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教師學習、實務、與信念：兩位國小英語教師的個案研究

▪ Teacher Learning, Practice, and Belief : ▪

A Case Study on Two Elementary School English Teachers

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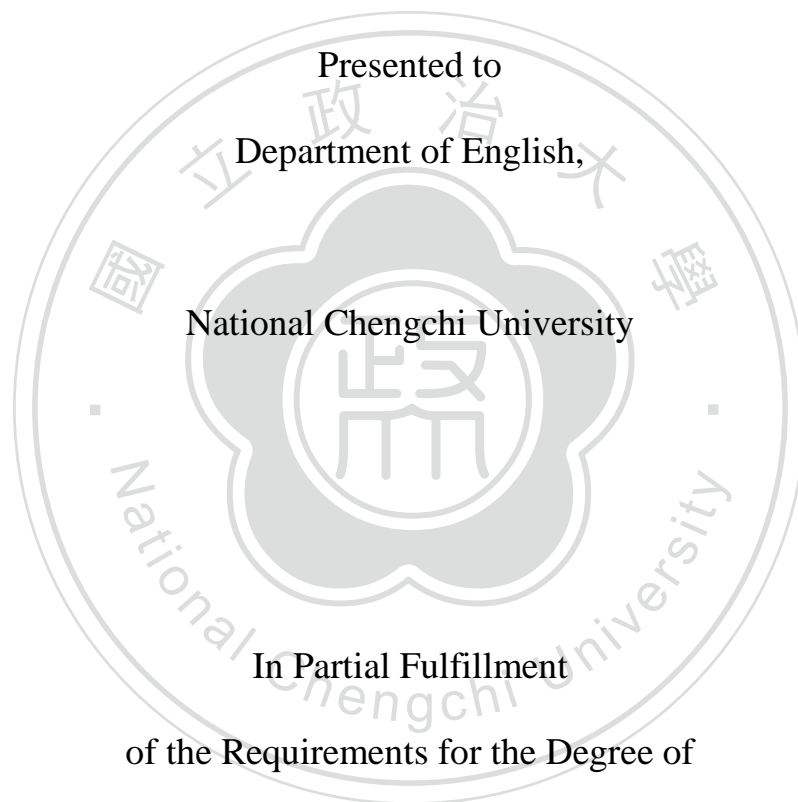
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Teacher Learning, Practice, and Belief :
A Case Study on Two Elementary School English Teachers

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To Dr. Chin-chi Chao

獻給我的恩師招靜琪教授





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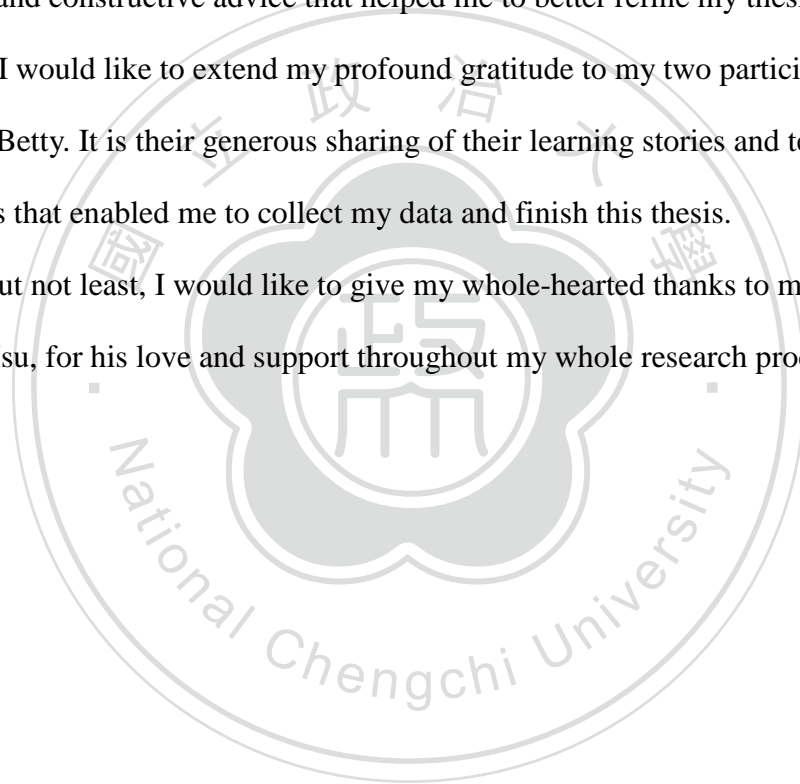




Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chinese Abstract	vii
Abstract.....	ix
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2	3
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
Teacher Learning	3
Language Teacher Beliefs/Classroom Practices	6
CHAPTER 3	11
METHODOLOGY	11
Participants.....	11
Data Collection	13
Data Analysis	16
CHAPTER 4	19
RESULTS	19
Case 1: Kevin.....	19
English Learning Experiences	19
English Teaching Experiences	27
Beliefs and Classroom Practices.....	36
Case 2: Betty.....	38
English Learning Experiences	38
English Teaching Experiences	48
Beliefs and Classroom Practices.....	55
CHAPTER 5	57
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	57
Research Question 1	57
Research Question 2	59
Research Question 3	61
CHAPTER 6	65
CONCLUSION.....	65
Summary of the Study	65
Suggestions	66
Limitations of the Study.....	66
Direction for Future Research.....	67
Conclusion	67

References.....69
Appendices.....75
 Appendix A: Questions for the Interviews with Kevin.....75
 Appendix B: Questions for the Interviews with Betty.....79
 Appendix C: Questions for the Additional Interviews.....85



國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：教師學習、實務、與信念：兩位國小英語教師的個案研究

指導教授：招靜琪博士

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論文提要內容：

教師專業發展是在職英語教師的重要課題。愈來愈多英語教師擁有英語研究所相關係所的學歷，這些教師同時也保持自我學習英語的熱忱與習慣。然而，對於教師如何持續學習仍有了解不足之處。本研究旨在以語言學習者同時是英語教學者的角度，探討臺灣兩位國小英語教師的學習經驗、課室實務、與教師信念。

本研究採用質性研究的個案研究方法，研究對象為兩位擁有英語相關研究所學歷，且教學經驗豐富的國小英語教師。研究方法主要包含研究對象的半結構式訪談、課室觀察以及補充訪談(additional interviews)。

透過 Lieblich 等人的「整體—內容」分析法，研究結果顯示兩位教師的英語學習經驗、教師信念，都與他們的課室實務息息相關。兩位英語教師的外語學習經驗形塑了他們的教學信念；這些因教師英語學習經驗而形成的教師信念，對於教師在課室實務，扮演相當關鍵的角色。最後於文末提出給予研究所教育機構與教師的建議，以及未來研究建議方向。

關鍵字：教師學習、教師信念、課室實務



Abstract

Teacher professional development is an important issue for in-service English teacher. Increasing English teachers hold master's degrees in English-related disciplines; moreover, these teachers have been able to, have managed to sustain the enthusiasm and develop the habit to learn English by themselves. However, there is not much understanding of how teachers continue their learning. This study aimed to examine two Taiwanese English teachers' reflections on learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and their classroom practices.

The study adopted a qualitative case study method. The participants were two elementary English teachers with English-related master's degree and rich experience of teaching. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and additional interviews were collected and analyzed using a holistic-content approach.

The research findings indicate that the two teachers' learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and their classroom practices are dynamically connected. Their foreign language learning experiences are important parts of their teacher beliefs. These teacher beliefs which constructed from the teacher learning experiences also play important roles in their classroom practices. Suggestions for graduate schools and English teachers and direction for future research are provided at the end of the thesis.

Keywords: teacher learning, teacher beliefs, classroom practices



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teacher, as an important individual to instruct and educate, is expected to learn and develop continuously as a competent educator. To achieve this goal, teacher learning plays a pivotal role. For English teachers, especially those in the EFL context, how to ensure success and professionalism in English teaching is a burning issue. In Taiwan, the statistics released by the Minister of Education (MOE) indicate that an increasing number of elementary school teachers possessed a Masters' degree in the past decade. In 2008, the ratio of elementary school teachers holding an M.A. degree was 21.3%, while in 2017, the ratio increased to 57.2%. Numerous English teachers in Taiwan also hold Master's degrees in English Literature, Linguistics, TESOL, Translation, or other English-related disciplines. The formal training in graduate school cultivates these English teachers' academic attainments and helps sustain their professional development in English learning and teaching.

Johnson and Golombek (2002) claimed that “professional development emerges from a process of reshaping teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices rather than simply imposing new theories, methods, or materials on teachers” (p. 2). Learning is a process during which teachers reshape their own knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Lee, 2011). Teaching, on the other hand, is a complex cognitive activity which focuses on the nature of teachers' beliefs and thinking and how these influence their teaching and learning (Richards and Farrell, 2005, p. 6). Richards and Farrell (2005) pointed out that teachers are encouraged to explore their own beliefs and to examine how these impact their classroom practices in the process of learning. There is a need to understand language teachers' reflections on their learning, beliefs, and classroom practices.

Although previous studies have generated significant insights into the issue of

the impacts of language teacher beliefs on their classroom practices, the foci are often limited to investigating (1) the internal factors: teachers' teaching experiences (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Gatbonton, 2008; Grosemans, Boon, Verclairen, Dochy, and Kyndt, 2015), (2) the external factors: contextual factors (Chan, 2016; Cheng & Kang, 2014), and different aspects of instruction, for example, grammar (Alghanmi & Shukri, 2016; Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Ezzi, 2012; Farrell & Lim, 2005), listening (Karimi & Nazari, 2017), reading (Farrell & Ives, 2015), and speaking (Farrell & Vos, 2018). Little research has been done to investigate Taiwanese English teachers' reflections on their learning experience, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices. The present research is an attempt to fill the gap.

In this qualitative case study, in order to develop an understanding of how English teachers continue their learning and how these learning experiences are related to their teaching in elementary schools, the researcher focused on two teachers' experiences and reflections on their past and present learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices. The results are expected to generate useful and helpful insights for EFL English teachers' learning and teaching. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What kind of schooling and professional development experiences related to English teaching have the two Taiwanese elementary school teachers had, particularly before, during, and after the graduate school?
2. How do the two teachers think of themselves as English teachers and manifest their English teacher beliefs in the classroom?
3. How are these teachers' beliefs and experiences related to their formal and informal professional development?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss the following issues related to the study: (1) Teacher learning and (2) Language Teacher beliefs/classroom practices.

Teacher Learning

Teacher learning is a continuum, connecting formal learning and informal learning (Sawchuk, 2008). Grosemans et al. (2015) define formal learning as “learning that takes place in a structured and organized environment” (p. 152), and is characterized as “structured” in terms of learning context, support, time, and objectives. Informal learning, on the other hand, emerges in an unstructured environment and throughout people’s daily activities and routines (Marsick & Volpe, 1999). Jurasaitė-Harbisson and Rex (2005) conceptualized informal teacher learning as professional growth, which is a “spontaneous, contextual process that positions teachers as independent self-directed learners. It occurs in diverse environments, which are not traditionally recognized as specific occasions of professional development” (p. 428).

In Richards and Farrell (2005), four conceptualizations of teacher learning are discussed: teacher learning as skill learning, teacher learning as a cognitive process, teacher learning as personal construction, and teacher learning as reflective practice. Teacher learning as skill learning involves mastery of skills or competencies. Teacher learning as a cognitive process is an approach views “teaching as a complex cognitive activity and focuses on the nature of teachers’ beliefs and thinking and how these influence their teaching and learning” (p. 6). Teacher learning as personal construction emphasizes teachers’ contributions to learning and uses activities that focus on the

development of teachers' self-awareness and personal interpretation (p. 7). Teacher learning as relective practice is based on the assumption that teachers learn from teaching experiences.

Richardson (1996) claimed that three forms of experience begin at different stages of the individual's educational career: personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge. These three categories of experience were described as the impacts on the development of beliefs and knowledge about teaching (p. 105). The first category, personal experience, "includes aspects of life that go into the formation of world view... and other forms of personal, familial, and cultural understandings" (p. 105). Richardson indicated that the second category, experience with schooling and instruction, was a basis for the preservice teachers' deep seated beliefs about the nature of teaching. She further suggested that "most researchers... also agree that the experiential effects of personal life, previous schooling, and student teaching are more powerful in building conceptions of teaching than the formal pedagogical education received in teacher education programs" (p. 106). The third category, experience with formal knowledge, includes the conceptions or beliefs about nature of subject matter and how students learn it, and experiences with formal pedagogical knowledge that usually begin in preservice teacher education programs (p. 106). Richardson suggested that although experiences with formal pedagogical knowledge are seen as the least powerful factor affecting beliefs and conceptions of teaching and the teacher role, its influence is not negligible. There may be a "lag time" or a "sleeper effect" of formal pedagogical training on teacher education (p. 106).

Hoban, Butler, and Lesslie (2007) conducted a research on self-study of professional development. They illustrated the claims of Day (1999) and Hoban (2002) that teacher learning is "a dynamic process involving the interaction of many different

initiatives and processes to support change” (p. 48). Hoban et al. (2007) indicated that “teachers may need input from teacher educators to facilitate the methods of self-study, including how to reflect on their practice, how to represent their ideas and how to share ideas for public scrutiny” (p. 49). They further claimed that self-study can “help teachers to better understand themselves as learners and thus help them to understand and manage the dynamic processes of teacher learning to sustain professional development and improve the quality of children’s learning” (p. 49).

