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碩士學位論文

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以定位理論探討一位補習班英語老師的敘事

Positioning and Being Positioned – A Narrative Inquiry on a Buxiban

English Teacher in Taiwan

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Positioning and Being Positioned—A Narrative Inquiry on a Buxiban

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To My Parents, Mr. Ching-Shun Liao and Mrs. Chin-Fen Wang.

獻給我的父母，廖慶順先生和王靖芬女士





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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：以定位理論探討一位補習班英語老師的敘事

指導教授：招靜琪教授

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論文提要內容：

在臺灣教育體制下存在著兩種英語老師：一種是學校英語老師而另一種是補習班老師。大部分的學術研究探究學校老師的身分認知與建構，而很少人深入補習班老師。本質性研究以一位臺灣教育體制下的補習班老師如何定位自己和如何看待他人定位為題，探討台灣英語教育體制下，一位補習班老師的身分認知與建構。

研究參與者是一位台籍的英語補習班老師，在補習班從事英語教學工作有八年之久，並曾在不同類型的補習班任教過。藉由合作敘事探究，本研究發現老師的身分認知與建構緊緊於他自身學習經驗，且老師過去學習的經驗，包括他自己曾經遇過的老師，可左右其教師信念與教學。

透過本論文之研究，研究者提出補習班老師能夠藉由定位學校老師而建立自己的專業身分認知，再藉由不承認社會大眾對他的定位而找出自己在教師工作上的特殊價值。

關鍵詞：英語老師、補習班、身分、定位、敘事、英語教育



ABSTRACT

In Taiwanese educational contexts, there are two groups of English teachers. One is school English teachers and the other one is buxiban English teachers. Most of the studies investigated identity construction of school teachers, overlooking how buxiban teachers construct their own teacher identity. This study addresses the research gap by conducting a qualitative study to explore how a buxiban teacher constructs his own teacher identity in the Taiwanese educational context. By answering the research question, how a buxiban teacher positions himself and how he positions others' positioning in the overall Taiwanese educational context, the study attempts to understand how identity construction of the participant manifests itself in context.

The participant in this study is a Taiwanese buxiban English teacher who has eight-year working experiences and has worked in different buxiban contexts. By using collaborative inquiry, the research findings expose a teacher's identity construction is highly related to his own learning experience because the learning experience may impact on his teaching belief.

Through the findings, this study argues that the buxiban teacher is able to construct his own professional identity by positioning school teachers and find out his unique worth and value by denial of public positioning.

Keywords: identity, positioning, English teacher, buxiban, cram school, English education



CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

It is widely known that being a good language learner does not mean that he or she can be a good language teacher. In addition to a teacher's ability of English, it is considered crucial for the teacher to have adequate teacher training in order to enhance his or her teaching strategies, techniques, and even classroom activities in language teaching (Garton, Copland & Burns, 2011). For this reason, many countries in the world have developed their own teacher education training programs; Taiwan is no exception. The common route to becoming an English teacher in Taiwan is to enter a teacher education program, finish all the training courses, work as a student teacher, pass the teacher's certification exam and finally get a teaching certificate (Lin & Byram, 2016). Thus, it is deeply rooted in the mind of the public that a qualified English teacher is one with a valid teaching certificate and who teaches in the public or private school system. But actually, there is another group of English teacher playing an important role and contributing tremendously to our students' English education; they are buxiban English teachers.

I began to teach as an English tutor when I was a sophomore. Being an English tutor made me realize I was quite interested in teaching; therefore, I decided in my senior year to take the teacher education program in order to become a qualified public school English teacher. It took me two years to finish the teacher education program, during which time I continued teaching as a public school English teacher for the remedial program. After graduation, I went on to engage in an internship at a prominent junior high school in Taipei famous for its students' high academic performance. After the intership, I stayed on and worked in the same school for one more year. Then, I passed a teacher's certification exam, so I went to teach at a private school in China for three years.

During the second year of teaching in China, I felt a great sense of loss because of being far away from Taiwan's English teaching environment, so I decided to come back to Taiwan to pursue a Master's degree. I thought there would only be school English teachers attending this program; however, to my surprise, three of my classmates are buxiban English teachers, and one of them is Mill (pseudonym), a very confident English teacher who has never received any kinds of formal teacher education before this program.

Compared to my own long journey of "climbing the ladder," Mill seems to have taken a totally different path in his development. He had the experience of teaching in children's English learning buxiban, secondary school students' buxiban and adult English learning buxiban. This incredibly wide range of teaching experience made me curious about his job and his development as a teacher. I wonder what exactly stand as the key difference between the development and practice of a buxiban English teacher like Mill and a school English teacher like myself. With curiosity, I decided to embark on this journey of inquiring into Mill's, a buxiban English teacher, practice and identity construction.

The "buxiban" in this study also known as "cram school," is an informal educational context which offers classes for raising academic achievement or for adults to improve their English skills in order to pass such exams as TOEIC and TOEFL. This follows Bray's (1999) definition that a buxiban is a private and commercialized tutoring service that serves as a supplementary school "which is only concerned with tutoring which covered subjects that are already covered in school," such as English, mathematics and science. According to Bray, there is a wide range of supplementary tutoring service all over the world. This kind of supplementary school can also be considered as a shadow education because it provides supplementary or test-preparation programs (Chou, 2008b).

According to a survey, high-school students spend half of their days in attending school, and the other half, cram school (Chou, 2008b). The biggest function of buxiban, as known by the general public, is that it is a place for raising students' academic performance. In this study, "buxiban" refers to all kinds of private services that aims to enrich English learning performance, including, tutoring, anchin (安親, an after-school service where students go to buxiban for their homework, and their homework will also be checked by buxiban teachers), children's English learning buxiban, secondary school students' buxiban and adult English learning buxiban.

Although the previous studies show buxiban is a wide spread phenomenon in Taiwan's education, most people hold the impression that school teachers who have teaching certificates are more qualified and professional than buxiban teachers. I have also found that most teacher identity research (see Abednia, 2012; Masoumpanah & Zarei, 2014; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Xu, 2013) focused on teachers in school system, not those in buxiban. This observation thus leads to following questions. How exactly is a buxiban English teacher's development and practice like? How does a buxiban teacher position himself and his practice in the overall Taiwanese educational system?

Focusing on Mill's rich teaching experiences in different buxiban contexts, this study attempts to investigate how Mill, a buxiban English teacher, positions himself and how he perceives others' positioning in Taiwanese English educational system. And most importantly, I wish to engage in dialogues with Mill so that our collaborative reflection on our practice and identity work can lead to fruitful insights on the English education in Taiwan.



CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The literature review covers two topics: buxiban phenomenon in Asia and language teacher identities as analyzed by the concept of positioning.

Buxiban Phenomenon in Asia

The supplementary tutoring service such as the so-called buxiban is found all over the world, especially in Asia. According to Bray (1999), cultural, economical, and educational factors have influenced geographic spread of such services, with cultural factors making Asia and Asian communities all over the world the most significantly impacted regions. The source of such impact has been attributed to Confucian cultural heritage.

Confucius was one of the most famous educationalist in ancient China who emphasized people's efforts in order to become successful in their lives (Bray, 1999; Rohlen & Lettendre, 1996; Salili, 1996). His concept has deeply rooted in Asian people's hearts and was reflected in Chinese ancient exam system, *keju* (translated directly from Chinese). *Keju*, seen as the original source of examination system (Zeng, 1999), was a way for Chinese government to recruit its officials; it provided a chance for civilians to change their social status—to be recruited as government officials, earn more money than what the general civilans could do and thus lead to a better life. The examination system has wide spreaded in Asia and was adopted by Korea and Japan in the early ages (Zeng, 1999) leading an examination-oriented learning culture (Bray, 2003; Kwok, 2004; Little, 1997; Zeng, 1999). Up to now, Confucian concept and *keju* still play dominant roles in Asian cultures and are reflected in the similar private tutoring phenomenon which has different names in different areas, such as *juku* in Japan, *hakwon* in Korea and *buxiban* in

Taiwan (Kwok, 2001). Among these areas, the topic of buxiban phenomenon has received a large attention (Chou & Yuan, 2011; Huang, 2004; Hsu, 2002).

