications of knowledge. In this activity, the instructor teaches a lesson in the real world. For example, in teaching a lesson on online shopping, students will do some real online shopping along with the teacher. At first,

the teacher introduces some basics about online shopping, and learners observe and model the teacher in shopping for different things online. Students then start their own online shopping experience with the teacher's assistance, until finally, they become masters of online shopping. In this process, students learn by doing things together with the teacher in real contexts (e.g., consulting the teacher, searching for things to buy, comparing prices, and making decisions). They have the teacher's scaffolding, and they can interact with the teacher as well as other students. After shopping, students need to tell the class about their online shopping experience. In so doing, they have to use their L2 knowledge in articulation, externalization, and reflection. These are conducive to deep-level conceptual learning. As Sawyer (2014, p. 10) puts it, "in many cases, learners don't actually learn something until they start to articulate it—in other words, while thinking out loud, they learn more rapidly and deeply than while studying quietly." Cognitive apprenticeship provides a good model of contextualized and concurrent language learning and use.

- *Higher-Order Thinking*

According to Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al. 1956), recognizing, locating, describing, talking about, and understanding are lower-order thinking skills. Higher-order thinking skills are more important for deep conceptual learning. They include activities such as applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In this activity, students can work in groups to locate and find out about different places, using online mapping services such as Map World or Google Earth. They need to use the L2 to interact with each other in giving directions and talking about different places and their cultures. The purpose of this is to engage students in practicing different levels of thinking skills in the L2. Students in this activity not only explore different places but also evaluate those places, make decisions about whether they want to travel to those places, and negotiate with each other and create a travel plan. These are higher-order activities. In performing such activities, students would have to use their L2 creatively in dealing with new situations. They also need to make connections with what they have learned before and use the L2 to design and formulate new thoughts. In carrying out this activity, the teacher needs to support students through the more complex and higher-order tasks. This activity promotes the creative use of their L2. When students present their plans and tell about their choice and reasons, they have to use their L2 to articulate, externalize, and reflect on their learning experience.

- *Improvisational Speaking*

This activity is a modified version of the improvisation activity designed by Kurtz (2011). In this activity, students work in groups of two. Each needs to think of a meaningful gift for her or his partner. When they meet, they will give each other a picture and also a short description of the imagined gift. They first tell each other why they chose to give that gift. Then, they ask their partner to tell what she or he thinks of it and also tell a story (imagined or real) related to it. This latter part of the exercise requires improvisational conversation. Students cannot do any preparation beforehand because they are not given any hint beforehand about what the gift will be. This assignment challenges students to use English creatively beyond what is easy for them. They need to take a step further to accomplish this task. They cannot plan it in advance. They have to use their L2 knowledge in a new context. Since they cannot plan ahead, they must practice creative use of the L2. In this way, this activity facilitates students' transfer of knowledge and skills to new situations.

- *Project-Based Learning*

In this activity, students need to find a real problem in their lives or studies. They can identify a question for which they are genuinely interested in finding an answer. Then, they work in groups to search for and find relevant information and read about the problem or question. They can use search engines such as Baidu or Google to find online resources. They can also do library research. After they finish gathering information, they will summarize the information and present their answer

or solution to the class. Students have to use the L2 in every step. This activity illustrates an unstructured project-based learning task (Krajcik and Shin 2014). In this task, students are given the opportunity to investigate their own motivating question. In the search for the information and in the process of creating the presentation, they need to collaborate with others and make decisions together, thus facilitating social interactions and the development of self-regulated learning skills in the L2.

- *Self-Reflection*

This activity asks students to reflect on what they have learned and what their learning strategies are. The teacher, for example, can ask students to reflect on their learning methods and prepare to move forward. In this metacognitive activity, students can think about the learning methods or strategies they used taking this course, then compare them with the new learning methods or strategies they are currently using. They can list the strengths and weaknesses of each learning strategy in table form. After this is done, they can answer this question: What changes do I need to make so that my learning methods will be more effective? This exercise is intended to make students aware of where they stand now, how they arrived at this point, and what goals they intend to reach as the next step. This activity is based on the learning sciences concept of metacognition or reflection (Sawyer 2014; Winne and Azevedo 2014). It intends to provide a chance for students to practice metacognition in the L2. “Learning scientists have repeatedly demonstrated the importance of reflection in learning for deeper understanding” (Sawyer 2014, p. 10). By reflecting on their L2 learning strategies, students can adjust their learning methods, take control of their own study, and develop self-regulated learning skills in the L2.