The nature of teacher learning from traditional perspectives was seen as a cognitive issue (Richards, 2008). Teaching was viewed as a transmission process. Richards (2008) claimed that from this perspective, “teacher learning is not viewed as translating knowledge and theories into practice but as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes” (p. 164). He further called this latter type of knowledge as ‘practitioner knowledge’, which is the source of teachers’ practices and understandings. Richards (2008) pointed out that the more recent views see teacher learning as “the theorization of practice- making practitioner knowledge visible and providing the means by which such knowledge can be elaborated, understood, and reviewed” (p. 164).

Teacher learning involves “not only discovering more about the skills and knowlegde of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher” (Singh & Richards, 2006, p. 155). Richards claimed that second language teacher learning is “influenced by perspectives drawn from sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000) and the field of teacher cognition (Borg, 2006)” (p. 160). A sociocultural perspective recognizes that language teacher learning is “not only a process of enculturation into the existing social practices associated with teaching and learning but also a dynamic process of reconstructing and transforming those practices to be

responsive to both individual and local needs” (Johnson, 2009, p. 13). Language teacher cognition acknowledges that teachers’ teaching practice is not only informed by their knowledge, but also by their beliefs, attitudes, thinking and decision-making (Borg, 2006). Research into language teacher learning from a sociocultural perspective and research into language teacher cognition are often presented as opposites; however, they are more likely to be complementary in understanding how language teachers learn and know, and the reasons behind their teaching practices (Albaba, 2017).

Language Teacher Beliefs/Classroom Practices

Johnson (1994) suggested that language teacher beliefs are neither easy to define nor study because they are not directly observable. Kagan (1992) defined teacher beliefs as “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic materials to be taught” (p. 65). Teacher beliefs act as a form of personal knowledge consisting of implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms and the subject matter to be taught. Borg (2001) proposed a definition for teacher beliefs as “used to refer to teacher’s pedagogic belief, or those beliefs of relevance to an individual’s teaching” (p. 187).

Johnson (1994) proposed that three assumptions build the research on language teacher beliefs: (1) teacher beliefs impact both conception and judgment of their instructional choices, (2) teacher beliefs play an important role in pre-service and in-service teacher training: they moderate teachers’ interpretations of information and their classroom practices, and (3) teacher beliefs is crucial to improving instructional practices and teacher education programs.

Kavanoz, Yüksel, and Varol (2017) claimed that teacher beliefs “function as lenses through which their interpretations, behaviors, and decisions are refined and

they are, therefore, considered powerful constructs that influence the way teachers perform their profession (p. 120). They pointed out that there are two sets of claims about the impact of teacher preparation on teacher beliefs. One asserts that teacher preparation and training programs have limited influences on the change of pre-service teacher beliefs (Johnson, 1994; Richardson, 1996; Tatto, 1998). The other research posits that teacher beliefs are mainly affected by their educational experiences including “schooling and teacher preparation classes, professional education and classroom experience” (Borg, 2003; Ozmen, 2012, p. 120). In view of the impact of teacher beliefs, Borg (2001) deems that they may “affect the way teachers process new information, respond to advocated changes for professional practices, and make decisions in classroom teaching (cited in Lin, 2013, p. 57).

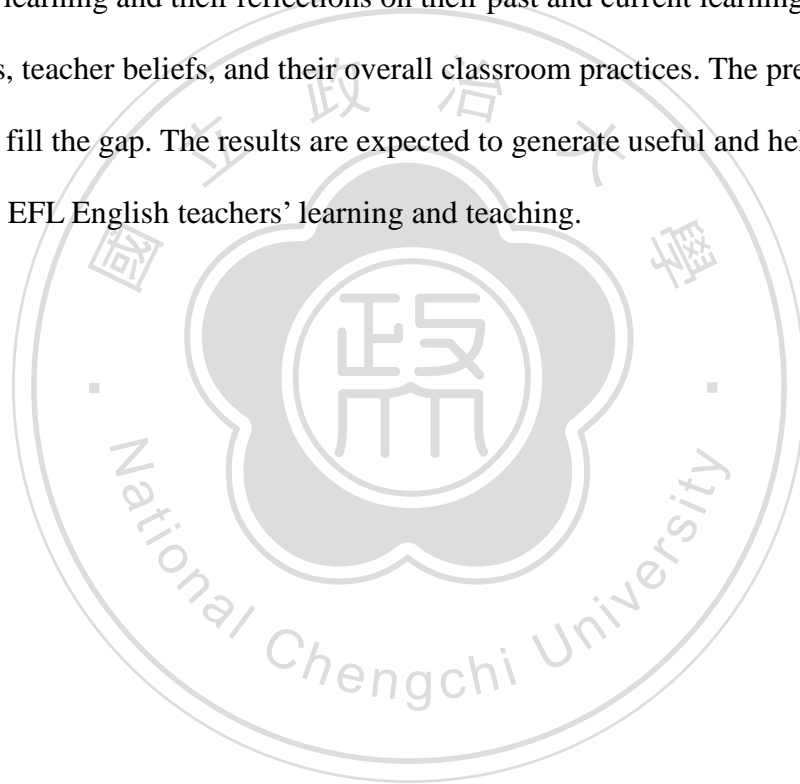
During the last two decades, many researchers have explored language teachers’ reflections on their classroom actions, mostly about teacher beliefs and classroom practices. Most research investigated teacher belief and classroom practices focused on the topic of grammar instruction (Alghanmi & Shukri, 2016; Basturkmen et al., 2004; Ezzi, 2012; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Farrell & Lim, 2005). Basturkmen et al. (2004) conducted a qualitative research on grammar in New Zealand. They indicated that there was a somewhat tenuous relationship between the teacher’s practices and stated beliefs regarding focus on form (p. 243). Ezzi (2012) conducted a quantitative research on grammar in Yemen. He claimed that “teachers do possess a set of complex beliefs about learning and teaching grammar that are likely to be derived from their prior experience of teaching English” (p. 170). Prior experience of teaching serves as a basis for the forming of teacher beliefs. Farrell and Bennis (2013) conducted a qualitative research on grammar in Canada. They indicated that experienced teacher’s classroom practices were more clearly related to his beliefs while there was a ‘tenuous relationship’ in novice teacher’s beliefs and classroom practices (p. 175). Farrell and

Lim (2005) investigated the stated beliefs and actual instructional practices of two experienced English teachers in Singapore. They pointed out that “opportunities be provided for teachers to reflect on their work so that they can be encouraged to articulate and reflect on their beliefs while also investigating any discrepancies between their beliefs and classroom practices” (p. 10).

Studies on the relationship of teacher beliefs and classroom practices of other aspects, for example, listening, reading, speaking, and teaching approaches (e.g., CLT) were conducted during the last decade. Karimi and Nazari (2017) conducted a research on EFL teacher beliefs about listening instruction and their listening instructional practices. They claimed that teachers’ practices should be “amalgamated with research findings concerned with innovations in listening pedagogy, cognitive and metacognitive strategies/ processes for listening, and linguistic resources supporting listening comprehension” (p. 73). They indicated that teacher beliefs forms the basis of what to be educated and the educated theories inform teachers’ forthcoming practices. Farrell and Ives (2015) conducted a qualitative research on reading instruction in Canada. They indicated that teacher’s beliefs provided a strong basis for his/her classroom practices. Teacher beliefs and classroom practices exist in a relationship in which both shape each other, and are shaped by each other (Walsh, 2006). Farrell and Vos (2018) conducted a qualitative case study on speaking instruction in Canada and one female teacher participant was engaged. The findings indicated that “the teacher’s classroom practices are a strong reflection of her professed beliefs” (p. 13). They also claimed that feedback may be necessary for teachers to reflect on their beliefs and evaluate their practices. Rahman, Singh, and Pandian (2018) conducted a case study on ESL teacher beliefs and classroom practices of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). They claimed that “teacher belief in the ESL context highly depends on their learning as a learner and their

teaching education” (p. 305). Rahman, Singh, and Pandian (2018) cited Richards and Lockhart’s (1994) statement that “teacher beliefs about learning may be based on their training, their teaching experience, or may go back to their own experience as language learners” (p. 305).

While previous studies reflecting on teacher beliefs and classroom practices mostly focused on the aspects of grammar, listening, reading, speaking, or teaching approaches, little attention has been focused on Taiwanese English teachers’ continuous learning and their reflections on their past and current learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and their overall classroom practices. The present study intended to fill the gap. The results are expected to generate useful and helpful insights for EFL English teachers’ learning and teaching.





CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the connections between two Taiwanese English teachers' learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices. For this purpose, a qualitative case study method is adopted. According to Yin (2013),

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. (p. 16)

This means when one intends to understand a real-world case and assumes that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to the case, a case study approach is appropriate. In this study, two Taiwanese English teachers' learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices were examined within the real-world context; therefore, the case study approach was considered proper. Further information on the participants, context, data collection, and data analysis are provided as follows.

Participants

The two participants of this study are Kevin and Betty (pseudonyms). The reasons why the participants were invited were that both of them contributed a large amount of time developing habits in learning English and that they both received graduate education and held a Masters' degree in English-related disciplines. Kevin studied English-learning magazines while Betty read original English novels. Also, they built up practical methods in teaching English. Kevin emphasized the importance of vocabulary teaching while Betty highlighted developing students' reading and

writing abilities. Both of the participants are the researcher’s friends. The long-term relationship and the strong rapport between the participants and the researcher encouraged the participants’ disclosure of their thoughts and feelings.

Kevin, who is in his mid-forties, took an M.A. degree in English Literature. His daily routine involved studying many such English-learning magazines as *Advanced* (Brougham, 2000), *Studio Classroom* (Brougham, 1962), *English Digest* (Hsu, 1979), and *CNN Interactive English* (Cheng, 2000). He spends at least three hours studying these magazines every day and aims to be “a native-like English speaker” by expanding his vocabulary volume.

Betty is in her mid-thirties, and has an M.A. degree in Children’s English Education. She enjoys reading original English novels in her spare time, especially those that are thrillers. Her reading lists included *American Sniper* (Kyle, McEwen, & DeFelice, 2014), *Still Alice* (Genova, 2014), *Dark Places* (Flynn, 2015), and *The Snowman* (Nesbø, 2016). Table 3.1 is a summary of the two participants’ backgrounds.

Table 3.1 Backgrounds of the participants

Participants	Kevin	Betty
Gender	Male	Female
Age	Mid-40s	Mid-30s
Teaching Years	1990-2018 (28 years)	2003-2018 (15 years)
M.A. Degree	English Literature	Children’s English Education
Self-Learning	Studying English-learning	Reading original English
Method	magazines	novels

Data Collection

In order to understand the connections between the two participants' learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and their classroom practices, teachers' semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and additional interviews were conducted from September 2015 to August 2017. The sections below explain these data sources.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The in-depth semi-structured interviews aimed to understand the lived experience of the two participants and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 2013). To understand the world from the participants' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world are the attempts of conducting these semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In this study, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with Kevin, while four semi-structured interviews were with Betty.

The purpose of the first interview was to understand the two participants' English learning experiences, the critical events and their impacts, stories in graduate school, and their English teacher beliefs and teaching methods.

The second and the third semi-structured interviews were conducted after the first and the second classroom observations, respectively. The second interview aimed to understand the two teachers' thoughts about the first observed class, their teaching goals and methods, the impact of their learning experiences on teaching, and their beliefs on the interaction with students.

The purpose of the third semi-structured interview was to understand the two participants' thoughts about the second observed class, the most satisfied and the most challenged aspects of their teaching, their successful and unpleasant teaching experiences, the students' favorite teaching activities, their workshop experiences,

their beliefs on English four skills/ grammar/ vocabulary/ students' mistakes or errors/ classroom management strategies/ assessments or evaluations, their experiences of learning second foreign languages, their experiences of going abroad, and their thoughts on self-learning experiences (Please see Appendices A and B for the interview questions)

The purpose of the fourth semi-structured interview with Betty was to clarify the issues proposed by the previous three interviews. The fourth interview conducted with Betty was 131 minutes.

The interviews were all audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim carefully. Member checking was carried out to enhance the credibility of the interviews, and both participants checked the verbatim transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 are the schedules of the interviews with the two participants.

Table 3.2 The schedule of the semi-structured interviews with Kevin

Date	Duration	Topics
1 September 18, 2015	62mins.	(1) English learning experiences (2) English teacher beliefs and teaching methods
2 October 15, 2015	57mins.	(1) Thoughts about the first observed class (2) The impact of his learning experiences on teaching (3) His beliefs on the interaction with students
3 December 10, 2015	85mins.	(1) Thoughts about the second observed class (2) His teaching experiences (3) His workshop experiences (4) His beliefs on English teaching

Table 3.3 The schedule of the semi-structured interviews with Betty

Date	Duration	Topics
1 September 20, 2015	86mins.	(1) English learning experiences (2) English teacher beliefs and teaching methods
2 October 28, 2015	72mins.	(1) Thoughts about the first observed class (2) The impact of her learning experiences on teaching (3) Her beliefs on the interaction with students
3 December 16, 2015	103mins.	(1) Thoughts about the second observed class (2) Her teaching experiences (3) Her workshop experiences (4) Her beliefs on English teaching
4 January 7, 2017	131mins.	Confirmation of certain details

Classroom Observations

Two classroom observations were conducted for each participant. Each observation lasted for two class periods, which were 80 minutes in total. Different aspects of teaching were examined, including teaching contents, teaching methods, students' responses to the participants' teaching, and the teacher-student interactions. The classroom observations were video-recorded and transcribed carefully. Detailed accounts of time allotment, teaching activities, classroom events, and conversations between teacher and students were kept. The two participants were provided with the accounts after the observations, and member checking was carried out to enhance the credibility of the classroom observations.