The buxiban phenomenon in Taiwan has been extensively researched in recent years (Chang, 2004; Chou & Yuan, 2011; Huang, 2004; Hsu, 2002). As Chou (2014) points out, the reasons that have caused the flourishing buxibans in Taiwan are the examination-oriented learning culture and credentialism, which can be manifest through students and adult learners' language learning. For children, the examination-oriented learning culture makes parents highly concern about the children's academic performance. In order to enhance their children's academic performance, parents send their children to buxiban to get training for higher scores (Chou, 2014). For adult learners, they need credentials in order to be promoted in their occupations. Therefore, they go to buxiban to improve their English abilities, mostly with the special purposes of passing TOEIC, TOFEL or IELTS exam or enhancing their oral ability (Chang, 2004). According to Liu (2002), these adult learners range from office and factory workers.

Some researchers focus on the cultural background of buxiban, while others pay more attention to the interrelationship between buxiban (or buxiban teachers) and students. As Kwok (2004) noted, buxiban provides more drilling exercises and more examination skills than daytime school teachers. Therefore, students tend to go to buxibans in order to attain higher scores on their academic performance after school (Chou, 2008b). This kind of condition is especially reflected in ninth and twelfth graders who need high scores on entrance exams for entering prominent senior high schools and universities (Chou & Ching, 2012). Due to the examination-oriented learning culture and credentialism, it is clear that buxiban plays an important role on people's language learning in Taiwan and that the function of buxiban is to raise students or adult learners' academic performance.

The previous studies (Chang, 2004; Chou, 2014; Chou, 2008b; Chou & Ching, 2012; Kwok, 2004; Liu, 2002) not only show the function of English buxibans but also reveal the phenomenon how people in Taiwan, including children and adults, trust buxiban English teachers and seldom question their professionalism as an English teacher. The professionalism of a teacher in the school system is based on qualification obtained from a teacher education program. As we know, to be a qualified English teacher in the school system, an English teacher must have entered a teacher education program, finished the teacher practice, passed the teacher's certification exam and end up getting a teaching certificate (Lin & Byram, 2016). Owning an English teaching certificate symbolizes that the English teacher has received a lot of professional training and his or her professionalism is unquestionable. However, thus far, there have not been many teacher training programs offered by the MOE or any universities in Taiwan for buxiban English teachers, so their teaching professionalism can not be certified. This lead to the question how buxiban teachers develop their teaching identities and how they consider themselves as teachers in the Taiwanese educational context.

Few studies focusing on identity construction of buxiban teachers can be identified particularly in Asia. Some of the exceptions are Trent (2012) and Trent (2016) which will be discussed later.

Language Teacher Identity and the Concept of Positioning

Teacher identity is a dynamic transformation which involves the context that teachers experience in and outside of schools as well as the teachers' belief and value of what kind of teachers they want to become (Sachs, 2001). It is a continuous constructing process that can be manifested through teacher training. As Burns and Richards (2009) states, teacher training (or learning) should be viewed as a process "constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in

particular types of activities and processes” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4). Novice teachers gain experiences through teacher practice and develop their own beliefs and perceptions on what it means to be a good teacher. The transforming process from not being a teacher to becoming a teacher is like going across a threshold and then grow into the profession (Vonk, 1989). However, such an identity is not stable; rather, it is “something that they use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate” (Maclure, 1993, p. 312).

Martel and Wang (2014) argue that language teachers’ identities are shaped with significant others, personal biographies and contexts. They then give the examples from Park’s (2012) study, Duff and Uchida’s (1997) study and Yi’s (2009) study to demonstrate the insecurity and constant negotiation between teachers, others and the teachers themselves. From Duff and Uchida’s (1997, p. 291) study, a native Chinese-speaking English teacher began to question herself about being an English teacher after her students’ mocking that “you were only here for one and a half years and you are going to teach English [to kids who don’t speak English]? ” This comment made her unsure about whether she was capable of teaching English to those students. This reflects that language teacher’s identity has the following features: “the contingent, shifting and context-dependent nature of identities emphasizes that identities are not merely given by social structures or ascribed by others, but are also negotiated by agents who wish to position themselves” (Norton, 2013, p. 5).

In the poststructuralist theory, the concept of identity can be derived from Davis and Harré’s (1990) concept of “positioning.” As Davis and Harré’s (1990, p.48) proposes, positioning is a discursive process “whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines.” In other words, speakers claim their own identities for themselves and assign similar or

contrasting identities to their interlocutors in social interactions (Menard-Warwick, 2008) by which positioning and being positioned between them are shown (Davis and Harré, 1990). Hence, positioning implies how identities are manifested through discourse and accentuates the relationship among individuals in the teacher's life story (Barkhuizen, 2009).

Many researchers have conducted their research through the conception of positioning (Canagarajah, 2004; De Costa, 2011; Duff, 2002; Kayi-Aydar, 2014; Menard-Warwick, 2008; McKinney & Pletzen, 2004; Reeves, 2009; Talmy, 2008). For example, De Costa (2011) examined how positioning and being positioned affect the English learning outcome through observing the interaction between a Chinese immigrant student in a Singapore secondary school with her classmates and teachers and found that teachers' and colleagues' positioning had some impact on her learning. A number of studies (Canagarajah, 2004; De Costa, 2011; Duff, 2002; Kayi-Aydar, 2014; Menard-Warwick, 2008; McKinney & Pletzen, 2004; Reeves, 2009; Talmy, 2008) have been using positioning as a way to reveal the impact of second language acquisition through documenting the interaction between language teacher and students. Some studies (Arvaja, 2016; Pinnegar & Murphy, 2011; Trent, 2012; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014) have conducted to investigate the positioning and being positioned between teachers in school and shadow education.

More recently, some limited studies began to emphasize how positioning works on constructing teacher identity, such as Trent (2012) and Trent (2016). In Trent's (2012) study, the researcher investigated how in-service teachers position themselves and others through discourse. The results shows that discourse used to position others has a great power to shape the identities. Trent (2016) aims at investigating how private supplementary tutors, or teachers who are employed by tutorial companies providing

tutoring in English for a fee in Hong Kong, construct their professional identities.