In sum, these activities illustrate how to implement the CBLT approach in L2 teaching. However, for a new innovative L2 teaching method to succeed and become accepted, one important support mechanism must be in place. That is the appropriate L2 assessment, which will be discussed next.

CBLT Assessments

In China, most of the current L2 assessment measures are based on traditional L2 teaching approaches. These assessments only measure disconnected pieces of knowledge (Sawyer 2014). Such tests have a rather negative impact on L2 instruction. According to Pellegrino (2014), learning scientists are facing the challenges of how to design assessments that can tap into students’ deep conceptual knowledge. To design assessments that are aligned to the principles of the learning sciences, we must think of how to make assessments capture the complexity of the learning process and the learning outcome and also provide guidance for L2 instruction and learning. To this end, we need to break out of the current assessment paradigms and explore alternative approaches. One direct way of assessing CBLT activities is to provide assessment rubrics for each activity. The following examples are the corresponding rubrics for the activities described above.

- *Rubric for Cross-Layer Reading Activities*

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Content	Your summary includes all of the key points from the materials.	Your summary includes most of the key points from the materials.	Your summary includes only a few key points from the materials.	Your summary includes no or few key points from the materials.	40

(Continued)

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Clarity	Your writing is always clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your writing is mostly clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your writing is clear and logical only occasionally and not easy to follow.	Your writing is not clear, not logical, and not understandable.	30
Accuracy	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate, with no errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate most of the time, with occasional errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are only occasionally correct and appropriate, with many errors.	Your language is incomprehensible, with no or little correct or appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar.	30
Total Points:					100

This rubric incorporates some learning sciences principles, especially the creativity principles, into the assessment. Since the activity combines perception and production into the same task, the effectiveness of students' learning can be gauged through the quality of their summaries. To assess how well students perform the task, the rubric includes a criterion for evaluating the content and idea of the summary, which is whether the summary includes all the key points mentioned in the reading material.

• *Rubric for Apprenticeship Training Activities*

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Content	You complete all of the required components.	You complete most of the required components.	You complete only a few of the required components.	You complete none or very few of the required components.	30
Skill	You demonstrate full mastery of the target skill.	You demonstrate sufficient mastery of the target skill.	You demonstrate only a little mastery of the target skill.	You demonstrate no or little mastery of the target skill.	30
Clarity	Your speech is always clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your speech is mostly clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your speech is clear and logical only occasionally and is not easy to follow.	Your speech is not clear, not logical, and not understandable.	20
Accuracy	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate, with no errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate most of the time, with occasional errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are only occasionally correct and appropriate, with many errors.	Your language is incomprehensible, with no or little correct or appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar.	20
Total Points:					100

This rubric gives more weight to the content and the mastery of the target skill than to clarity and accuracy. This can lead students to observe and model the teacher and practice the target skill very carefully. Students are most likely to take advantage of the apprenticeship opportunity to learn the language and the target skill. In this way, this rubric serves to guide students' learning.

• *Rubric for Higher-Order Thinking Activities*

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Content	You completed all of the required components.	You completed most of the required components.	You completed only a few of the required components.	You completed none or very few of the required components.	30
Plan	You created a highly detailed and feasible plan.	You created a sufficiently detailed and feasible plan.	You created a somewhat detailed and feasible plan.	You do not create a detailed or feasible plan.	30
Clarity	Your speech is always clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your speech is mostly clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your speech is clear and logical only occasionally and is not easy to follow.	Your speech is not clear, not logical, and not understandable.	20
Accuracy	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate, with no errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate most of the time, with occasional errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are only occasionally correct and appropriate, with many errors.	Your language is incomprehensible, with no or little correct or appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar.	20
Total Points:					100

This rubric gives much weight to the content, which shows how well students perform the activity, and also much weight to the created plan, which shows whether students have developed the higher-order thinking skills.