The purposes of the classroom observations were to observe the participants' teaching methods and strategies and to triangulate the semi-structured interviews to

guard the trustworthiness.

Additional Interviews

Two additional interviews were conducted after the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The participants were asked to answer questions on the given topics in written form, without any restriction on the format. The purposes of the first additional interview were to understand the two participants' reflections on their English learning and teaching as well as their thoughts on the first observed class. The topics were (1) who or what impacted on the participants in the past academic year (August 2015- July 2016), (2) what adjustments the participants made on their formal and informal learning, (3) what was their greatest concern in the observed classes, and (4) what impacted their instructional decisions in the observed classes (Please see Appendix C for the additional interview questions). The first additional interview was conducted in July 2016. Both participants chose to write in English.

The purpose of the second additional interview was to understand the two participants' beliefs and perceptions on their own teaching and learning. The topics were (1) how did the two participants think of themselves during different stages: elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, university, and graduate school, and (2) how did they think of themselves as an English learner and as an English teacher after graduate school. The second additional interview was conducted in August 2017. Kevin chose to write in English while Betty chose to write in Chinese (her native language).

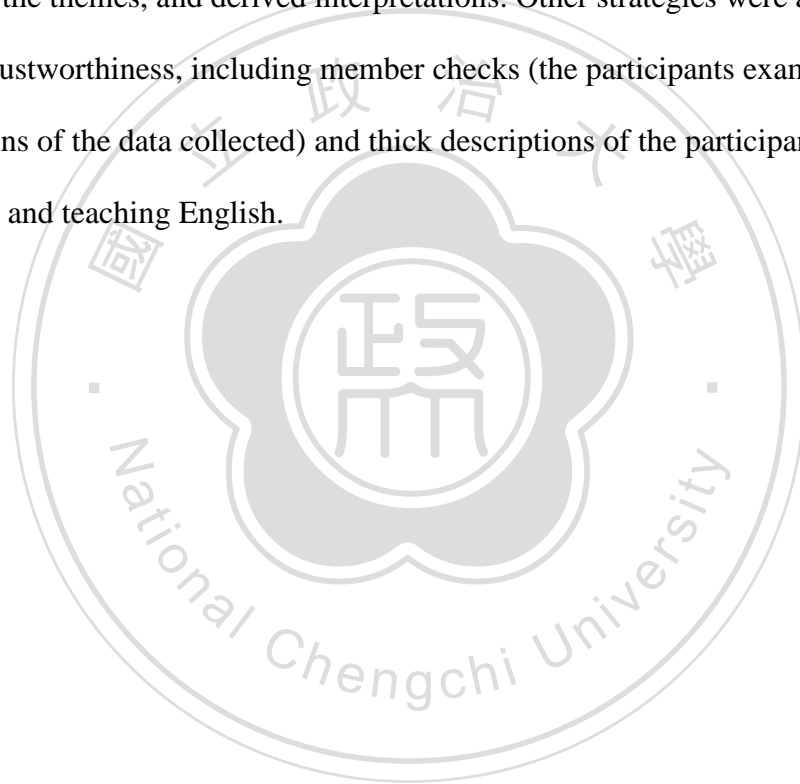
Data Analysis

The holistic-content approach (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998) was applied to analyze the data. The following steps were applied:

1. Read the materials several times until a pattern emerges.
2. Put the initial and global impression of the cases into writing.
3. Decide on special foci of themes in the story.
4. Read the themes separately and repeatedly.
5. Follow each theme throughout the story and note the researcher's conclusion.

(p.62)

By following such analysis approach, the researcher found the emerging patterns, decided on the themes, and derived interpretations. Other strategies were also adopted to ensure trustworthiness, including member checks (the participants examining the transcriptions of the data collected) and thick descriptions of the participants' stories on learning and teaching English.





CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of analysis on the in-depth interviews and classroom observations of the two English teachers, Kevin and Betty. Their stories are presented in the following order. First, the researcher introduces the participants' English learning experiences for three aspects: schooling experiences, graduate education, and self-learning experiences. Second, the researcher presents the participants' English teaching experiences and their workshop experiences. Finally, the participants' beliefs on learning and teaching and their classroom practices are presented.

Case 1: Kevin

English Learning Experiences

Schooling Experiences

Kevin is in his mid-forties and has been teaching English for 28 years. His own journey in English learning started when he was an elementary school student. His parents asked him to attend a church which held English classes. The topics of these classes were about daily life; however, Kevin was not really interested in learning English at that time. Not until he was in his junior high school years did Kevin start to be intrigued by English. He stated,

When I was in my junior high, I became interested in English. Yes. My scores of English were always the highest among all the other subjects. Certainly I felt confident. When it came to English, I felt confident, and I started to devote myself to English. I remembered I started with the English-learning magazine, '*Let's talk in English.*' And then I had a feeling that surely I would take English as my life career. (09/18/2015)

Kevin mentioned that when he was about to graduate from junior high school he felt fascinated by learning English and he started to study English-learning magazines. By the time Kevin entered Normal College at age fifteen, his English was the best among his peers in class, and he kept on studying English-learning magazines as he always did. In addition, Kevin attended classes in a language training center in northern Taiwan to learn English and further improve his English. He spent considerable time and devoted remarkable efforts in learning English; he was an active English learner.

After graduating from college, Kevin determined to take the university entrance examination and successfully entered a prestigious university in an urban area of northern Taiwan. He kept reading the English-learning magazines when he was in the university and sustained it as his self-learning method till this day. Kevin mentioned this experience in the additional interview,

As always, I spend more than three hours learning English by reading eight English-learning magazines and listening to radio programs on the Internet every day except Sunday. (06/30/2016)

At university, Kevin had a close friend, Peter (pseudonym), who studied English in the United Kingdom after graduating from university and later on taught in a private university in northern Taiwan as a professor. Kevin and Peter had regularly meetings to exchange information about English learning and teaching with each other, at least once in a month, and Kevin viewed Peter as his best friend. They had such regular gatherings that Kevin's wife and daughters usually said, "You both meet again!" And Kevin said jokingly that he needed to take photos with Peter to prove that he did not have an affair.

Graduate Education

After university, Kevin went to graduate school to work on his M.A. degree in English Literature. When Kevin was in the graduate school, he deemed learning English extremely important and determined to pursue further academic achievement. He was not in a hurry to graduate as his peers; instead, he audited several doctoral courses for one year. In these courses, he improved his reading ability and accumulated a tremendous amount of vocabulary by reading numerous original novels.

Kevin asserted that studying in graduate school was not only to gain a master's degree (i.e., a piece of paper) but also to learn to conduct research independently, which helped a lot in his self-learning experiences and teaching career. He stated that the major challenge in graduate school was to develop a thesis. One needed to read plentiful books, materials, theses, and bibliographies to finish a thesis. The process was an academic training. Kevin said,

I studied English Literature in graduate school, and it was barely related to English teaching. I think its facilitation on my teaching are that the training of making presentations in English. When I teach in class, I find no difficulty speaking English although students need explanation and translation in Chinese. (10/16/2015)

In Kevin's viewpoint, his graduate education did not directly facilitate his English teaching, but helped him with the training of English speaking and reading abilities. Also, in the process of developing the thesis, he learned the method to conduct research independently. By auditing doctoral courses during graduate school, he learned that extensive reading was important, and cultivating the reading ability was significant for his being both an English learner and teacher.

Self-Learning Experiences

After graduate school, Kevin has continued furthering his English proficiency by studying English-learning magazines and watching video clips on YouTube. He asserted,

Besides studying English-learning magazines, I sometimes watch English-learning clips on YouTube. There are a plethora of video clips on YouTube which I can learn English from. Sites such as “*10 commonly mispronounced words in English - Spoken English lesson,*” “*English expressions to describe your 'Mood' - English Speaking Lesson,*” “*Tips to understand fast native English speakers - Advanced spoken English lesson,*” to name just a few, are ones that have helped me horn my English skills. (06/30/2016)

In Kevin’s viewpoint, paying assiduous attention to details in learning English was his greatest concern. He claimed,

While I’m listening to radio programs on the Internet, I focus on how the panelists explain a word, a phrase, or an idea. I try to jot down what I hear as much as I could... Paying attention to details helps improve my listening comprehension, speaking ability, and writing skills. (06/30/2016)

Kevin started to study English-learning magazines when he was in junior high school, and has continued the habit of studying the magazines to this day. He spent so much time studying magazines that his wife once said, “Could you stop spending so much time studying English?” “Not to subscribe so many magazines?” Kevin understood that she thought her husband should have spent more time on their relationship. After a period of time, however, she became accustomed to his life style. After all, learning English was a lot better than other bad habits, such as wine,

cigarettes, or gambling.

When preparing for the graduate school entrance examination, Kevin kept studying English magazines every day, and he went to a cram school to audit a course on “Introduction to English Literature” for one year. He believed that he had the professional knowledge in English and successfully acquired admission to a well-known private university in northern Taiwan. After graduated from the graduate school, Kevin continued studying English-learning magazines, and he studied almost all that he could buy from bookstores except those that might be too simple for him. He preferred English-learning magazines that provided radio broadcasts because they were affordable and convenient to listen to, particularly in terms of the native-speakers’ pronunciation and intonation. Kevin mentioned,

I think the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, can be all developed and acquired by studying English-learning magazines as long as one takes time imitating the intonation that the native-speakers held in broadcasts. When I was a college student, I used an English-English dictionary, and it was so frequently used that it became tattered.

Sometimes when I dropped the dictionary, it fell apart; I repeatedly picked it up and pasted it back with tape. That’s how I learned English. I use a dictionary seriously and constantly, memorize words and sentences diligently, and imitate intonation from broadcasts earnestly. I strongly believe I can learn four skills from the English-learning magazines.

(09/18/2015)

In addition to the English-learning magazines Kevin endeavored to study the magazine *Panorama*, which was helpful in translating between English and Chinese. In the first interview, he mentioned that he subscribed to *Panorama* in order to improve and hone his skills in translating between these two languages. He had

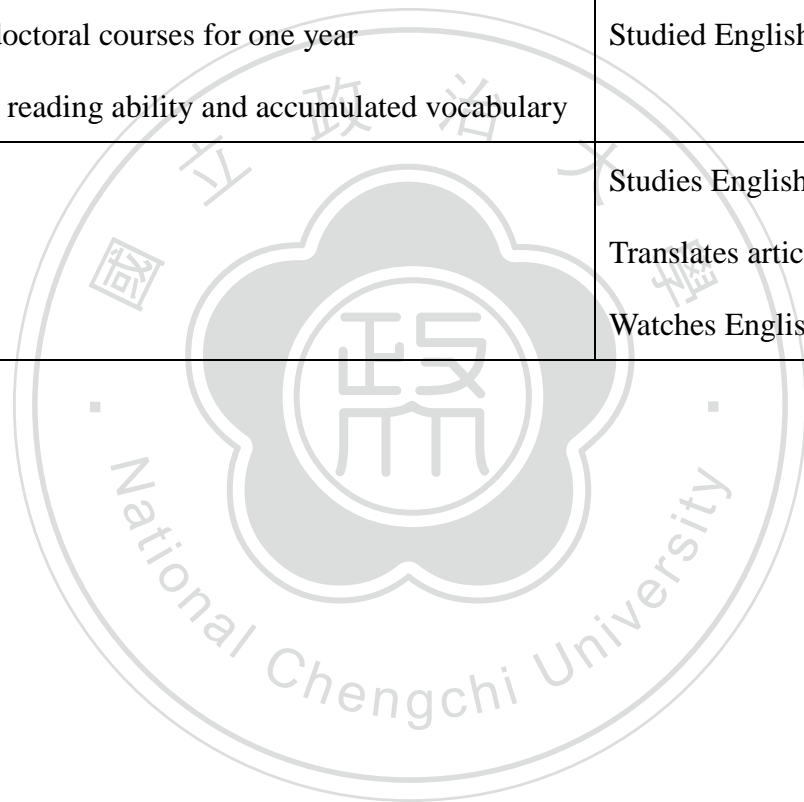
translated numerous and various kinds of articles or abstracts of theses for his friends and colleagues, which helped him acquire vocabulary of different kinds of topics. In the third interview, Kevin mentioned that he translated an abstract of a thesis which was about funeral ceremonies. In the process of translating, he learned plentiful words and phrases related to religious ceremonies, for example, encoffining ceremony, the deceased, and door gods. Kevin felt that he could learn a lot from translating between English and Chinese, and he believed that the topics in these articles and abstracts were common sense for native-speakers. He did not confine himself to everyday English; instead, Kevin diligently acquired various types of words and phrases in English.

Table 4.1 summarizes Kevin's schooling and self-learning experiences. Kevin started to study English-learning magazines when he was in junior high school, and continued to develop as a habit up to this moment.