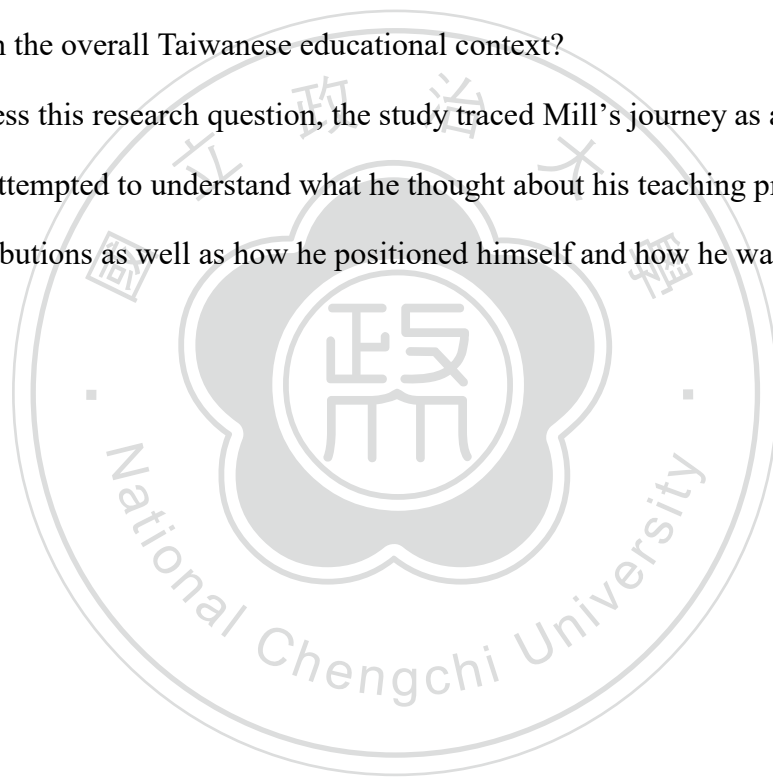
In Trent's (2016) study, he interviewed six private tutors and found out that these private tutors shared similar paradox about being as "private tutors", instead of being as "teachers." Some of them found it hard to realize their dreams of becoming teachers because they lack of formal qualifications. As one of the participants, Grace, mentioned, "I'm not qualified as a teacher" and regards herself as merely a "private tutor." To this point of view, Trent (2016, p.122) proposes, "This positioning, according to Grace, reflects the existence of an identity hierarchy in which those who are able to take on the identity "*teacher*", and who are located in real schools are contrasted with a "*private tutor*", located in a tutorial center." Another participant, Vicky, also notes that "When I was a student I know that some of my school teachers did look down on those working in tutorial schools, as just exam machines with short term goals only on exam results..." This supports the subordinate position of these private tutors and their distinction with school teachers.

The results of Trent's (2016) study indicate a phenomenon that the private tutors tend to minor their identities due to lacking teaching qualifications, considering themselves as "exam machines" (excerpt 5, p. 125), lacking the chance to construct close relationship with the students and without the opportunities to expand their teaching abilities. However, there is no hierarchy in teaching in the real world. A teacher's duty is to give service to his or her students and solve students' learning problems. What teaching context that a teacher is involves in does not matter. Trent's (2016) study begins a conversation between school teachers and teachers who teach beyond school and offers a chance for general public to understand the perceptions of private tutors. This study tries to call for public attention to envisage the existence of these shadow teachers, including both researchers and policy makers.

Similar to private tutoring in Hong Kong, there is also a growing buxiban phenomenon in Taiwanese teaching context. Since this phenomenon has typically been considered an indispensable part of Taiwanese educational context by both parents and students, it is crucial for the general public, researchers and policy makers to envisage this phenomenon and to develop a deep understanding of buxiban teachers. Therefore, the research question for this study focusing on Mill, a teacher who has rich experiences in buxibans is:

How does the participant position himself and how does he perceive other's positioning in the overall Taiwanese educational context?

To address this research question, the study traced Mill's journey as an English teacher and attempted to understand what he thought about his teaching practice and his unique contributions as well as how he positioned himself and how he was positioned.





CHAPTER THREE

Methods

This study adopts narrative inquiry approach. According to Barkhuizen (2007), “Narrative inquiry is reflective inquiry. Through constructing, sharing, analysing and interpreting their teaching stories, teachers get the opportunity to reflect on their own practice and to articulate their interpretations of this practice. Constructing and thinking about stories in this way, therefore, involves both introspection and interrogation (p. 232).” In other words, teachers can derive valuable resource to understand teaching and learning by inquiring into teaching experiences (Beattie, 2000).

In order to have an in-depth picture of the study, I used multiple sources, including narratives, interviews, dialogues, documents, artifacts and observations, as my data. More detailed description of the research context, the background of the participant, data collection and data analysis are presented in the following sections.

Context and Participant

This study was conducted in northern Taiwan, involving one participant, Mill (pseudonym), who was in his late 30s and has the experiences of working at almost all the possible tracks of the Taiwanese buxiban English-teaching practice, including those for children, secondary students, and adults. Followings are information about Mill.

Although Mill had rich buxiban teaching experience, as a learner he actually had very little buxiban learning experience. During his schooling, he attended buxiban once when he was a third grader. After that, he had no experience of learning at a buxiban. As he described it himself, he was quite interested in English learning but did not pay much attention to the English classes in school. During college, he began to teach as an English tutor. He even went to Cambodia to be a volunteered English teacher for one month. After

he came back to Taiwan, he became a buxiban English teacher, and he has been teaching in buxiban for eight years. During these eight years of teaching, he changed his jobs three times. The first buxiban he taught at was a children's English learning buxiban and he taught there for six years. Due to the unsatisfying low income, he decided to teach in a buxiban for secondary school students. "Secondary school students' buxiban" here particularly refers to a traditional style cram school that aims to enhance secondary students' academic performance. One year later, he turned to a buxiban for adult English learning. When he were interviewed for this study, he had been teaching there for almost two years. Mill has never thought about working as an English teacher in a formal education system. He just wants to teach at buxibans. The reason of this would be later discussed in chapter four.

Mill and I were classmates in the Master's program. I first met Mill in the first semester of our MA program two years ago. I missed the first week's class because of my job. When we finally met in the second week, he not only gave me all the course information that I needed, but also gave me all the notes that he took in the first week. I was so thankful and my first impression of him was that he was quite a caring person. After a few classes together, we knew each other better, and he accepted my invitation to be the participant of this study. The rapport between us was expected to greatly facilitate the data collection and analysis process of this study.

Mill's rich teaching experience in buxiban was just one reason for inviting him to be the participant of this study. Since both Mill and I had experienced some transformation of teaching contexts and we had no intention to become a member of each other's language teaching community, I believed his story and the dialogues between us could provide useful insights for the purpose of this study.

Data Collection

Data collected for this study included one narrative, four interviews, four dialogues between us and two class observations. All the narrative and interview data as well as our conversations and dialogues were conducted in Chinese, recorded electronically and transcribed for analysis. Details of each of the five data sources are presented below.

Narrative.

The narrative data was about Mill's overall learning experience. Following Chao (2018), the initial prompt is, "Please tell me when you first became aware of the existence of English." This Chinese narrative was given in a café in July, 2018 as part of a course assignment, and was lasted for thirty minutes.

Interviews.

To collect more information about the participants, I conducted four interviews in total.

The first three interviews were conducted in August in 2018 as part of coursework, right after the participant finished his narrative. After the narrative, the researcher conducted three follow-up in-depth interviews. Each of the interviews took thirty minutes and was conducted in the classroom that we took course together (See Appendix for interview questions).

The first interview was to know more about the participant's English learning background. The second interview was about the participant's working experience and where, when and why he shifted his teaching environments. The third interview was about how he views his own teaching style.

Then, the researcher decided to observe Mill's class. The fourth interview was conducted after observing Mill's grammar class at his buxiban classroom in January, 2019. It was mainly about how Mill designed his teaching materials and his teaching

rationale.

Dialogues.

Dialogues in this study are similar to those adopted in many qualitative studies such as collaborative autoethnography. Chang, Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2016, p. 25) argue such dialogues afford “multiple voices and perspectives” that add rigors and benefits to the study. The possible benefits, as specified by these researchers, are “collective exploration of researcher subjectivity, power-sharing among researcher-participants, efficiency and enrichment in the research process, deeper learning about self and other and community building” (p.25). With these benefits, dialogues as a data collection method for this study allow the researcher to work “from self and collective analysis” and could greatly enrich the understanding of Mill’s positioning and being positioned.

There are four dialogues in this study. Three of these dialogues took thirty minutes each and were collected in August, 2018. These three dialogues mainly focused on how Mill and I view differently the roles of being an English teacher in buxiban and school system. We discussed the differences between buxiban and school English teacher, such as teaching styles, teaching philosophy and teaching methods.