• *Rubric for Improvisational Speaking Activities*

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Collaboration	You collaborated with your partner extensively in moving the conversation forward.	You collaborated with your partner sufficiently in moving the conversation forward.	You showed only a little collaboration or effort in moving the conversation forward.	You showed no or little collaboration or effort in moving the conversation forward.	30
Creativity	You demonstrated creative use of the L2. You used it very effectively in dealing with unplanned situations, and the conversation went very smoothly.	You sufficiently demonstrated the creative use of the L2. You used it fairly effectively in dealing with unplanned situations, and the conversation went fairly smoothly.	You showed only a little effective use of the L2 in dealing with unplanned situations, and the conversation did not go smoothly.	You showed no or little effective use of the L2 in dealing with unplanned situations, and the conversation cannot move forward.	30
Clarity	Your conversation is always clear and easy to follow.	Your conversation is mostly clear and easy to follow.	Your conversation is only occasionally clear and is difficult to follow.	The conversation is not clear and not understandable.	20

(Continued)

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Accuracy	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate, with no errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate most of the time, with occasional errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are only occasionally correct and appropriate, with many errors.	Your language is incomprehensible, with no or little correct or appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar.	20
Total Points:					100

This rubric gives more weight to the collaboration and creative use of the language than to clarity and accuracy. This has the effect of guiding students in paying more attention to active and creative use of the L2 in different contexts.

• *Rubric for Project-Based Learning Activities*

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Content	You completed all of the required components.	You completed most of the required components.	You completed only a few of the required components.	You completed none or very few of the required components.	30
Collaboration	You collaborated with your partner extensively in moving the project forward.	You collaborated with your partner sufficiently in moving the project forward.	You showed only a little collaboration or effort in moving the project forward.	You showed no or little collaboration or effort in moving the project forward.	30
Clarity	Your presentation is always clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your presentation is mostly clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your presentation is clear and logical only occasionally and is not easy to follow.	Your presentation is not clear, not logical, and not understandable.	20
Accuracy	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate, with no errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate most of the time, with occasional errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are only occasionally correct and appropriate, with many errors.	Your language is incomprehensible, with no or little correct or appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar.	20
Total Points:					100

The rubric for this activity gives more weight to the content and collaboration than to clarity and accuracy. These criteria assess how well students complete the project and how much they learn from this project.

• *Rubric for Self-Reflection Activities*

Criteria	Ratings				Points
	Excellent (100–90 points)	Good (89–60 points)	Novice (59–20 points)	Unacceptable (19–0 points)	
Effectiveness	Your reflection is very effective, as shown by a complete list of the strengths and weaknesses of your previous and current learning strategies.	Your reflection is sufficiently effective, as shown by a fairly complete list of the strengths and weaknesses of your previous and current learning strategies.	Your reflection is somewhat effective, as shown by an incomplete list of the strengths and weaknesses of your previous and current learning strategies.	Your reflection is not at all effective, because you list no or few strengths and weaknesses of your previous and current learning strategies.	30
Change	Your reflection includes all of the changes you need to make your learning strategies more effective.	Your reflection includes most of the changes you need to make your learning strategies more effective.	Your reflection includes only a few of the changes you need to make your learning strategies more effective.	Your reflection includes none or very few of the changes you need to make your learning strategies more effective.	30
Clarity	Your speech is always clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your speech is mostly clear, logical, and easy to follow.	Your speech is clear and logical only occasionally and is not easy to follow.	Your speech is unclear and illogical and is very difficult to follow.	20
Accuracy	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate, with no errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are correct and appropriate most of the time, with occasional errors.	Your vocabulary and grammar are only occasionally correct and appropriate, with many errors.	Your language is incomprehensible, with no or little correct or appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar.	20
Total Points:					100

This rubric gives much weight to the two criteria for reflection, effectiveness and necessary change. This is to encourage students to devote more effort to reflecting on and improving their learning methods.

Each of these rubrics provides criteria for evaluating how well students perform the activities. They give enough weight to the aspects of the activity that demonstrate the creative use of the L2.

CONCLUSION

Traditional L2 teaching approaches are ineffective because they excessively emphasize memorization, imitation, and grammar practice. In traditional L2 pedagogies, teaching and learning usually start from a vocabulary list and a set of grammar points, then proceed to the text or dialogue. Words and expressions are usually presented in decontextualized vocabulary lists. Grammar items are taught in a similarly decontextualized manner, separate from real communicative contexts. Students are introduced to speech or conversational activities only after they have learned the vocabulary and grammar.