Table 4.1 Summary of Kevin's schooling and self-learning experiences

Stage		Schooling experiences	Self-Learning experiences
Before graduate school	Elementary School	Mimicked the teacher's pronunciation and read dialogues Not really interested in learning English	Learned English by attending classes in a church
	Junior High School	Did not deem learning textbook materials as English learning Deemed studying English-learning magazines as English learning Got the highest scores of English among all the other subjects Got intrigued by English	Started to study English-learning magazines
	Normal College	Studied more English-learning magazines than before	Kept on studying English-learning magazines Improved English by attending classes in a language training center

	University	Improved English in four aspects-- reading, speaking, writing, and listening	Studied English-learning magazines
During graduate school		Audited doctoral courses for one year Improved reading ability and accumulated vocabulary	Studied English-learning magazines
After graduate school		N/A	Studies English-learning magazines Translates articles between English and Chinese Watches English-learning video clips on YouTube



English Teaching Experiences

At the time when data were collected for this study in 2018, Kevin has been teaching English for 28 years in an elementary school and three years in a university. His students included people aged from ten to twelve in Elementary School A and from twenty to thirty in University A. Kevin's experiences of teaching English are shown in Table 4.2 and further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 4.2 Kevin's Experiences of Teaching English

Time	Schools	Students' Age	Duration
1990-2018	Elementary School A	10-12	28 years
2015-2018	University A	20-30	3 years

Teaching in Elementary School A

Kevin enjoyed teaching English because he changed his attitude and beliefs toward students. He used to be highly demanding when teaching English. He would punish students by asking them to write vocabulary words ten times, or he would scold these students. Of course, some of his students backfired and cursed Kevin with foul language. It hurt. He started to ponder what was wrong with his teaching method. The turning point was that he had an opportunity to attend a workshop held by School A (pseudonym) in 2011 and 2013, respectively. This was a significant event and an opportunity for Kevin to teach English; he not only updated his English teaching skills but also learned helpful classroom management strategies. For example, when some students always slept in class, Kevin learned to ask them to wash their faces instead of scolding them. Furthermore, he avoided any negative words toward students. He changed his teacher beliefs and thought of himself as a more successful English teacher than he had been.

Kevin believed that vocabulary was an important element in learning English; therefore, he emphasized the significance of effectively memorizing vocabulary. He taught students how to memorize words by applying phonics rules. In the second interview, Kevin took “library” as an example. When teaching students how to memorize this word, he separated the word into three parts: l-i-li, b-r-a-bra, r-y-ry, and reminded students to apply phonics rules and use sounds to refer back to the letters. This was how Kevin taught students how to apply phonics rules to memorize words.

Kevin provided students with additional words and phrases that were related to the textbooks as well as googled pictures on the Internet to help students learn. In the first observed class, Kevin introduced 'Statue of Liberty' in the textbook; instead of descriptive information, he googled for pictures of the Statue of Liberty. By doing so, students could easily grasp the idea. He stated,

My teaching method is substantially about providing students with additional words and phrases, speaking English as much as possible, and googling pictures on the Internet. I think when we were in our childhood, no such excellent equipment was available, and we had to imagine what were mentioned in the textbook. Now, it is important for students to learn English by this method... I think it (googling pictures on the Internet) is a strategy to motivate students. (10/16/2015)

The habit of studying English-learning magazines helped Kevin boost his confidence in English, and facilitated his teaching in three aspects. First, he placed emphasis on intonation and pronunciation. Kevin believed that to study English-learning magazines over a long period of time had assisted him to develop professional knowledge in English, especially when intonation was the focus. Second, Kevin laid emphasis on learning vocabulary extensively. He thought that words from the textbook were limited; therefore, he provided words and phrases as much as

possible to his students. Third, Kevin emphasized that repetition was highly important. His students always said, “Teacher Kevin, you have taught this word before.” He replied, “It is all right to repeat learning words for ten or twenty times. You are supposed to have these words at your fingertips” (10/16/2015). Kevin claimed that he had introduced a concept to his students: Learning English vocabulary requires repetition. He believed that repetition helped students remember words and phrases.

Kevin also believed that immersing students in an English-speaking environment was important. He spoke English as often as possible and managed to create an English-only context for students. In both observed classes, Kevin spoke English a lot, and students tried to comprehend. For example, he said, “We are going to have a look at the dialogue in Unit 2. Let’s see, what happened to these four children. Now, I want you to repeat after me while we are reading. Please show me your index finger, and point to the word you’re reading” (10/15/2015). Kevin gave all of the instructions in English and most students understood him.

When talking about classroom management, Kevin believed that teachers needed to “Be nice and firm,” which was highly emphasized in the workshop held by School A. Teachers were required to stick to their principles but made students feel that they were respected. When teachers respected their students, their students did the same to the teachers. Kevin indeed acted like a caring and warm parent when teaching in elementary school, always being positive and encouraging. In the first additional interview, Kevin wrote,

When confronting an undisciplined class, I seldom yell at mischievous or absent-minded students. Instead, I speak softly and slowly and tell them that if they are caught being inattentive in class twice, I will keep their parents informed. It works! The key to calming chaotic class is to quiet down the students and get them focus on instructions in an environment

where they feel respected and safe. No yelling at them, I think, is crucial.

Yelling at kids can backfire. (06/30/2016, Original text, unedited)

In the second observed class, one student called Han (pseudonym), was distracted and doodled in class. Kevin reminded Han to pay attention several times but Han did not improve his behavior. Kevin asked Han to stand at the back of the classroom for approximately five minutes. Han stood, turning his back to Kevin. Kevin then asked Han “Can you be attentive? If you can be attentive, I will let you go back to your seat. Can you?” Kevin tried to talk to Han nicely, but held a firm attitude. He asked the other students how Han’s performance was like in the other teachers’ classes; students revealed that Han was always distracted and inattentive in all classes. Han’s greatest dread in school was his homeroom teacher, Ms. Hsu (pseudonym). Only in Ms. Hsu’s class did Han dare not distract or doodle.

Ms. Hsu, an extremely strict teacher, scolded students who did not perform well in Kevin’s class, and she asked students to memorize vocabulary at recess. With the help of Ms. Hsu, Kevin believed that homeroom teachers were important for subject teachers. He stated,

To help lower-achievers, I have to spend my recess instructing them how sounds are translated into letters again and again. Luckily, most of my students’ homeroom teachers are willing to help me urge students to memorize words at recess. Without the homeroom teachers’ help, these lower-achievers won’t have made so much progress. I am very grateful for having such helpful homeroom teachers. (06/30/2016)

Kevin deemed homeroom teachers as his partner when instructing students English; they assisted him not only in terms of managing classroom, but also in terms of creating an environment to help students learn. He was thankful for homeroom teachers, and built up a positive relationship with them.

To sum up, Kevin's teaching strategies were applying phonics rules to help students memorize words, creating an English-only context to immerse students in English, providing additional words and phrases to increase students' vocabulary volume, and googling pictures to help students grasp the idea of words. He managed to help students learn English, and gave acquiring vocabulary as a focus. Kevin believed that English teachers needed to be nice and firm, and with the help of the homeroom teachers, he endeavored to create a 'safe' environment for students, aiming to develop their interests in learning English. Kevin put emphasis on vocabulary when he learned English and in the meanwhile, he helped students learn as many words as possible. He thought of himself as "a walking dictionary" and managed to live up to his expectation.

In September 2016, Kevin was offered an opportunity to take a trip to Canada for an official educational visit, which was partially sponsored by the government. During this trip, he learned effective English teaching techniques and useful classroom management strategies by observing classes of Canadian teachers. For example, he learned about *Acting out a story*, in which the teacher acted out a story instead of simply reading through it. Students could easily remember the storyline and paid attention to the intonation. This technique helped Kevin reflect on his own teaching, and paid attention to how to teach intonation. He claimed,

After getting back from Canada, I tried to adapt myself when teaching readings or dialogues. I added as many different intonations as possible and tried to act out each sentence by demonstrating how a story or a situation may go or happen. By adding emotions, facial expressions, hand gestures and different tones of voice to my teaching, the story in each unit came to life, and the characters were as if three-dimensional. To my astonishment, I obviously heard laughter from my students with these

simple adjustments. (10/20/2016)

Kevin was surprised that his students admired his adaptation of teaching intonation and felt fulfilled with his observation of classes in the trip.

Teaching at University A

Kevin started to teach in University A in 2015. University A is a private university which does not rank highly in Taiwan. Actually, the students enrolled in University A do not score high in the College Entrance Examination.

One of his friend emailed information about recruiting a lecturer in University A, and encouraged Kevin to turn in an application. Lacking publications in addition to a master's thesis, Kevin made a list and provided online links of the articles that he had translated into English, such as abstracts of others' theses for University A. He also prepared a presentation on Prezi, a cloud-based software. With rich teaching experience and excellent English proficiency, Kevin successfully acquired the position of a lecturer and started to teach English in University A in 2015.

At the outset, Kevin was under a lot of pressure and thought these university students' English were superb; thus, he had to be fully prepared. However, the students' English proficiency was not as good as Kevin had imagined, and he only needed to meet his students' basic demands. His students majored in tourism at the night school; moreover, their academic performance were dissatisfactory and their English proficiency were basic. For example, in the first class, Kevin spoke English all the time, expected that these university students could understand him; however, his students said, "Teacher Kevin, could you slow down and speak Chinese?"

(09/18/2015) Kevin realized that these students' English abilities were limited. In order to increase their vocabulary volume, Kevin asked his university students to memorize words and gave tests every week. These students did not need to spell the

words; instead, they were given a word bank. Kevin took 'hobby' as an example. The sentence he gave was “_____ is what you want to do in your leisure time.”

(09/18/2015) and students were expected to fill in 'hobby.'

Kevin also asked his university students to read paragraphs in pairs, but they seemed reluctant and not enjoying the assignment. What they wanted was passively attending the class. In Kevin's viewpoint, his university students' learning attitude was passive.

Kevin's university students worked in the daytime and attended classes in the evening; in addition, they needed to take courses on Japanese and Law, which for them, were heavy courses. Some students told him, “We really cannot study in the daytime due to our jobs, and we are exhausted after work. The only time we can prepare for the tests is Saturdays and Sundays. Please post the test items in Moodle on weekends so that we can preview them in advance” (10/16/2015). Kevin promised his students he would post the test items before weekends and lowered his standard on them. He thought that these students were busy and with beginning-level English; hence, he could not demand too much of them. Some of his university students could not figure out when to add an “s” at the end of a word or when not to. For example, some students thought that “Does she eats?” was a correct sentence, and they were often confused with grammar points.

At the end of the semester, Kevin pointed out that some students might fail the class because they were too frequently absent and failed almost every test. These students always said, “We are too busy to study” (12/11/2015). However, Kevin thought they were supposed to spend time studying since they chose to study at the night school. They could not use the excuse that they had to work in the daytime to earn credits without paying efforts. Kevin remarked,

It is unfair to those who study hard if I pass all of these students.

Furthermore, I had posted the test items in Moodle before all the tests, and asked them to read and study. They are required to memorize the meaning of the vocabulary, not the answers of the questions. Some students say, “Teacher Kevin, can we take the test open book?” Surely they cannot take the test open book; they are expected to memorize vocabulary when learning a language. In real-world conversations, they cannot tell their interlocutors to wait for them and give them some time to look words up in the dictionary. (12/11/2015)

Kevin firmly believed that to learn English well, one needed to learn vocabulary well. He did his best to help his students enlarge their vocabulary volume. Also, he taught grammar and provided additional vocabulary to the best he could. It was obvious that Kevin’s teaching experiences were corresponded to his self-learning experiences: For him, to expand vocabulary was a way to communicate in English, and to study English-learning magazines was a method to increase vocabulary volume. He believed that in order to speak English with foreigners, one needed to accumulate extensive vocabulary and used these words at one’s fingertips. This was the reason why his teaching method was vocabulary-oriented.

Workshop Experiences

As discussed earlier, Kevin learned how to interact with students appropriately, and adopted strategies to get along with them pleasantly from the workshop held by School A, especially the one in 2013. In the workshop, he learned that teachers were expected to encourage students when they got low scores, and students would feel respected when teachers talked to them in a squatting position and at eye level. In addition, Kevin learned effective classroom language, which helped students keep attentive. For instance, in the second observed class, Kevin said, “Eyes on me,” and

his students replied, “Eyes on you.” With this simple classroom routine, Kevin successfully gained students’ attention.

In the second interview, Kevin mentioned that he also learned, “Names are important” from the workshop. Teachers needed to remember students’ names to the best they could; therefore, Kevin made the effort to memorize students’ Chinese names. In the workshop, student-teacher relationships were also highly emphasized. When teachers called their students by “Number 2,” “This one,” “That one,” a sense of detachment developed. With this, Kevin started to reflect on his relationships with students, and he endeavored to build up a positive relationship. According to the researcher’s observation, most of Kevin’s students deemed Kevin as a kind and friendly teacher; they enthusiastically called Kevin’s name when they see him, during recess or in class.

When asked the question, “How do you interact with students whose English proficiency is high, average, and basic, respectively, in your class?” Kevin mentioned, I learned in the workshop held by School A that teachers should not level students according to their English proficiency. In addition, teachers needed to constantly emphasize, “The higher-achievers have to help the lower-achievers.” ... I told my students to help each other. Therefore, when I grouped students, I did not insist that every group had a higher-achiever or a lower-achiever. I believe, “Group students randomly” is better. (10/16/2015)

Kevin did not label his students as higher-achievers or lower-achievers; instead, he insisted that students learn together and help each other. He took a student as an example. Sam (pseudonym) was particularly weak in English. In the first observed class, Kevin asked Sam, “How do you spell ‘zoo’?” Sam could not spell it, and Kevin whispered into Sam’s ear: “z-o-o.” Kevin said that he learned this strategy in the same

workshop that when students could not answer the question, the teacher could tell them the answer in a low voice or asked other students to offer help. Kevin claimed that it was a kind of learning when whispering answer to students and asking them to speak out, which made them feel that they could say the answer and finally learned it. By doing this, students learned to help each other and would not feel being excluded.

Beliefs and Classroom Practices

Table 4.3 summarizes Kevin's beliefs and classroom practices. The learning experiences includes graduate education, self-learning, and workshop. His beliefs as an English learner and a teacher are presented. Also, his classroom practices are put forward.