In October in 2019, I also invited Mill to observe my English class at my school and conducted the fourth dialogue right after the observation. These four dialogues was recorded electronically and transcribed for analysis.

Informal conversations.

In qualitative study, the relationship between the researcher and the participant can be as close as that between friends (Owton & Allen, 2014). In fact, many conversations happened during the lunch or school break time. Some conversations of course happened on LINE, a social communicative tool that is popular in Taiwan. These informal conversations were all recorded as a way to clarify Mill and my thoughts.

Class Observations.

Class observations were conducted two times in 2019. The purpose of class observations were to understand how the buxiban teacher participant and the researcher as a school teacher present their English teaching in their own teaching context between the two teachers.

The first class observation on a two-hour grammar class was conducted in January in 2019, which took place in Mill's buxiban. During the observation, I paid attention to the interaction between Mill and his students — what language he used in class and how he guided his students to meet his teaching goal. Through the observation, I knew how Mill designed his lesson, his teaching materials and discovered his teaching strategies, which reflected the participant's own teaching philosophy.

The second class observation took place in October in 2019. In the second class observation, I invited Mill to observe one of my classes and then have a follow-up dialogue with him to know his thoughts about school teaching. All the data was collected primarily by means of a paper-and-pencil.

Data Analysis

In order to enhance credibility of this study, I invited Mill to read all the transcription as a form of member checking (Shenton, 2004). And I noted down my reflection as reflective commentary to monitor my own initial impression of each data (Shenton, 2004).

Data analysis of this study was performed in three stages. The first stage was the holistic-content analysis procedure (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). According to Lieblich et al. (1998), holistic-content analysis is a way to analyze narrative materials which sees the story as a whole and the theme will be generated from it after it has read by the researcher many times. Thus, after collecting Mill's English learning history

narrative, conducting the first two interviews about Mill's English learning background and his working experiences, I transcribed the narrative data, printed out the transcriptions, read them several times and marked the texts for key concepts (categories). Then, I derived the themes from those key concepts (Iyengar, 2014). Based on the categories, I coded three interviews. Through this process, I constructed a profile of how Mill became a teacher he is now and tried to address the research question.

In the second stage, I explored Mill's teaching practice based on the narrative data and the first three interviews. I used critical event analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007) to identify life-changing events that had consequences and impacted his teaching practice. According to Webster & Mertova (2007), critical events are those "unplanned and unanticipated events (p. 83)" that happened in one person's life which cause "life-changing consequences (p. 83)." These life-changing consequences "are only identified after the event (p.83)" and also, during the events, the person has "strong emotional involvement (p.83)." Through the dialogues between Mill and me, I tried to explore our discussion about our views toward English teachers, English teaching, and school and buxiban teaching systems. As Davies and Harré (1990) proposed, "The words the speaker chooses inevitably contain images and metaphors which both assume and invoke the ways of being that the participants take themselves to be involved in." Through critical event analysis, what Mill said in our dialogues could be regarded as how he positioned himself which helped me to understand what Mill thinks about his teaching practice and his unique contributions and addressed to the research question.

In the final stage, again, I used critical event analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007) and took the data from the previous stages to explore how the shifts that we each experienced in our teaching and development reflected our self-positioning in the teaching system, focusing on who the participant thought he was in our discussions. By

the narrative data, interviews and our dialogues, how we position each other would be emerged and the research question “How does the participant position himself and how does he perceive others’ positioning in the overall Taiwanese educational context?” was addressed.





CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter traces Mill's journey to become an English teacher and attempts to understand what he think about his teaching practice and his unique contributions. In this chapter, I present Mill's experiences as two topics. The first one is Mill's English learning journey, which discusses how his English learning experiences is reflected in his current teaching. The second is Mill's English teaching experiences, which provides an understanding of his English teaching belief. This part also include an observation of Mill's classroom, which reveals what it is like in Mill's teaching environment. Through these two topics, the route of how Mill became a buxiban English teacher and how he thought about his teaching practice and unique contributions are constructed.

Mill's English Learning Journey

Elementary school—The enlightenment

"It was him, a foreign teacher in a children's English learning buxiban, who enlightened me to learn English." Mill described how the teacher made an effort to delight the children during the class, "the most impressive was that he would sweat in class." "All of his gestures were so dramatic...when he said, 'tall', 'short', 'big', 'little'...he would behave in an extremely exaggerated way." Mill did not care what the teacher taught, and he did not remember what he had learned in class. All he could remember was that it was an interesting class. "The teacher made me realize that we should pay our sweat, expression, action, voice and professionalism if we want to be impressive."

When Mill talked about this experience, his eyes glowed with excitement and he was amazed by the teacher's attitude and his devotion. Although Mill did not understand any

English words, the teacher still tried hard to communicate with the students using body language, which was impressed by Mill. However, it was just for a short period of time for him to know this language, and he had not encountered English again until he entered junior high school.

Junior and senior high school—An English self-learner

Mill told me he learned English by himself. He said he never paid attention to his school English teachers because he thought what they taught was too boring.

When I was in junior high school, I began to have English class. I hated all the school English courses, and I was not interested in the school English teacher. It was not my fault. The English class was too boring.”

During his junior high school, English was so easy that he did not need to spend too much time preparing for it. He said, “I did not view English as English. I learned it, and I had tests on it.”

Moving on to high school, he tried hard to maintain his English proficiency level—he bought some English magazines to read and listen to the CDs. “Since I was the best student in English in my class, I didn’t want to lose.” He said it was not easy because he needed to study English magazines, listen to the CDs, and clarify the ideas of the articles and even try to enjoy the content of it all on his own.

He specified that he did not care what his school English teacher taught in class. “I looked down on the word, ‘teacher’.”

I did not care what he said or what he taught in class. Why not? The reason was: every time when I try to ask some questions to my school English teacher, he would say, ‘Come to me after class and I will answer your questions.’ However, he just ran

away EVERY TIME after class. Damn it!

Therefore, during school English class, he usually lowered his head and read English article or whatever he wanted to read. “Among all the school courses, English was the only one that I refused to participate. I always lowered my head, read articles, listened to the CD and solved English problems by myself.” Then, he mentioned one experience that he was praised by his high school English teacher.

It was an afternoon English class, the school teacher passed down the printouts of an essay to the class which was written from one of my classmates. He kept praising the great exclamation and fresh words that were used in that article. I did not notice at first, but then I found a little bit strange, so I read the article and found that it was mine. I blushed immediately because I never peacock myself and it was a rare time for me to be under the spotlight. [Except for looking at me...] The teacher kept looking at my classmates who looked pretty or worked hard in his class. And then, he looked at the other classmates who had prominent family background; however, everyone just looked at me because only I would use pseudonym in the essay. It was the first time that I saw the teacher felt very embarrassed because I never paid attention to him in his class...I did not think he could get any credits on this.

“I did not want to show off. I just wrote [essays] for pleasure,” Mill explained. He commented his school English class and said, “I did not want to learn the skills of studying English.”

When my classmates followed the ways to learn English vocabulary that teacher guided in class, I just tried to learn English in my own way. During that time, I did not realize that I was learning specific grammar rules or something. I just kept

reading...

Although Mill spent a lot of time on English, he did not recognize it as studying English; he clarified, “Every subject that I studied at school was for exams, except for English.” He said, “To me, learning English was not like studying English. I never thought about I was studying English while learning it.”

In Mill’s mind, English was more than a subject to him because he learned it in his own way, such as reading English articles. When English teachers taught in class, they taught it as a subject. They provided students with English learning skills and the students strived hard to learn these skills. Mill showed a highly disapproval toward how school English teachers taught to students. He said he despised the concept of “teachers.”