The assumption behind the traditional forms of teaching and learning is that knowledge is built in a layer-by-layer manner. Students start from the bottom layer. After they finish learning the knowledge at the bottom layer, they are ready to move up to the next layer. Language learning in this way implies hard, laborious work because there are too many words and grammatical elements. It takes much time to learn and memorize them, but they are forgotten very easily. This linear

approach to foreign language learning leads to the accumulation of knowledge in disconnected chunks. Knowledge thus acquired is not only forgotten very easily, but is also difficult to apply in new situations.

In contrast, CBLT situates L2 learning in a rich, associated web of meaningful communicative contexts. Students start from real communication needs. They learn and use the language at the same time and in real-life settings. There is no separate vocabulary and grammar teaching. Students begin to engage in communicative activities right from the start. They learn vocabulary and grammar only when needed, and vocabulary and grammar learning is embedded in communicative activities. Learners can ask the teacher to support them whenever necessary. In other words, vocabulary and grammar learning in the CBLT approach always occurs in real contexts and is simultaneous with the communication process. Learning a foreign language in this way leads to integrated, dynamic knowledge of the language. Such knowledge is easy to apply to new contexts. This method of language learning contributes to the creative use of the language.

CBLT can be implemented through language teaching models that practice situated and improvisational language learning. At the initial learning stage, CBLT advocates cross-layer parallel learning with more scaffolding by teachers. This can be realized through learning models such as cognitive apprenticeship (Collins and Kapur 2014) and vertical teaching (Sawyer 2019). With new technology, this can also be realized in virtual reality environments. At the applying and creating stage, CBLT utilizes learning sciences models such as project-based learning (Krajcik and Shin 2014) and (disciplined) improvisations (Kurtz 2011, 2015; Perone 2011; Sawyer 2011). As students increase in language proficiency, teachers provide less scaffolding and give learners more opportunities for creative use of the language in new situations. Students who begin to use the language in real communications immediately in CBLT can experience a great sense of achievement. This is intrinsically motivating.

For CBLT to be successful, the current assessment methods must change and support it. Traditional tests are mostly summative rather than formative. They focus on assessing perceptive knowledge rather than productive knowledge. Students do well on these tests, but are not able to use the language in new contexts. The tests measure very little on the creative use of the language. By contrast, CBLT-based assessments guide students to the creative use of the L2 and the development of strong communication abilities.

In CBLT, L2 learning no longer consists of pattern drills, repetitions, imitations, memorizations, quizzes, and tests. Rather, students will use the language to achieve their communication purposes, to satisfy their curiosity about the L2 culture, and to carry out creative activities using the L2. Creative use of the new language will bring enjoyment to L2 learners and satisfy their inherent creative needs. These fulfillments will accompany their entire L2 learning process.

Despite the promising prospects that CBLT can bring, implementing it might be potentially difficult in China's context. According to Long (2015), "innovative ideas or programs are likely to be ignored or rejected if they would entail an increased workload for teachers; they are difficult for them to understand; they require greater skills, abilities, technology, or training than they currently possess; they would cause disruptions to customary practices; and they come with no obvious benefits to potential adopters, including little or no institutional support" (p. 370).

In China, implementing CBLT would likely mean extra demands on teachers who are already used to the traditional methods of L2 teaching. Further, innovative teaching methods that promote creativity and student-centeredness are generally in conflict with China's memorization-based, exam-oriented, and teacher-centered educational culture (Liu and Xu 2017). Another related challenge, as mentioned in Reinders et al. (2017, p. 13), is very likely to stem from China's current educational policies. For example, one recent policy regarding L2 tests stipulates that the National English Test will no longer assess students' English-speaking skills. Since most of the students in China learn English as a school subject to pass English tests, this change in the official policy may lead Chinese teachers and students to downplay or ignore the importance of English-speaking skills.

However, in this age of fast development in information exchange and global communication, L2 speaking skills are becoming increasingly important for anyone. More and more Chinese students want to study abroad. Obviously, the

traditional L2 teaching approaches are inadequate for this need. In addition, real-life communications involve creative use of the language at almost every moment. For these reasons, L2 teaching in China needs a radical transformation from the traditional ways of teaching into creativity-based teaching.

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