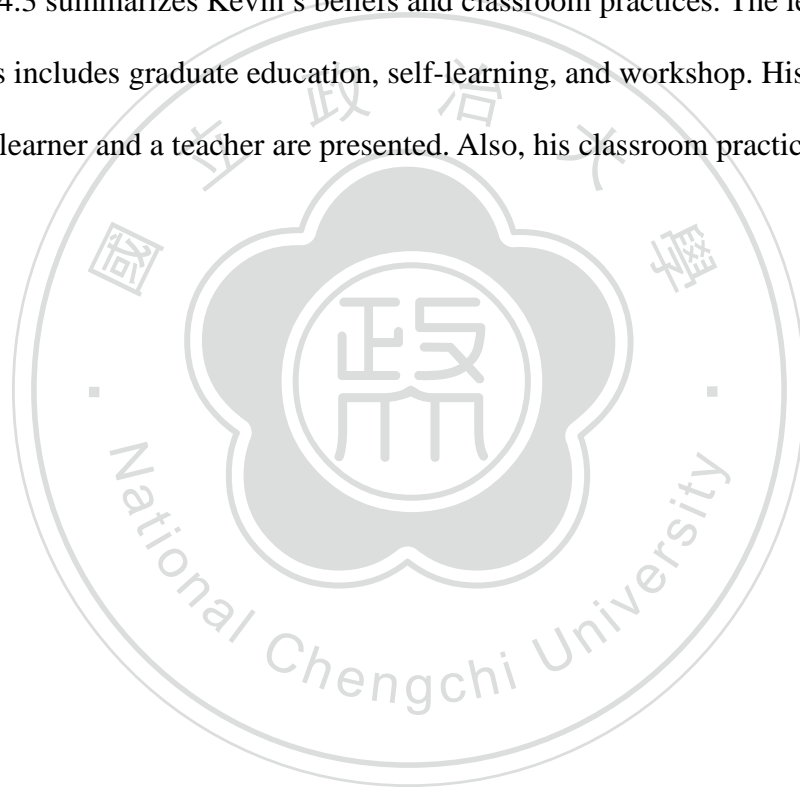


Table 4.3 Kevin's beliefs and classroom practices

Learning Experiences	Beliefs as an English learner and a teacher	Classroom practices
Graduate Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The training of speaking ability helped a lot in learning and teaching. • Teacher should immerse students in an English-only environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoke English as often as possible.
Self-Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four skills can all be developed and acquired by studying English-learning magazines. • Teacher should help students memorize vocabulary effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taught students how to apply phonics rules to memorize vocabulary.
Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher should encourage and respect students. • Teacher should build a positive student-teacher relationship. • Teacher should not level students according to their English proficiency. • Effective classroom language helps students keep attentive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whispered answers to students and helped them learn. • Made efforts to memorize students' names. • Group students randomly. • Gained students' attention with simple classroom routines.

Case 2: Betty

English Learning Experiences

Schooling Experiences

Betty is in her mid-thirties and has been teaching English for fifteen years. Her own journey in learning English started when she was a first grader in southern Taiwan. Her mother sent her to Language Institute A (pseudonym) to learn English; at that time, Betty felt stressed because she was the youngest student in the mixed-grade class, and she could hardly catch up with her classmates. She remembered that her first teacher was an English native speaker. He did not use a textbook, but he put a lot of emphasis on students' speaking ability. When Betty became a fourth grader and her classmates entered junior high schools, her teacher started to teach materials at junior high levels. The material was too difficult for Betty, and she was overwhelmed by the large amount of paper-pencil tests which included grammar and the KK phonetic symbols. The KK phonetic symbols were particularly beyond her comprehension. She was not interested in learning English and thought that this language was too difficult. Betty stopped attending Language Institute A until she entered junior high school. In junior high school, Betty performed well in English in the first semester because of her training in Language Institute A, but she could not in the second semester.

When asked about critical events during her junior high years, Betty mentioned that her English teacher, Ms. Ku, impressed her most. Ms. Ku asked students to spell words based on the KK phonetic symbols given on the blackboard. This task was too difficult. Betty said,

It left a lasting and strong impression on me. Ms. Ku asked me in front of the whole class, and I remembered she said, 'Betty, did you fall asleep? Why couldn't you spell such an easy word?'... The easy word 'restaurant'... Ms. Ku said this with a microphone and an amplifier. I felt

deeply and terribly embarrassed. (01/07/2017)

Betty started to think that English was difficult, and she determined to review and practice English by herself. She spent much time reviewing English and strived to memorize the KK phonetic symbols. She even marked Mandarin Phonetic Symbols on the side of new words to assist her in pronouncing words. After the embarrassing event, she was truly afraid of being asked to spell words again by Ms. Ku. She said,

Ms. Ku placed a high emphasis on the KK phonetic symbols. It was actually what junior high school teachers always did. They conducted tests on the KK phonetic symbols, and their students were required to write down vocabulary as well as these symbols,... including the primary stress and the secondary stress. If the stresses were placed wrongly or the symbols were written inaccurately, the students' scores would be deducted. That was the reason why I suddenly felt learning English was not as easy as I had imagined. (01/07/2017)

The turning point was in the third year of junior high school. Her English teacher at the time, Ms. Chen (pseudonym), gave tests on grammar and translation. Students needed to meet the high standards on the tests or they would be corporal punished on their palms. Fortunately, Betty found an effective way to memorize the KK phonetic symbols and thus she managed to learn English well. For Betty, English was not difficult at that time. She memorized the KK phonetic symbols and reviewed what she had learnt right after class; thus, she performed well in English tests and developed an interest in learning this language.

When Betty was in her senior high school, she thought English was the easiest subject among others, so much so that she gave up math and Chinese. She began to write reflections on the articles in the English-learning magazine, *Studio Classroom*; moreover, she always finished assignments such as translating sentences or articles

into English and listening to English CDs, no matter how hard they were. At the Joint College and University Entrance Examination (JCUEE), Betty performed best in English amongst all the subjects, and she believed she could study well in an English department. Betty successfully enrolled in an English department in a university in northern Taiwan.

In the college years, Betty was deeply influenced by one of her classmates, Jason (pseudonym). She remembered that some courses, for example, *Shakespeare*, *American Literature*, and *Comparative Literature*, were closely related to history and culture. She and her classmates were required to read a large amount of original English texts and books in a short period of time. Betty was overwhelmed by these reading assignments, while Jason overcame the difficulties in reading and was able to perform well in tests. She asked Jason about his tips, and he told her that he would read the Chinese versions of the assigned texts or books or watch related video clips to understand the background of history and culture, and then read original English books. Jason set a model of learning English for Betty, and she started to read original English novels and watch Western movies when she was in college.

As for the most impressive professor in college for Betty was Professor Chu (pseudonym), who taught *English Teaching* and *Original English Novels*, respectively in two semesters. She also encouraged students to read a lot of English books by saying, “Reading helps enormously in learning English.” The novels that she recommended included *Death of a Salesman*, and she would ask students to write reflections instead of giving presentations or holding tests. Betty did not feel pressured in Professor Chu’s class, and that was the first time she read original English novels.

Betty said that her English learning experiences in college years were deeply influenced by Jason and Professor Chu. Jason told her how to improve and enhance

her English proficiency by reading original English texts or books, while Professor Chu encouraged Betty to read original English novels. Both helped her read extensively.

Graduate Education

After university and having worked for several years, Betty determined to continue with graduate school in Children's English Education. She hoped not only to gain an M.A. degree and a salary raise but also to study the discipline that was really interesting to her. In her graduate school years, Betty was deeply impressed by a teaching demonstration class in which every student were required to apply a teaching method, mostly Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In this class, Betty learned a lot from her classmates. She claimed,

I learned a lot. The songs my classmates used were special and real nursery rhymes, not the ones we literature majors would use; these songs were spirited, energetic, and suitable for elementary school students...

We shared with each other, and I thought this demonstration class was the one I learned most in graduate school. I could apply what I had learned from the class to the teaching context in school in the years to come.

(09/20/2015)

Betty said she took many credits in graduate school. She said that the course *Teaching Materials and Teaching Methods* by Professor Chang (pseudonym) impressed her deeply. In this course, Betty was taught how to choose textbooks for elementary school students: Teachers should take a look at the "table of contents" page and examine whether the contents were too difficult or too easy for students. Moreover, Betty learned how to choose textbooks by evaluating words, structures, and graphic design, which could arouse students' interests and motivate them.

Another professor, Professor Hong (pseudonym), also impacted Betty's teaching a lot. Professor Hong believed that pronunciation was highly important, especially for those who were beginning learners. She said, "Teachers who are much experienced should teach lower graders; the higher graders are for novice teachers" (10/28/2015). Betty thought of Professor Hong's suggestion the most when she taught in Elementary School E. Students there lacked the knowledge of phonics rules. They could not memorize and use words appropriately; even worse, they could not make sentences or read articles. Betty said, "It's a vicious circle" (10/28/2015).

Self-Learning Experiences

Betty read original English novels and watched Western movies as her self-learning activity. When asked the question, "How does reading English novels facilitate your teaching?" She replied,

Reading is my hobby. It assists me in teaching reading... I place emphasis on reading and often ask students to make sentences. Take the word 'ten' for third graders as an example. I hope that they could make sentences, such as 'I'm ten years old.' I always encourage my students to make sentences... I think the reading load for them will get heavy in the future, and I hope my students can make sentences and read articles."

(10/28/2015)

Betty hoped that her students could cultivate the writing ability, and she believed that students needed to understand the sentence structure before they imitated sentences and wrote their own sentences. Therefore, she emphasized teaching sentence structure. She mentioned,

I usually write down sentences on the strips, cut down these strips, and ask students to unscramble the sentences. I want them to understand the

sentence structure and I firmly believe that this activity will cultivate their ability to make sentences... As for the short passages and dialogues from the textbook, I ask students to circle the words they do not understand, and then I explain the meaning of these words. After my explanation, students are expected to make sentences by using these words. (01/07/2017)

Betty put considerable efforts on teaching reading because she loved reading original English novels, and she believed that to enhance students' reading ability was her responsibility. She asked students to imitate sentences, make sentences by themselves, and further write long paragraphs to tell stories.

In the second observed class, Betty asked students to make sentences which were based on the pictures projected on the screen. These pictures and sentences told a story which was actually a long paragraph provided in the workbook. Betty instructed her students to make sentences by giving hints and making gestures. In the interview conducted on the same day, Betty mentioned that the paragraphs in the workbook were getting longer and longer. For two thirds of her students, these paragraphs were too difficult to understand. For the students who had difficulty reading, she separated the paragraphs into several parts, which could make them easier to comprehend. Betty mentioned, "I hope by doing so, I can help students understand long paragraphs, and I expect them not to consider learning English an extra burden" (10/28/2015).

On the other hand, Betty's interests of watching Western movies assisted her to teach students in learning daily English and understanding different cultures. In the additional interview, she wrote,

Great movies really inspire me. The main reason I love watching movies is the coverage of English use. Through movies, I can see how English native speakers use words, how they pronounce words, and how they

interact with each other. Different countries have their own cultures, and when I am learning a language, I am learning its culture. This is important for me to use these cultural materials in my class. According to my experiences, most primary school students are curious, and do not like to be lectured... Thanks to the plots of the English novels and the Western movies, there are lots of interesting culture issues and English usage I can share with my students. (07/01/2016)

Betty believed that the materials provided in original English novels and Western movies helped her enormously in classroom management. Some students were talkative, noisy, and tended to interrupt her in class. She realized that these students loved to listen to stories in her class. As long as Betty told stories, the whole class became attentive. These stories came from the original English novels she had read and the Western movies she had watched. Her students always reminded Betty of 'the story time,' and she told stories for five minutes before the class dismissed. She mentioned,

I share with my students what I read in original English novels and watch in Western movies. The reason I do this is that I love novels and movies, and I share the stories with my students in order to bridge the gap between them and me. Moreover, telling stories help effective classroom management. (01/07/2017)

Betty successfully kept her students attentive in her class. In addition, her students thought that Betty cared about them and was willing to share her life experiences with them. They thought of Betty as a supportive English teacher.

In conclusion, Betty continued her self-learning by reading original English novels and watching Western movies, which facilitated her teaching in writing, reading, and classroom management. She placed high emphasis on students' reading

and writing abilities, and she shared stories in original English novels and Western movies with her students.

Table 4.4 summarizes Betty's schooling and self-learning experiences. Betty developed reading original English novels as self-learning activity when she was in university.