Since College—Keep going, and keep trying

Regarding college English learning, Mill depicted it as “a cycle of challenging, failure, problem facing, and ability growing.” He studied English literature when he was in college, and he said, “At least... to me, I was quite interested in English, especially, this language. I chose literature to be my major because it was just like reading story books....” When he entered college, he faced a big trouble — he did not know how to speak English.

It was a flaw...or a kind of challenge. Some of the professors taught in English at college. When they spoke in English, the students answered in English. Therefore, my challenge was to enhance my oral ability to the level that I could answer those questions in English.

He told me it was impossible for him to speak English since he had not be in any kind of English speaking environment before college. In order to improve his oral ability,

he spoke to a British teacher in the language center on campus whenever he had time, he read out loud some English articles by the lake on campus almost every day and even played a game with his classmates which is called, “English only push-ups.” The rule of the game was easy. Anyone who spoke Chinese during a specific period of time needed to do push-ups.

In order to improve my speaking, I would get up at six in the morning and went to the lake. There were some stairs by the lake, so I just sat on them and began to read the articles out loud. [I did this] Almost every day from freshman to fifth year of college.

No matter how long the words were, he just read the words out loud. “I did not look up the words in the dictionary because I was lazy. I just kept reading, reading and reading out loud. Maybe I would finish two chapters of that book.” With this training, he told me he could read very fast, but he could not fully understand the meaning of the words.

As he recalled those memories, he said he was the worst one in English speaking among his classmates at first. “I remember when I spoke English, I would blush and sweat, and I would use a lot of body language. I didn’t have any courage to look others in the eye.” He was embarrassed for this situation, but he told himself, “I did not want to lose.” He took up the situation as a challenge. He tried to answer questions in English if the teachers used English to ask him. He said, “Sometimes I could not get the positive reply from the teachers, but I just kept trying and trying.” With persistence, “my English became the best among my classmates [when graduation],” he said.

“The aim of my English learning was not for studying English...I think it was a process of self-fulfillment.” From elementary school to college, Mill did not want to follow the path that school teachers gave, but tried to follow his will to learn this

language. “I did not study for scores. I just did not want to lose...Anyway, I did not care about the marks, like 82 or 86. What I care was the feeling of perseverance.”

Mill’s English Teaching Experience

From Mill’s English learning experiences, it is obvious that English teachers did not play a part in his life. And mostly, his thought for “teacher” is negative. Although he said he learned English by himself, he still stepped into this profession as an English teacher. This made me wonder what changed his thought and made him become an English teacher. In order to get more understandings, I embarked on the journey of investigating his teaching experiences and the difficulties that he overcame as being an English in buxiban these years.

Mill’s English teaching experiences can be divided into four sections. The first section is his initial idea of becoming a teacher. The second to the fourth section is how and why he switched his working places from children’s English learning buxiban, secondary school students’ buxiban to adult English learning buxiban.

Being a teacher—Before working in a buxiban

When talking about being a teacher, Mill said, “I despise the word ‘teacher’.”

My college classmate asked me, “Your English is so good. Why not the taking teacher’s certification exam?”(...) I really detest this. I just do not want to be a school teacher because I think school teachers are “huì rén bù juàn”, 毀人不倦.

(The original meaning of this Chinese expression is “helping people learn tirelessly.”). The word “huì”, 毀, I mean here is destroy. (Mill thought school English teachers destroyed students.) However, I do not think the problem has to do with teachers or students. It is the whole educational system which makes the problem. The educational system turns the teachers into the ones to please

others and changes our college students into machines. I totally disagree with this system, and also, I can not make a lot of money from being a teacher.

Although he said he did not imagine himself being a teacher in the future, he still started to teach as a private tutor in his junior year. He went to a church and taught ten students. “It was an easy way to make money because the salary was four hundred and fifty per hour. However, I was really painful because they (the students) were not willing to learn.”

This the painful English teaching experience did not stop Mill from being an English teacher. After college, Mill went to Cambodia to be an English assistant for one week. In his mind, teaching in Cambodia was just an opportunity; one of his classmates in college invited him to go with her. He did not mean to be a teacher there, but the one-week experience of teaching in Cambodia was unforgettable. He taught at an elementary school and was amazed by how the students there treated their study.

When they went into the classroom, they would take out their uniforms and shoes carefully from their tiny bags. (...) When they appeared, they had neat and tidy appearance. They even washed their feet before class in the bathroom. They worked hard during class. (...) You could see they sit up straight, quite straight.

Mill said he was very touched by how the students behaved in the classroom which showed how they valued education. Although the Cambodians put much emphasis on education, it was sad to say that few of them could get into a junior high school. He said, “What I gained from Cambodia teaching experience was the

students did not treat English as (studying) English.”

They learned English because it was fun. They didn’t study English for tests.

They learned it because it would be useful in their future. Whether there would be tests or not, they just learned it... Students in Cambodia didn’t have any chances to go into junior high school. But they were still willing to learn English and sang English songs with me.

Mill explained that he had encountered too many tests or exams in his English learning process; although he had become an English teacher, he still needed to pass the entrance exam to get into the graduated school. Learners in Taiwan always study for exams. Compare to the students in Cambodia, “they love useful English information, like numbers and banknotes,” he said. When he taught them the conception of money, banknotes, numbers, including how to say buy and sell or anything that related to their daily lives, they were willing to learn. “They wanted to learn the phrase — ‘Thank you.’ because they could use it.” Mill said from this experience, he realized, “If the students do not want to learn what teachers teach, and this kind of teaching is useless.” He wanted to give something useful while teaching. “As long as the students think it is useful, they can learn it successfully.”

A depressive teacher — Teaching in X children’s English learning buxiban

Mill merely taught in Cambodia for one week; later on, he came back to Taiwan for mandatory military service. Afterwards, he began to work at X, a buxiban with both anchin department and children English learning department (“Anchin”, 安親, is an after-school service where students go to buxiban for their homework, and their homework will also be checked by buxiban teachers.) When I asked why he wanted to become a buxiban teacher, he answered, “First, I wanted to make money. Second, school English education

was excluded from my thought.’ He said, the flexible working schedule was also the reason. He emphasized, “[As a learner] I seldom paid attention to school English class because it was too boring.” However, during the first year working at X, Mill nearly lost his enthusiasm in English teaching.

I taught both anchin and children’s English learning class. In anchin, it was like a game called, “hitting the gopher.” What does that mean? When students began to talk, we (teachers) would punch them on the head. The students were prohibited to talk. It was a torturing job. In children’s English learning class, the students was asked to speak, the more the better. I called it the activity of “pulling the gopher.” Every time when they dug into the ground, you needed to pull them out and made them speak.

To Mill, that was a torturing job because he needed to play two different kinds of character and he did not like that. Moreover, in the anchin class, he had a lot of administration work. He had to pick up the phones and contact the students’ parents; he needed to monitor the students’ scores closely and he had to spend extra time teaching students after class. Not being able to adjust, Mill worked there only for one year before he changed to another buxiban.

An enthusiastic teacher—Teaching in Y children’s English learning buxiban

Next, he taught Y children’s English learning buxiban for five years. Compared to X, Mill said he approved the working environment in Y. In Y children’s English learning buxiban, the teachers were asked to teach in English. They were asked to pronounce correctly, speak fluently, and tried to make students understand English-only instruction. The main goal for teachers was to make students listen to English and speak English.

I spent a lot of time thinking about how to make students understand while preparing for the class. I needed to express the meaning of the English words, phrase or sentences through my facial expression or action. Sometimes the students did not understand, I needed to pronounce the words in a very exaggerated way or did a very big movement. I also spent time trying to figure out a way to make a reading passage much easier for them.