Table 4.4 Summary of Betty's schooling and self-learning experiences

Stage		Schooling experiences	Self-Learning experiences
Before graduate school	Elementary School	Felt stressed and overwhelmed due to the difficult lessons offered by teachers in Language Institute A	Started to learn the KK phonetic symbols and grammar Studied materials at junior high levels
	Junior High School	At first, she performed well in English Then, she felt English difficult due to the KK phonetic symbols In the 3 rd year, she gained confidence and developed interest in learning English	Strived to memorize vocabulary and the KK phonetic symbols Spent a lot of time reviewing and practicing English at home by herself
	Senior High School	Wrote reflections on the articles in the English-learning magazine, ' <i>Studio Classroom</i> ' Finished assignments such as translation between English and Chinese and listened to English CDs Deemed English as the easiest subject among all Put lots of efforts in learning English	Studied the English-learning magazine, ' <i>Studio Classroom</i> ' and wrote reflections Translated sentences or articles Listened to English CDs

	University	Learned how to improve English by reading original English texts, books, and novels	Started to read original English novels
During graduate school		Learned how to apply CLT in teaching and how to choose qualified textbooks Learned teaching strategies, techniques, and methods	Stopped reading original English novels due to limited time Watched English news to sharpen listening skill
After graduate school		N/A	Reads original English novels Watches Western movies Uses website resources

English Teaching Experiences

At the time when data were collected for this study in 2018, Betty had been teaching English for eleven years. She taught English in four public elementary schools. Her experiences of teaching English are shown in Table 4.5 and further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 4.5 Betty's Experiences of Teaching English

Time	Schools	Students' Ages	Duration
2008-2012	Elementary School B (City A)	7-12	5 years
2012-2014	Elementary School C (City A)	7, 11,12	2 years
2014-2015	Elementary School D (City A)	9-10	1 year
2015-2018	Elementary School E (City B)	7-12	3 years

Teaching in Elementary Schools

Betty taught in Elementary School B in a rural area in northern Taiwan, and she thought this teaching experience influenced her profoundly. In the second year when Betty was in Elementary School B, a new principal, Mr. Chen (pseudonym), arrived. Mr. Chen placed a high value on teachers' and students' performance in all English competitions. It was demanding for Betty and her colleagues because they had few students and limited resources. Mr. Chen asked Betty and another teacher to instruct and prepare students for an English competition, and they succeeded. Betty suddenly realized that these English competitions could help her achieve self-confidence and gained valuable experiences. Betty was then required to participate in every English competition sponsored by the government. Although entering these competitions took much time and efforts, Betty said she was grateful for Mr. Chen. She claimed,

I partly agreed with Mr. Chen when he said, "If you are willing to make

efforts to perform well in the competitions, this means that you worked hard. And in the process of preparing for and participating in the competitions, students will learn from these experiences.” (09/20/2015)

Betty started to improve her reading ability by herself from the year she became a formal English teacher. This had a lot to do with Mr. Chen and what he had said something to belittle the teachers. He thought that the teachers in his elementary school lacked the abilities to teach. With this, many teachers chose to transfer to other schools, but unfortunately Betty did not succeed in gaining an opportunity to transfer. She then decided to develop her reading ability in order to survive, and she realized that she could learn English by herself. Betty started with reading original English novels, and she loved thrillers especially. Betty wrote,

Reading original English novels and watching Western movies are the best part of my life. I am bathed in the interesting plots, and I can learn how to use the words as well as improve my listening ability step by step... As a primary English teacher, I should not stay where I am and try to harness my professional knowledge to bring students more different learning experiences. (07/01/2016, Original text, unedited)

In 2012, Betty transferred to a middle-sized elementary school (Elementary School C), and again in 2014, to a large-sized elementary school (Elementary School D). In these two schools (C and D), Betty enjoyed the benefits that the English teaching team (her colleagues who also taught English) offered, and she could learned a lot from her peers. For example, she learned how other teachers prepared for lessons, how they designed worksheets, how they made teaching aids, and how they set exam questions. Betty stated,

I believe that to work and learn in a team is important. After I transferred to Elementary School D, I started to change my teaching method. In fact,

I would like to change teaching environments although I also need to adapt to different colleagues and students. By transferring to different environments, I can adopt different viewpoints and learn from other teachers. (09/20/2015)

Betty preferred cooperating with other English teachers, and she thought that working with peers provides higher quality in teaching than working alone. She said, “Two heads are better than one. Not all of us are top teachers, but when we gather and brainstorm together, we become the best teachers” (01/07/2017).

When she transferred to Elementary School E (a small-sized school) in 2015, Betty was the only Non-Native English Speaking Teacher (NNEST) in the school. As the section chief of curriculum, Betty was in charge of such work as registering and developing curriculum, which were usually handled by several personnel or teachers in large-sized schools. In the office, her colleagues were the Director of Academic Affairs and other section chiefs, and her office desk was always piled with official documents. Every teacher in the office was busy with official responsibilities instead of just teaching-related work. Betty was afraid of getting regressed in English teaching; therefore, she participated in English-teaching related workshops as often as possible, and strived to learn from other teachers in the workshops.

When asked about her primary focus in teaching, Betty mentioned that classroom management and students with weak English proficiency were her main concerns. For these two concerns, Betty set rules for students and encouraged them to help each other. She said,

At the first class, I told students that I would give them a worksheet every week, and I hoped they could hand in punctually. In class, they could drink water, but not beverage. Before they left the classroom, they were supposed to push their chairs in. They needed to raise their hands if they

wanted to speak in class, and could not interrupt Teacher Betty in class. Moreover, I told students to help each other. The higher-achievers were required to help others; intermediate students could help their classmates as well. I highlighted the importance of team learning. (01/07/2017)

Betty instructed students to learn English by applying induction. She taught the material from the textbooks by the following three steps. The first step was that she listed vocabulary on the blackboard, and taught the students how to learn and reviewed words by phonics rules. For example, in the first observed class, Betty wrote twenty-four words on the blackboard before the class began, including *brave*, *rainy*, *day*, *bee*, *east*, *bike*, *pie*, and *cry*. Then in class, she raised a question, “Which letters are not sounded?” She asked students to cross out unsounded letters. For example, the *e* for *brave*, the *i* for *rainy*, the *e* for *bike*, and the *e* for *pie*. After this process, Betty concluded with a phonics rule: When two vowel letters (a, e, i, o, u) come together, the second one is not sounded. This is an example of how she tried to help students apply phonics rules to memorize vocabulary.

The second step was introducing sentences and dialogues in the textbooks. In the first observed class, Betty paired students up and gave each pair a sentence strip. There was one or two blanks in the sentences, and students were expected to fill in the blanks after Betty had read a paragraph from the workbook. Betty asked students to put the strips on the blackboard sequentially when she read the paragraph the third time, and then asked students to volunteer reading the sentences on the blackboard. According to the sentence strips on the blackboard, Betty raised several questions about the main idea of the paragraph. Through this activity, Betty acquainted students with the strategy of gleaning information from a long paragraph and identifying the main idea. After the activity, students could easily answer the questions in the workbook and make sentences. Thus, Betty put a lot of emphasis on students’ reading

ability, and taught them how to read long paragraphs.

The third step was that Betty asked students to make sentences by using words from the textbook; this helped them understand how to use the words. For example, in the second observed class, Betty gave each pair two sheets of paper which included several pictures and gave each student a blank sheet of paper. She asked the students to make sentences according to the given pictures and demonstrated how to make sentences according to the first picture. The characters and objects in these pictures were related and thus formed a storyline. Students were required to write down sentences on the blank paper. Betty helped the students make sentences by themselves, and taught them how to use words in the textbook. She did not only read paragraphs, explain words or translate; instead, she put in considerable efforts on students' ability to make sentences.

By applying the above-mentioned three steps, Betty helped students improve their reading and writing abilities, especially for lower-achievers. Betty said that in the beginning of the semester, these students could not pronounce words accurately, and they stared at the words in a daze. However, they had improved after practicing for a period of time, and Betty's teaching goal was that these students could link sounds with letters at the end of the semester. Betty wrote,

Although they were sixth graders, some of the students still did not know the phonics rules. Based on my teaching objective, they had to be able to pronounce those basic words, and I also provided them with worksheets in order to create more practicing opportunities. (07/01/2016)

Additionally, Betty usually divided students up into groups or paired them up. She thought that students' abilities to cooperate with each other was important. In the second observed class, the students were asked to discuss in pairs or in groups. Betty cleverly integrated an award system with a Bingo game to motivate students. She also

encouraged students by giving awards or candies. Betty helped students learn with their team members and strived to create a learning environment which students cooperated with each other.

Betty reduced the writing load of the lower-achievers. She did not want to put these students under pressure; moreover, she thought that English was not a must in an EFL context. Some students might not have the aptitude for learning this language. Thus, Betty did not want to force these students to write too much. She claimed, “I reduce, or simplify the homework for the lower-achievers. If they become interested in English in the future, they will learn it on their own” (09/20/2015).

In 2015, Betty transferred to Elementary School E, and she had to take over additional administrative work. This tedious administrative work often occupied her time. Furthermore, she was often interrupted by the administrative work and could not have a complete period of time to prepare for lessons. To solve this problem, Betty forced herself to stay in the English classroom in the morning, concentrating on preparing for classes. She said,

I need to teach students from third graders to sixth graders. No other English teachers can help me go over exam papers. In addition, I have to record listening test questions by myself. How can this kind of life bring good teaching quality?” (09/20/2015)

Betty was too busy after work and could hardly watch TV. Elementary School E was a small-sized school, and there were only two section chiefs: Section Chief of Curriculum and Section Chief of Student Activities. Betty served as the Section Chief of Curriculum, and she had to deal with all the curriculum-related administrative work. In the interviews, Betty revealed that she was helpless in the teaching context which Elementary School E offered, and she thought that the government had responsibility to solve this problem.

In addition to the overwhelming administrative work, Betty needed to hold various activities, and attended numerous workshops that were unrelated to English teaching, such as Hakka language teaching workshops and scientific teaching workshops. She was extremely bothered by these activities and workshops. She remarked, “I think I have role conflicts. I am expected to take over administrative work and teach English at the same time” (10/28/2015).

Betty wrote in the additional interview,

The school policy doesn't help me at all. I feel like I was stuck in a bog, no one can pull me out. Totally stuck by all the government papers, school-based activities unrelated to English teaching, and administrative work, I barely have time to prepare lessons for my students. Sometimes I feel very sorry for them. (07/01/2016)

Workshop Experiences

Betty mentioned that three workshops that she had attended truly impressed her. The first was on the issue of accent neutralization, which helped Betty pronounce accurately, particular how to properly position her tongue when pronouncing different sounds. By attending this workshop, Betty developed the capability to teach students pronunciation.

The second impressive workshop for Betty was on English classroom learning community, in which Betty learned the strategies to teach students reading and listening. The teacher who conducted the workshop showed her test papers and her students' workbooks to demonstrate how she developed English classroom learning community and how to instruct English reading in a learning community. Betty mentioned,

I think the presenter did an outstanding job in designing reading activities,

and I adapt her teaching materials for my students. Also, the techniques that she designed listening assignments inspire me. I think I benefit a lot from this workshop. (12/16/2015)

Finally, it was a creative teaching aids workshop, in which Betty learned how to reuse the teaching aids which textbook publishers provided. Before attending this workshop, Betty had always thrown away the teaching aids that came with the textbooks. After the workshop, she started to reuse these teaching aids, including the sentence strips and the flash cards. For example, she would have students unscramble sentences in order to understand sentence structures. With these teaching aids, Betty did not need to type and print extra worksheets; she could save time and resources. Betty continued to participate in various English teaching workshops held in her city as she strived to learn from other English teachers.

Beliefs and Classroom Practices

Table 4.6 summarizes Betty's beliefs and classroom practices. The learning experiences includes graduate education, self-learning, and workshop. Her beliefs as an English learner and a teacher are presented. Also, her classroom practices are put forward.

Table 4.6 Betty's beliefs and classroom practices

Learning Experiences	Beliefs as an English learner and a teacher	Classroom practices
Graduate Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studying in Children's English Education benefit teaching. • Teaching techniques, strategies, and methods helped teachers in designing contents and implementing practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied induction when instructing students. • Acquainted students with the strategy of gleaning information from paragraphs and identifying main ideas.
Self-Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading novels benefit teaching reading and writing. • Sharing the stories in novels was a strategy to manage classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked students to make sentences according to the given pictures and demonstrated how to make sentences.
Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing English classroom learning community helped students learn to cooperate with each other. • Reusing teaching aids helped save time and resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked students to discuss in pairs or in groups. • Helped students learn with their team members and created an environment which students cooperated with each other. • Used sentence strips to fill in blanks or unscramble sentences.

CHAPTER 5

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is to address the research questions through a cross-case analysis. First, the connections between the two teachers' learning experiences and their teaching are addressed. Second, the two teachers' beliefs and their manifestation in the classroom are discussed. Finally, the two teachers' reflections on their learning experiences, teacher beliefs and classroom practices are presented. Discussions are provided according to the research questions and the themes.

R. 1. What kind of schooling and professional development experiences related to English teaching have the two Taiwanese elementary school teachers had, particularly before, during, and after the graduate school?

The data gathered from the two participants revealed that English teachers' learning experiences and their teaching are dynamically connected. Language teachers' learning experiences include their schooling, graduate education, workshop, and self-learning experiences. These schooling and professional development experiences help teachers reflect on their own learning and teaching. Teacher learning, as a foundation for teachers to attain betterment in their teaching, is a mirror for teachers to reflect themselves. In the two teachers' childhood English learning experiences, both claimed that they were passive English learners: Learning was to fulfill their parents' expectations. In their teens, they developed to be active English learners and strived to learn English diligently and autonomously. In their graduate school years, they decided what to pursue in English learning and developed beliefs in how to teach English properly. Teacher education, particularly graduate school, played an ancillary role in the two teachers' English learning journey and functioned as a support in their teaching life. For example, in Kevin's case, his study in English

Literature in graduate school helped him read extensively and develop the habit of studying English-learning magazines, which led to his teaching belief in emphasizing vocabulary learning. In Betty's case, her study in Children's English Education helped her learn effective teaching techniques and develop the belief in emphasizing reading and writing abilities. Both teachers claimed that graduate education helped a lot in their learning experiences, and Betty said that she benefited tremendously in English teaching during her graduate school years. Their graduate education thus provided dissimilar opportunities to develop English learning abilities, offered different perspectives on English teaching approaches, and helped strengthen divergent beliefs on English teaching methods. Teacher learning functions as a basis for their teaching as well as serves as a mirror to reflect themselves.

This finding is in accordance with those of the previous studies on teacher learning (Richardson, 1996). Richardson (1996) claimed that personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge were three categories of experiences described as influencing the development of beliefs and knowledge about teaching (p. 105). Teacher learning in this study included schooling, graduate education, workshop, and self-learning, which impacted the two participants' teacher beliefs and classroom practices.

The research finding also echoes what Hoban et al. (2007) claimed that "self-study can help teachers to better understand themselves as learners and thus help them to understand and manage the dynamic processes of teacher learning to sustain professional development and improve the quality of children's learning" (p. 49). Teacher learning is a dynamic process, which help teachers reflect themselves and better their teaching. In this study, both participants developed and sustained their own self-learning activities, which in turn impacted their teaching.

R. 2. How do the two teachers think of themselves as English teachers and manifest their English teacher beliefs in the classroom?

Both participants were experienced English teachers and their beliefs manifested in their classroom actions. In Kevin's and Betty's stories, both teachers' beliefs promote their classroom practices. Kevin believes that vocabulary was the most important element in learning a language and thought of himself as "a walking dictionary," which not only helped him pursue self-learning experiences by studying English-learning magazines, but also affirmed his decisions to supply his students with voluminous words and phrases. Betty, on the other hand, held the belief that to learn a language well one needed to read and write well. Her belief led to her position as a facilitator of reading and writing skills as well as her self-learning experiences of reading original English novels. Through this study, it is clear that the two teachers' English learning experiences strengthened their beliefs; furthermore, their beliefs impacted their classroom practices.

Teacher beliefs provide a strong basis for their decision-making, which impacted their classroom practices. The two participants developed different self-learning activities, which in turn construct dissimilar teacher beliefs and therefore adopted distinct teaching methods. The two teachers' schooling, graduate education, workshop, and self-learning experiences have been presented in the previous chapter. Their negative young childhood English learning experiences forced them to be passive learners, but both developed to be active English learners when they achieved academic success in their junior high years. Kevin and Betty started to learn English for themselves, and developed the habit of studying English-learning magazines and reading original English novels, respectively. Moreover, they held dissimilar beliefs on learning and teaching English. Kevin put emphasis on the importance of

vocabulary while Betty highlighted the significance of reading and writing skills. In Kevin's class, he supplied a tremendous amount of vocabulary and asked his students to jot down words and phrases. He googled pictures of these words to help students understand. Moreover, he applied phonics rules to assist students in memorizing vocabulary. On the other hand, in Betty's class, she focused on developing students' reading and writing skills. She adopted strategies to help students read and write: Using phonics rules to learn new words, identifying key words and sight words, glean information from passages and understanding the main ideas, and making sentences and developing into paragraphs. Obviously, the two teachers affirmed different teacher beliefs and held dissimilar assumptions toward English learning and teaching based on their own preferred English learning activities, which in turn impacted their classroom practices.

Language teachers are encouraged to reflect on their teacher beliefs and examine their classroom actions in order to help themselves attain betterment in their teaching. In the present study, both participants reflected themselves in the additional interviews, which functioned as expressions of their viewpoints on teacher beliefs. In the additional interviews, both participants had second thoughts on how they thought of themselves as English teachers and how they manifested teacher beliefs in their classrooms. Kevin's emphasis on supplying students with tremendous words and phrases was a strong belief based on his own learning and teaching experiences while Betty's strategies to help students develop reading and writing abilities embodied her belief that reading and writing were important. Their classroom practices were the embodiment of their teacher beliefs. This finding is consistent with previous studies on the relationship of language teacher beliefs and classroom practices (Farrell and Ives, 2015; Farrell and Vos, 2018; Karimi and Nazari, 2017). Farrell and Ives (2015) indicated that language teacher beliefs provided a strong basis for his/her classroom

practices. Farrell and Vos (2018) claimed that “teacher’s classroom practices are a strong reflection of her professed beliefs” (p. 13). Karimi and Nazari (2017) pointed out that teacher beliefs form the basis of what to be educated, and further inform teachers’ practices. In this study, both participants’ teacher beliefs function as a solid basis for their classroom practices while their classroom practices serve as a strong reflection of their teacher beliefs.

R. 3. How are these teachers’ beliefs and experiences related to their formal and informal professional development?

Coldwell (2017) defined teachers’ professional development as “formal and informal support and activities that are designed to help teachers develop as professionals” (p. 189). Formal learning takes place in a “structured and organized” environment (Grosemans et al., 2015). In this study, the two teachers’ formal learning includes schooling, graduate education, and workshop experiences. Marsick and Volpe (1999) claimed that informal learning emerges in an “unstructured” environment and throughout people’s daily activities and routines. Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex (2005) conceptualized informal teacher learning as professional growth, which is “spontaneous, contextual process that positions teachers as independent self-directed learner” (p. 428). Teachers’ informal learning includes self-learning such as Kevin’s studying English-learning magazines and Betty’s reading original English novels in this study.

Teacher learning experiences enhance his/her teacher beliefs, which defined as “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic materials to be taught” (Kagan, 1992, p. 65). Teachers’ assumptions on the most effective method to facilitate their students’ English learning impact their classroom practices as well as the teaching contents they provide. In Kevin’s case, he

learned English by studying English-learning magazines and building a tremendous amount of vocabulary in his memory. He also assumed that the best method for students' English learning was to memorize vocabulary as much as possible. On the other hand, Betty learned English by reading original English novels and believed that students' reading and writing skills were important. She indeed managed to help students develop these two skills in her class. The research finding is congruent with what Richards and Lockhart (1994) claimed that "teacher beliefs about learning may be based on their training, their teaching experience, or may go back to their own experience as language learners" (p. 34). Teachers' training, including graduate education and workshop experiences, teachers' teaching experiences, and their learning experiences, including schooling, graduate education, and self-learning, all build a basis for their teacher beliefs. In this research, both participants' beliefs about English learning and teaching were based on their own learning experiences as well as their classroom practices. How they thought of themselves as English teachers would impact their classroom actions, and further firmed their determinations to sustain self-learning activities.

A model of English teachers' learning experiences based on the results of this study is presented in figure 5.1. In this model, the three points—teacher learning, teacher beliefs, and teachers' classroom practices are dynamically connected. Teacher learning, including the experiences based on schooling, graduate education, workshop, and self-learning, affirms the teacher beliefs in the best method to learn English. The method that teachers learn English and the activities that they involve in to sustain self-learning foster their teacher beliefs; these beliefs functioned as a filter through which their decisions were made and their classroom practices were adopted. These classroom actions help teachers reflect themselves as a learner as well as a teacher, and how to attain betterment in their teaching.

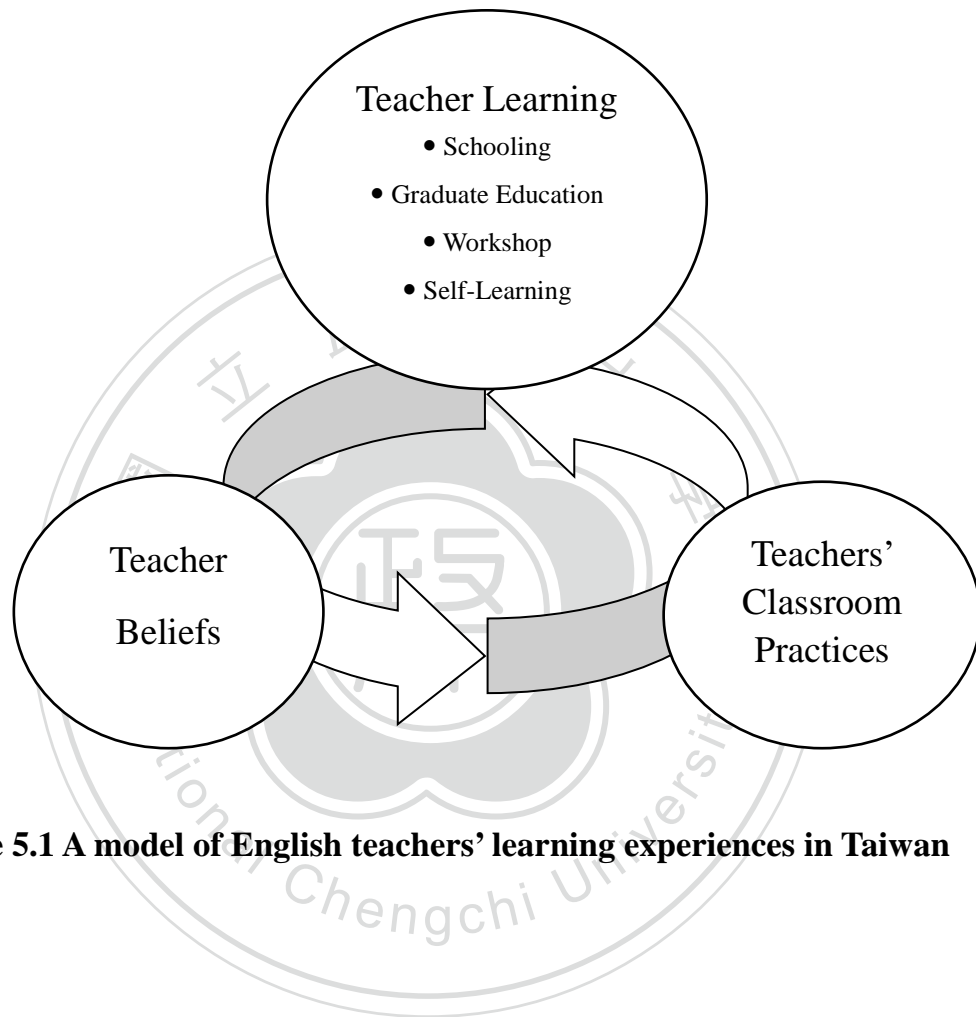


Figure 5.1 A model of English teachers' learning experiences in Taiwan



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the two Taiwanese English teachers' learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices. The two teachers' reflections on formal and informal learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and their overall classroom practices are presented in the previous chapters. In the final chapter, a summary of the study is first presented. Suggestions, the limitations of the study, and direction for future research are put forward subsequently.

Summary of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the connections between the two Taiwanese English teachers' learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices. The study adopted a qualitative case study method with semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and additional interviews as data and the data collected were analyzed employing a holistic-content approach. The research findings indicate that the two teachers' learning experiences, teacher beliefs, and their classroom practices are dynamically connected. The two teachers' schooling, graduate education, workshop, and self-learning experiences formed their learning experiences, and these professional development experiences help them develop and confirm teacher beliefs, which in turn impacted their decision-making in the classroom. In other words, the two teachers' English learning and teaching experiences constructed their beliefs, and further impacted their classroom practices. These teacher beliefs constructed from the teachers' learning and teaching experiences play a crucial role in their classroom actions. Teachers' reflections on their learning and teaching help them attain betterment in the journey of being an English teacher.

Suggestions

The present study contributes to the understanding of the two English teachers' experiences and life stories. Three suggestions are provided from the findings of the study. First, for English teachers, developing and sustaining self-learning activities is crucial to maintain informal professional development. Teachers are encouraged to cultivate the habit of self-learning in English, and these learning activities in turn help them in teaching. The spontaneous and independent self-learning experiences emerged in an unstructured environment help teachers understand themselves, reflect on their own learning and teaching, and improve students' learning quality.

Second, for government and authorities in Taiwan, assuming the responsibility to hold and organize workshops that aim to assist English teachers in developing strategies, devising techniques, updating skills, designing materials, and providing tips to manage classrooms is a prerequisite. Both teachers claimed that the workshop experiences were helpful, and practical and useful workshops benefited their teaching considerably.

Third, for graduate schools, the curriculums on English teaching theories, methods, and strategies are suggested to offer and implement in English-related departments. These curriculums may be helpful for students who aim to be English teachers and assist them in assigning the value and importance of education. Moreover, for teacher training programs, teachers' learning experiences are advised to take into consideration when theories are introduced and practices are adopted.

Limitations of the Study

Two limitations of the present study are addressed in this section. First, this case study only revealed the reflections of two English teachers. A broad understanding of English teachers' learning experiences will be gained if more cases are investigated.

Second, due to the limited time, budget, and human power, the researcher was not able to observe the participants in various contexts across different stages in their learning journey. The data collection of the participants' learning experiences primarily depended on the semi-structure interviews and the additional interviews, while their classroom practices mainly relied on two classroom observations. Some of the information the participants provided was probably affected by their subjective memories. If the data from teachers with more diverse perspectives could be collected, more valuable insights might be revealed on the topic of teacher learning.

Direction for Future Research

This study has demonstrated the connections between teacher learning, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices through investigating two English teachers' experiences. Although the present study was fruitful, two suggestions are provided for future study. First, narrative data from the two participants are advised to help gain a whole picture of the participants' thoughts and feelings about their reflections on learning and teaching. Second, more classroom observations are suggested to help gain richer data to perceive the two participants' teaching methods and strategies.