When Mill encountered any problems, he would reflect on himself first. For example, when students could not understand what he was talking about, he would think “I must have done something wrong, so they did not understand.” He cared about students’ feelings a lot and he would pay a lot of attention to those shy kids during the break or before class.

I would tell him or her, “You memorize the vocabulary really well.” “You read quite fluently.” “Wow, you’ve finished your homework and your handwritings are pretty!” “Oh! Don’t be afraid. I’ll help you. I’ll help you for sure.” “It’s OK. You can whisper. I’ll listen to you. I’ll give you a sticker if you speak.” No matter what happened, I would tell the students, “Let’s do it together!”

“You need to stand in their shoes,” he said. Mill’s teaching style was enthusiastic and caring. Meanwhile, Mill’s oral ability improved a lot because he needed to co-teach with international teachers. However, he told me he faced some challenges while working with them.

Usually, the international teachers only taught what they wanted. They did not care about students’ thoughts. Seldom did they care. Seldom. I kept trying to discuss with them before class about what we were going to bring to our students. Those

international teachers really didn't care what they taught, and they just wanted to play games with the students. They usually played games, and picked up one or two things randomly to teach and then left.

In order to deal with this situation, Mill usually needed to prepare a lesson plan before class and then he would try to persuade them to follow his lesson plan. "Although I needed to overcome these situations, I was still willing to teach in Y." Mill said, "Teaching in Y children's English learning buxiban matches well with my own English learning process. I like to learn English in a natural way [learning English in the English environment], so I was willing to compromise [to international teacher]."

I am a machine producer—Teaching in Z secondary school students' buxiban

However, after five-year experience of working in the children's English learning buxiban, Mill changed to Z secondary school students' buxiban under financial consideration. Z secondary school students' buxiban allowed him to make more money to support his family and his new-born child. For this career change, he spent almost five days finishing all the previous exam papers and model exams in General Scholastic Ability Test, a college entrance exam in Taiwan. He said, "If you want to teach in a secondary school students' buxiban, 'problem solving' is the necessary ability." During this time, he used grammar translation method (GTM) as his teaching method. "GTM was the best way to answer students' questions. I could give them what they wanted in the shortest time possible." However, he said he was totally disagree with that kind of teaching or English learning environment.

In this buxiban, the students didn't want to get involved in class. They didn't want to participate in any kinds of activities, or I seldom implemented activity to them...The only sense of achievement that I got from working there was scores.

In Mill's thought, the students were like prisoners. "They were prisoned at school, and were put into jail again in buxiban after school." He showed a strong disapproval of the exam-oriented style of teaching. Mill did not want to pay so much attention to exams or scores, and said, "Didn't I need to fight the attitude that students had toward English?" Feeling disappointed in the exam-oriented goal, Mill concluded his teaching in Z secondary school students' buxiban as — "Repeat! Fake Game! Repeat! Test! Homework!"

When talked about GTM, Mill said, "The way I taught there was quite opposite to my teaching belief" because "The students were not happy!" He said the students went to buxiban with no purpose, and what teachers did there were just filling up exam skills for them. "I needed to compromise my teaching style and used GTM. That was my sacrifice."

Mill could not tolerate his working environment, so he only taught in the secondary school students' buxiban for one year. He said, "I, as a teacher, turned myself into a machine producer. It seemed like I was not teaching English... and just like Chinese, science and math...English became an another subject."

A passing-by teacher traveler—Teaching in an adult English learning buxiban

(up to now)

Having nothing in common with the secondary school students' buxiban, Mill decided to move once again to an adult English buxiban. In order to get into the adult English buxiban, he took a lot of English exams, like the GEPT Advanced Test and TOEIC.

Having lots of English certifications was the basic requirement for entering an adult English buxiban. This is a way to show teachers' abilities. Many teachers take the exam every year. We need to update our certification. We cannot use the certification

that we took three hundred years ago. It is a whole new conception.

Mill thought there is a difference between a buxiban and a school teacher.

Our salary and our levels of education is not in direct proportion. The only way to increase our salary is based on the number of our students. And our salary will increase only when our students continuous presence in our classes. The high or low salary basically bases on our teaching performance.

In the adult English learning buxiban, teachers need to maintain their own professionalism through passing different kinds of English exam. In other words, they need to keep learning English. “I think whether a teacher is professional or not can best be revealed through their experiences of teaching in an adult English buxiban,” Mill said. “Most of the students there are adults. Although some of them are high school students, they are mature enough to tell if the teacher is professional or not.” Mill elaborated on his thought,

As teachers who teach in adult English learning buxibans, we need to make the students understand our teaching style. We need to care about every word we use and try to satisfy students from different levels and different ages because I don’t know if the student will come back to class next time or not. Maybe I thought the previous class was fun and he would show up next time, but he didn’t. And he was also absent in the following lessons.

Mill said teaching in the adult English learning buxiban is like in a buffet. “He [The student] can eat anything he wants. He can choose to take oral and listening lessons this time, and next time he takes TOFEL or IELTS. It’s a free market system.” Mill shows great assent of this kind of conception. “If he doesn’t like your class, he won’t show up

next time.” Mill showed great confidence in his teaching by using metaphor eating at sushi-go-around to indicate that students have a lot of choices which made it difficult to teach:

Working in buxiban is like eating at sushi-go-around. We are those sushi dishes and the students are like customers. They can choose whatever they want. They come here autonomously. They can choose. They have the rights to choose, to quit and to complain. Students at school don’t have these rights. And they [school teachers] can’t hear students’ real voices.

“How we teach is following how students react. No one teaches us how to teach (laugh). Everything is derived from students’ reactions.” In order to maintain his own English abilities, Mill constantly needs to prepare the English certification tests, and he needs to prepare for his lessons before class based on what the buxiban requires and what he wants to bring the students. “Based on the teaching material that buxiban give, I make my own teaching materials, including handouts or PowerPoint slides.”

Mill mentioned that in adult English learning buxiban, students seldom talk in class: “The students seldom talk in class. They want to understand what teachers say in class.” In that environment, he needed to talk all the time. No one would respond to him.

Actually, it is miserable. Now I do try to look for their “voices”. To be truth, this is funny. Actually, students’ voice are seldom heard in adult English learning buxiban because they think it is embarrassing to speak out.

I wish I can hear their voices. I often tell them “If you can, come and chat with me after class. I care about their voices a lot... However, only one in twenty will really talk to me after class... And most of them are not students [they are working now].

That is...actually...pathetic because...the school teacher had destroyed them.

I asked him how he knew the students would understand his lessons. He replied, “Just stand in their shoes.” He gave me an example,

When I am designing my lesson, I will try to guess what the students feel in this lesson. I will guess how they may react to every word and sentence that I say. I just stand in their shoes because in real teaching, a teacher is not the only one in the classroom. During the class, I might speak or talk unintelligibly and then observe their facial expressions and reactions. We need to be very patient, explain in a very clear way and try not to push them too hard.

In order to know the students’ feelings, Mill would go to his students directly after class and asked them if they understood the lessons and what their overall feelings were toward the class.

I ask them why they choose my class, and they say, “It is ‘Useful’!” They say what the teacher teach in class can incite their resonance [towards their lives]. (...) The students and I are in the same age, and we can understand what is going on in our lives and we can share our thoughts through this language.

Mill said he had some struggles. “Sometimes what the teachers do does not match with what the students need,” he said. He used to teach in an interactive way and tried to force students to think and talk in class; however, his students told him that they preferred something more direct. “They want answers,” he spoke in a disappointing way. Facing this kind of response, he said he tried to meet the students’ needs through his handouts and continued using his own ways to teach during the class. He did not force students to speak; instead, after he asked a question, he would stop and look around, and then, he

would answered it by himself. “It’s just a compromise between dream and reality,” he said.

He said through teaching in the adult English learning buxiban, he wished to share his life values with his students. “What I want to bring to them is something they can use in their daily life.” He usually used his life experiences to encourage his students. To Mill, English learning is about showing perseverance. Just like studying for a master’s degree, which is the highest position in life that he wanted to pursue. “It is not what you can do or not, but what you want to do or not,” he usually told his students. He emphasizes, “Everyone has his own professionalism, and just like my professionalism is English.” He said,

I’d never studied abroad and I didn’t come from a wealthy family. My father is a taxi driver and my mother just work part-time. And... I don’t go to buxiban... My family background might be worse than theirs [the students], but why can I become your English teacher right now? Because I invested a lot of time and will. And I believe in myself. I keep going even now.

Mill tried to encourage his students through his own English learning experiences, he told them, “English learning is a process, and it is not a result. It is a friend who can accompany you to become a grown-up. If you view English only as a result [like scores], you will lose your passion in [learning] English continuously.”

Being an English teacher in buxiban for eight years, Mill thought that he was trained to own an ability—how to make students learn English happily. This brought up a memory.

There is a School F in Taoyuan. As everybody knows, F is an extremely suck school.

And I tutored an eleventh grader who studied at F and his grade was very bad. His English scores were going downwards, from 23, 22, and then to 6. His parents were freaking out. But then, I quit the tutoring job! I told them, “It is useless to learn in this way.” I told my student that... he should learn from some magazines that would be easier for him to understand. If he continued studying like memorizing English words and grammar, it would only destroyed [his interest in English]. However, he did not want to listen to me! He still kept “memorizing” the vocabulary and learned English by rote. The way how he memorized the vocabulary was to bone up on all the vocabulary and sentence patterns at the night before the exam. It’s useless! I told him it was useless, and he could not accept. What could I do? He just could not get it! I spent a lot of time telling him my life experiences, but he just could not accept my thought. Therefore, I found a solution — move on, I needed to move on. I needed to learn to move on. Don’t make myself become a strict teacher, and that was a way to respect him. Not learning well on English doesn’t mean you would ruin your life, doesn’t it?

Mill said one of his international friend called him an educator when he shared his thoughts about being a teacher. His friend told him the way he spoke was like an educator. And Mill replied him, “No, being an educator is too tiring.” He laughed and said it was nonsense. He said, “My initial goal for being a buxiban English teacher was just for making a living—I did not want to live a tiring life.”

Because it [being as an educator] is too tiring...The students just come and go. No matter how much we love our students, they do not pay attention to us. If they do not pay attention to us, why do we need to waste our time to be with them? I don’t want to be like...sunlight. I mean I don’t want to be a teacher like the sunlight shines on

the whole world... I mean... I don't want to love ALL the students. No! I think it will be easier to have some resonance with some of the students. That will be okay with me. If I don't have resonance with you, good-bye, then. Please choose other teachers. It's none of my business.

To conclude his feeling of teaching in adult English learning buxiban, Mill said, "I am just a passing-by teacher traveler. When time passes by, they will leave and I will leave." "These students are passive learners. At least, this is a place for them to keep learning English. And through English, I can transmit my views toward life to them."

Mill's Classroom Observation

In order to understand what exactly Mill's teaching context is, I went to Mill's classroom and explore his teaching context. The story began from a description based on the observation that I conducted in Mill's classroom. When Mill and I arrived at his working place, he told me he needed to print some handouts and thus directed me into one of the classrooms. Walking into Mill's classroom, I saw most of his adult students had already waited in their seats phubbing their phones. Most of them were male, and only three of them were women. The students sat separately in the classroom and no one was talking. It was so quiet that any noise or any action could have been easily heard. Looking around, it was just a tiny classroom which could hold almost 25 people. The lights and the walls were all white, and there was a white board in the front of the classroom. In order not to disturb the students, I found a seat in the last three row, nearby the sidewalk where I could easily observe the whole class and watched the slides.

I counted the numbers of the students. There were twelve students in the classroom and their ages ranged from twenty-three to thirty. When Mill walked in, all the students looked up to Mill silently and some of them took out of their pencil bags and pens. Mill

went directly to the right front side of the classroom, greeting the students and turning on the computer at the same time. While waiting for the computer to be ready, Mill shared some of his feelings that day with a smile on his face and began to pass out his handouts. He put the rest of the handouts on his desk and clicked on his document.

Through the document on the computer, he tried to introduce some free, useful websites or radio stations to the students; meanwhile, he talked about how he learned English through these websites and shared his opinions about them. At the meantime, two students walked in and sat in the left behind me. Mill brought two pieces of his handouts to the students and walked to the front again. The students got the handouts and started to chat with each other with lower voices in the back. What they were talking about was nothing related to the class. While they were talking, Mill kept sharing his opinions to his class. He asked the students to take out their phones and took pictures of these websites. He said, “The dean here does not allow students to take pictures or record in class, but for me, it is not a big deal. Please take the picture as soon as possible.” No one responded him, but they did what Mill asked them to do.

After introducing those free websites, Mill led the students to read the handouts and introduced the grammar. While lecturing, the two students who came in late finally stopped talking. When Mill introduced the grammar usage, all the students looked at him quietly and some of them noted down some key points on their handouts. Mill then asked the students to read a passage from the handout, and then he explained why he wrote this passage and how it was related to his life experience — how he interacted with his wife and how he spent time with his child. Sometimes when he shared some interaction with his family, some of the students would smile. After introducing the passage, Mill asked the students to finish the exercises on the handout. Then, all the students looked down and engaged in doing the exercises. A few minutes later, Mill started talking again. He showed

the answers on the screen and then asked the students to take pictures of the answers. He did not explain much but just stopped and asked the students if they all understood. No one answered. Only one or two students nodded their heads slightly. This was a circulation of one exercise, and Mill repeated this teaching method several times till the bell rang.

As the bell rang, the students started to clean up their desks; Mill invited the students to ask some questions of him. The students did not respond and began to leave one by one. Seeing all the students left the classroom, Mill packed up and left the classroom with me.

The description above was a two-hour grammar class instructed by Mill in an adult English learning buxiban. It shows what his current English teaching context is like, how these adult students learned English in this kind of informal English learning environment and how they reacted to the teacher in the classroom. It is obvious that the students seldom expressed their feelings to the instructor. In the whole time, they just sat there, did whatever Mill asked them to do and paid attention to the teacher. They had almost no response to the teacher during the entire class. They only showed approval through their facial expression with one or two nods. The teacher and the students had zero interaction, before, during or after the class.

Summary of Mill's Story

Throughout Mill's English learning experiences, the only one-time experience of learning English in a buxiban was quite interesting and fun. The teacher's actions and hard work made him interest in English and he concluded the teacher's practice as "professionalism". In contrast to the previous experience, "boring" was the word to represent school English class. In Mill's thought, school English teachers taught English as a subject by teaching students how to study English, grammar rules and filling them up

with a lot of vocabulary. The school English teachers did not care if the students understand and were unwilling to answer students' questions which made him think that school teachers were "unprofessional teachers". He used a word, "flaw", to represent the problem about not being able to speak English after learning English at school. To solve this problem, he got up every day and trained his oral himself. He thought himself as an on-going learner and his English learning process is a process of self-fulfillment because he enjoyed the process of learning this language and he did not think he was studying for tests. Finally, Mill's persistence in English built the cornerstone for him to become an English teacher.