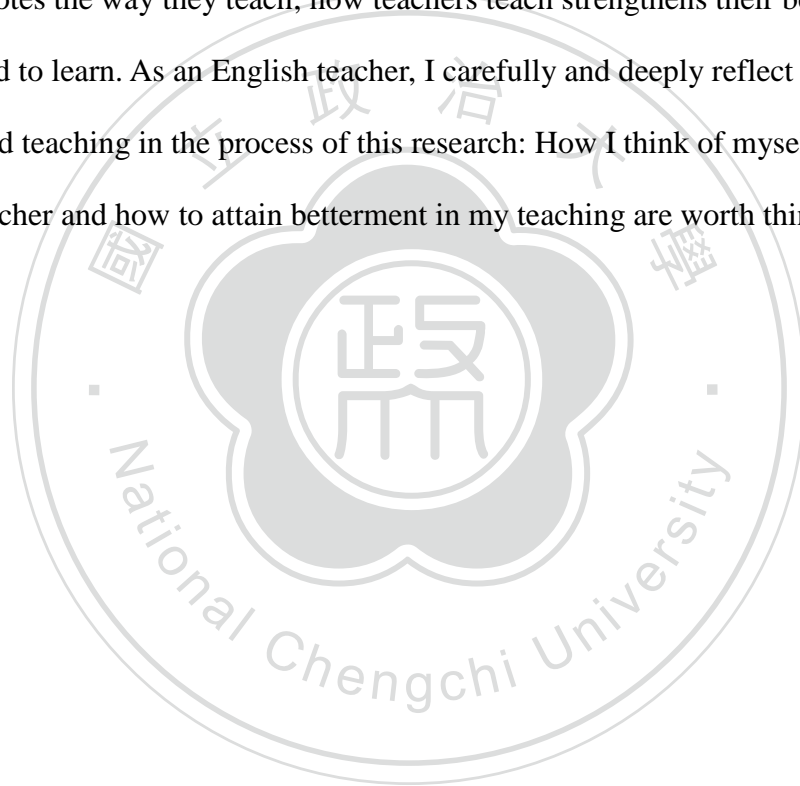
Conclusion

I would like to use Farrell's (2017) words to conclude this research journey:

I then realized that it is difficult to separate the personal from the professional because this is what makes us human in the classroom and in fact, makes all the differences as we interact with our students. In other words, I believe "who I am is how I teach"; the person (teacher) cannot be separated from the craft (teaching). Thus, when reflecting on "who I

am as a language teacher educator” I have to look deep inside myself at the personal and what has shaped my roles over the years. (p. 183)

Farrell’s words help me reflect on my role as a language teacher and try to look deep inside myself from diverse facets. In the journey of being an English teacher, learning is a requisite to keep teaching updated. From Kevin’s and Betty’s stories, we understand that learning and teaching are two sides of the same coin. How teachers learn promotes the way they teach; how teachers teach strengthens their beliefs on the best method to learn. As an English teacher, I carefully and deeply reflect on my own learning and teaching in the process of this research: How I think of myself as an English teacher and how to attain betterment in my teaching are worth thinking seriously.



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Appendix A: Questions for the Interviews with Kevin

English Learning Experiences

1. Can you please tell me about your experiences of learning English from childhood to this day? Maybe start with the period when you realized the existence of English.
2. Did you have any memorable English learning experience from childhood to graduate education?
3. How do you describe the impacts of this experience? (For example, how to construct an attitude or belief as an English learner or teacher?)
4. Why did you resolve to be an English teacher?
5. How did you describe the process to be a teacher? Can you tell me about any memorable experience?
6. Have you ever encountered any memorable experiences or stories during your teaching career?
7. How did these experiences or stories impact on you? What beliefs or attitudes did you hold as an English learner or teacher afterwards?
8. Why did you choose the graduate school?
9. What learning experiences impressed you during graduate school?
10. How do you continue the learning in English or English teaching after graduate school? (Please give examples.)
11. Why do you choose to learn in this way?
12. What do the learning in graduate school impact on your job?
13. Please tell me about your English teaching belief. What do you expect your students to learn in your teaching?
14. How do you instruct your students to learn English? (Please give examples.)

15. How did the teaching in university occurred?
16. What is the teaching circumstance?
17. How do the experience teaching in university impact on the attitude or method that you teach in elementary school?
18. How do you prepare yourself when you confront different students?
19. How do you develop to be a good teacher every day?

Interview After the First Observation

1. Please talk about the teaching objectives of the class.
2. Were the teaching objectives of the whole class attained? Please talk about the reason if any of them was not achieved.
3. What were the teaching goals of the activities?
4. Were the teaching goals of the activities attained? Please talk about the reason if any of them was not achieved.
5. Please tell me about your English teaching style or method. Can you give examples?
6. In the first interview, you mentioned the methods to instruct students: using whole English, supplying as much vocabulary as possible, and googling pictures. Did you apply these methods in the class? What is the assistance for students in learning English?
7. Do you want to make any adjustments in your teaching content, method, or style?
If yes, what will you want to change?
8. In the first interview, you mentioned that you studied many English-learning magazines. How did the self-learning activity benefit you in the class?
9. In the class, how did you interact with students with advanced-level, intermediate-level, and lower-level, respectively? Please give examples.

10. Do you want to make any adjustments in your interaction with students? If yes, what will you want to change?
11. In the class, how did you group students (whole-class/ group up/ team up/ pair up/ one-on-one/ others)? Can you explain why these grouping methods were applied?
12. What impacts did the experiences during graduate school exert on you in the class? Can you give examples?
13. Did the experiences that teaching in university have impacts on the class? If yes, can you give examples?
14. In the class, how did you think of yourself as a teacher?

Interview After the Second Observation

1. Please talk about the teaching objectives of the class.
2. Were the teaching objectives attained? Please talk about the reason if any of them was not achieved.
3. How did you prepare for class? How did you design the teaching contents and procedure? What were your concerns or considerations?
4. Please talk about the most satisfied aspect in your English class?
5. What is the most challenged or difficult aspect in your English class?
6. As an English teacher, what do you think the advantage of yourself?
7. What is the disadvantage of yourself as an English teacher?
8. Can you describe the successful or positive experience in your English teaching career? Under what circumstance?
9. Can you describe the unpleasant or negative experience in your English teaching career? Under what circumstance?
10. Please talk about the ideal, successful, or high-quality English class in your mind.
11. What content or activity do your students get interested in your class? Did you

present it in today's class? Why did you think this content or activity intrigued your students?

12. Please talk about the most impressive workshop experience. How did the workshop impact on you?
13. Please talk about your thoughts on the four skills— reading, listening, writing, and speaking.
14. Please talk about your thoughts on the grammar and vocabulary in English teaching.
15. Please tell me how you treat students' mistakes and errors. When will you correct students?
16. Can you talk about your classroom management strategies? What techniques do you apply to different students' ages? For example, for higher graders and middle graders, respectively.
17. Please talk about your thoughts on assessments and evaluations based on your English learning and teaching experiences.
18. Please talk about your experiences on learning the second foreign language (for example, Japanese or German). What are the similarities and differences between learning this language and learning English? Do you have any learning methods or strategies?
19. Please talk about the impacts of the learning experiences in graduate school on your teaching.
20. Please talk about your experience of going abroad. When? Where? With whom? What happened?
21. Please share your thoughts about studying magazines these days. What materials or contents do you like or are inspiring?

Appendix B: Questions for the Interviews with Betty

English Learning Experiences

1. Can you please tell me about your experiences of learning English from childhood to this day? Maybe start with the period when you realized the existence of English.
2. Did you have any memorable English learning experience from childhood to graduate education?
3. How do you describe the impacts of this experience? (For example, how to construct an attitude or belief as an English learner or teacher?)
4. Why did you resolve to be an English teacher?
5. How did you describe the process to be a teacher? Can you tell me about any memorable experience?
6. Have you ever encountered any memorable experiences or stories during your teaching career?
7. How did these experiences or stories impact on you? What beliefs or attitudes did you hold as an English learner or teacher afterwards?
8. Why did you choose the graduate school?
9. What learning experiences impressed you during graduate school?
10. How do you continue the learning in English or English teaching after graduate school? (Please give examples.)
11. Why do you choose to learn in this way?
12. What do the learning in graduate school impact on your job?
13. Please tell me about your English teaching belief. What do you expect your students to learn in your teaching?
14. How do you instruct your students to learn English? (Please give examples.)

15. Please talk about your thoughts on teaching in Elementary School E. What are the differences between teaching in City A and City B?
16. What is the current teaching circumstance?
17. How do the experience taking administrative work impact on the attitude or method that you teach in elementary school?
18. How do you prepare yourself when you confront different students?
19. How do you develop to be a good teacher every day?

Interview After the First Observation

1. Please talk about the teaching objectives of the class.
2. Were the teaching objectives of the whole class attained? Please talk about the reason if any of them was not achieved.
3. What were the teaching goals of the activities?
4. Were the teaching goals of the activities attained? Please talk about the reason if any of them was not achieved.
5. Please tell me about your English teaching style or method. Can you give examples?
6. In the first interview, you mentioned your methods to instruct students: 1. List vocabulary, review phonics, introduce sentences and dialogues, and make sentences. 2. Group work and cooperative learning. 3. Reduce the workload of lower-achievers. Did you apply these methods on the class? What is the assistance for students in learning English?
7. Do you want to make any adjustments in your teaching content, method, or style? If yes, what will you want to change?
8. In the first interview, you mentioned that you read original novels. How did the self-learning method benefit you in the class?

9. In the class, how did you interact with students with advanced-level, intermediate-level, and lower-level, respectively? Please give examples.
10. Do you want to make any adjustments in your interaction with students? If yes, what will you want to change?
11. In the class, how did you group students (whole-class/ group up/ team up/ pair up/ one-on-one/ others)? Can you explain why these methods were applied?
12. What impacts did the experiences during graduate school exert on you in the class? Can you give examples?
13. Did the experiences that taking administrative work have impacts on the class? If yes, can you give examples?
14. In the class, how did you think of yourself as a teacher?

Interview After the Second Observation

1. Please talk about the teaching objectives of the class.
2. Were the teaching objectives attained? Please talk about the reason if any of them was not achieved.
3. How did you prepare for class? How did you design the teaching contents and procedure? What were your concerns or considerations?
4. Please talk about the most satisfied aspect in your English class?
5. What is the most challenged or difficult aspect in your English class?
6. As an English teacher, what do you think the advantage of yourself?
7. What is the disadvantage of yourself as an English teacher?
8. Can you describe the successful or positive experience in your English teaching career? Under what circumstance?
9. Can you describe the unpleasant or negative experience in your English teaching career? Under what circumstance?

10. Please talk about the ideal, successful, or high-quality English class in your mind.
11. What content or activity do your students get interested in your class? Did you present it in today's class? Why did you think this content or activity intrigued your students?
12. Please talk about the most impressive workshop experience. How did the workshop impact on you?
13. Please talk about your thoughts on the four skills— reading, listening, writing, and speaking.
14. Please talk about your thoughts on the grammar and vocabulary in English teaching.
15. Please tell me how you treat students' mistakes and errors. When will you correct students?
16. Can you talk about your classroom management strategies? What techniques do you apply to different students' ages? For example, for higher graders and middle graders, respectively.
17. Please talk about your thoughts on assessments and evaluations based on your English learning and teaching experiences.
18. Please talk about your experiences on learning the second foreign language (for example, Japanese or German). What are the similarities and differences between learning this language and learning English? Do you have any learning methods or strategies?
19. Please talk about the impacts of the learning experiences in graduate school on your teaching.
20. Please talk about your experience of going abroad. When? Where? With whom? What happened?
21. Please share your thoughts about reading novels these days. What stories or plots

do you like or are inspiring?

The Forth Interview— A Supplement

1. In the first interview, you mentioned that you thought English was very difficult when in high grades; however, it became the easiest subject in the third year of junior high. How were the changes? Please talk about who, what, and how the changes occurred.
2. You mentioned that a teacher in the first year of junior high frustrated you significantly. The teacher asked students to spell vocabulary according to the KK phonetic symbols written on the blackboard. Did this teacher have other behaviors that impressed you? How did you overcome the difficulties? How did reviewing English at home help you learn English well?
3. Who or what events impacted on or helped you learn English when in university? How?
4. You mentioned that you are afraid of being regressing. Do you mean in the respect of English teaching or English learning? Why did you say so? You said that being afraid of regressing was relevant to the learning experiences in your childhood. What was the relevance?
5. How do you think of yourself as an English teacher? In the second interview, you mentioned that you are a demanding/stern teacher because some students think you give much homework. Please talk about why you think yourself as a demanding/stern English teacher. Please give examples.
6. You wrote,

I suddenly feel that I am the “big person” to them. I start to think about how to improve their basic abilities, start to focus on those slow learners, and start to learn to know what they need most. Now in my classroom,

each student are important, and they also learn to work with each other and help each other (07/01/2016).

Please talk about the teaching methods you applied to improve students' basic abilities. How do you help the lower-achievers? What techniques do you use to design teaching activities and help you attain teaching goals?

7. How do you think of the team learning among English teachers? How do the team learning impact on or assist you based on your experiences? Please give examples. What impacts does the current teaching environment have on your teaching?
8. You mentioned that you read many original English novels and put emphasis on reading; also, you encouraged students to make sentences. Please talk about the connection between reading and sentence making: How do students enhance their reading ability through sentence making?
9. You wrote,
Thanks to the plots of the novels and the movies, there are lots of interesting culture and usage I can share with my students (07/01/2016).
Please talk about how culture in original English novels and Western movies helps you in English teaching? What do you share with your students on culture? Please give examples.
10. Please talk about your teaching focus. For example, classroom management, designing activities to attain teaching goals, emphasizing students' improvement, concerning lower-achievers, spiral teaching... Please give examples.
11. Please talk about the difficulties or frustration you encounter in teaching in this semester. What impacts do the difficulties or frustration have on your English teaching and learning?

Appendix C: Questions for the Additional Interviews

First

1. Who or what impacted on you during the past academic year? How?
2. What adjustments did you made in your professional development during the past academic year?

Formal— for example, workshops/ teaching contexts...

Informal— for example, self-learning in English...

3. What was your greatest concern in the classes?
4. What impacted on your instructional decisions most in the class?

Second

1. How did you think of yourself as an English learner in elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school, respectively?
2. How did you think of yourself as an English learner in university?
3. How did you think of yourself as an English learner in graduate school?
4. How do you think of yourself as an English learner and as an English teacher after graduate school?