Regarding to Mill's teaching experience, Mill did not want to be a teacher in the first place. He became an English tutor in college and saw teaching as a way to make money. However, the one-week experience of working in Cambodia was a conception-changing event for Mill. He believed that he was a generous helper who taught something useful to students. Holding this teaching belief, Mill came back and began to work from X and Y children's English learning buxiban where he was like a care-giver who cared about students' needs and tried hard to make students understand in his class. Due to financial consideration, he moved to Z. As a buxiban English teacher in Z, he detested his teaching there. Dedicating not to be a machine producer, he then finally moved to an adult English learning buxiban. In order to be a competitive buxiban teacher, Mill strived hard in improving his own English by passing different kinds of English certification exams. With his English professionalism, he could teach his students how to be successful English learners. As he said, the students had their rights to choose their teachers in buxiban. He regarded himself as a sushi-dish and he just wanted to attract those students who could have resonance with him so that he did not need to deal with all types of students. In the end, he viewed himself as a passing-by teacher traveler, a teacher who

shares his life experiences.

Table 1 summarizes how Mill positioned school and buxiban English teachers through his learning experiences. Table 2 summarizes how he positioned himself as a buxiban English teacher in his English teaching experience in chronological order.

Table 1.

Mill's positioning toward school and buxiban English teachers

	As a Learner	Positioning Teachers
Learning at a Buxiban	Elementary School	A professional teacher
Learning at Schools	Junior and Senior high School	Unprofessional teachers
	College	Learner destroyers

Table 2.

Mill's and others' positioning toward Mill

Teaching in Different Context	Positioning Himself
Cambodia	A generous helper
X and Y Children's English Learning Buxiban	A care-giver
Z Secondary School Students' Buxiban	A machine producer (which he did not like)
Adult English Learning Buxiban	A sushi-dish (merchandise)
	A passing-by traveler

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This is a story about Mill, who dedicated himself not to be a school English teacher but to devote his teaching skills and experiences in different types of English buxiban. In the previous chapter, I have presented Mill's English learning and his teaching experiences. This chapter addresses the research question — How does the participant position himself and how does he perceive other's positioning in the overall Taiwanese educational context?

As Davis and Harré's (1990) proposed, "position" is a replacement of "role" which can be reflected in the "actual conversations between particular people on particular occasions (p.44)." What a speaker says in the conversation is often based on his memories and experiences in life, such as social relationships and beliefs about what is wrong or right. While making a speech, one may also have different interpretations; and thus, through the discursive conversations on certain topics with certain people, an individual can position and be positioned.

In this chapter, key themes related to being positioned and positioning are identified in Mill's story which have been presented in the previous chapter. This chapter is divided into two sections; the first section is positioning school teachers, which reveals Mill, the buxiban teacher, to construct his own professional identity and the second section is positively positioning, which allows the buxiban teacher identify his unique self worth and value.

Theme 1: Positioning school teachers reveals how the buxiban teacher constructed his own professional identity

Mill's story illustrated issues buxiban teachers might face while taking up the

identity of “a teacher.” This section addresses how the buxiban teacher constructed his own professional identity through positioning school English teachers as unprofessional teachers under three perspectives. The first one is his earlier English learning experience, the second one is questioning the necessity of having the conventional teacher’s certificate, and the third one is the different teaching systems between school and buxiban.

First of all, Mill identified buxiban teachers as more professional based on his earlier English learning experiences. Martel and Wang (2014) mentioned, teachers’ identities are shaped by significant others. In Duff and Uchida’s (1997) study, they interviewed four teachers who were recognized as good teachers. Among all, one of the teachers, Danny, did not like the way his high school French teacher guided him using decontextualized grammar lessons. After he became a teacher, he was reluctant to use textbooks in his teaching due to his earlier learning experience. Like Danny’s experience, Mill’s English learning experience has a huge impact on his teacher career. Mill considered his English learning was inspired by his buxiban English teacher who impressed Mill by his sweat, action and voice.

According to Davis and Harré (1990), positioning happens in an interactive way. “There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another (Davis and Harré, 1990, p.48).” While a person is making the speech, he is positioning others through his speech; in the meanwhile, he shows his self-position as well. Through pointing out the school teachers were “huì rén bù juàn”, 毀人不倦 (“destroying students’ interests non-stop”), provided students with English studying skills such as grammar or vocabulary and they even avoided answering students’ questions, the school teachers were positioned as being lack of professionalism.

The similar findings was found in Trent’s (2012) study, local Hong Kong English

teachers' teaching were positioned as "traditional teaching" which was "exam-based" and about "memorization." Native English teachers thought local English teacher "taught to the tests." By positioning local teachers as just "teaching about English," native English teachers determined to teach the students how to use the language and implemented some activities and games. Through positioning local Hong Kong English teachers taught traditionally, native English teachers constructed their own professional identities as "real English teachers." In this study, Mill positioned buxiban teachers as hard-working teachers who cared about students' feelings and tried hard to create happiness for them during teaching. In this way, buxiban teachers' professional identities were constructed and they improve their own English abilities with times. The image of professionalism of buxiban teachers deeply rooted in Mill's mind; therefore, he determined not to be one of the school teachers, but a buxiban teacher.

Secondly, Mill questioned the school English teachers' professionalism as defined by having a conventional teacher's certificate. This practice is common all over the world, as Lin & Byram's (2016) asserted that a qualified teacher is one who passes the teacher's certification exam and shows his or her professionalism by receiving a series of teacher training. However, buxiban teachers' professionalism is quite different: Mill believed that English teachers' professionalism can best be demonstrated by holding certificates from passing different kinds of English proficiency tests. For a buxiban teacher, a certified English proficiency is highly needed as the students take courses as "eating at a sushi bar." Operating based on a customer-oriented concept, a buxiban teacher would have no use of a conventional teacher's certificate. Having a teacher certificate would not be able to show his professionalism. Therefore, in this study, Mill as a buxiban teacher devoted himself in getting as high scores as possible in different kinds of English certification examinations. With certified high English proficiency, he believes he could impress his

students and keep them in his classes. He positioned a buxiban teacher as being different from school English teachers, who can remain lazy all their lives without attempting to prove or improve themselves. Through positioning school teachers as not needing to enhance their own English ability while the buxiban teachers' English proficiency is better because they need to survive in a cruel professional world, buxiban teachers are positioned as being more professional than school English teachers.

At last, Mill indicated that the educational system was different between school and buxiban. School English teachers did not need to worry about their salary because their salary were given by the government, but the buxiban teacher's salary was based on the number of students that the teacher has in the class. As Chou (2014) said, buxiban is a profitable educational industry. Teachers in buxiban have to hold the students in place and had their own ways to attract their students. By describing buxiban's working environment like "eating at a buffet" or "eating at a shushi-go around," Mill indicated that the students in buxibans had the rights to choose their teachers. If the students do not like the teachers, they could change to another classes anytime. However, the students at school could not choose their own teachers. Mill clearly positioned buxiban teachers as needing to spend more time on teaching in order to meet students' needs and expectations. Through positioning students at school as not having rights to choose their teachers, Mill again positioned buxiban teachers as being more professional than school teachers.

Buxiban teachers' teacher identities could be found in Trent's (2016) study. In Trent's (2016) study, the identities of buxiban teachers were discursive. The participants did not construct themselves as a "proper teacher" because they did not have "paper qualifications," the so-called, "conventional teacher's certificate." They positioned themselves as not being qualified and they did not think to take up the identity of a

“teacher” because they did not work at school. Indeed formal teacher credentials symbolized the teacher have passed teacher training, and they are certified as real teachers. However, “a teacher identity that was more congruent with her personal and professional sense of self and related values and ideologies (Arvaja, 2016).” Anna, the participant in Arvaja’s study (Arvaja, 2016), showed her teacher identity by taking up her own positioning as a “teacher” through her respect to the students’ uniqueness. As Davis and Harré (1990) mentioned, “those who develop their particular concept of mother in anticipation that they will one day be positioned as mother will do so differently from someone who knows that they will never be so positioned.” In this study, Mill, the buxiban teacher constructed his identity by taking up his own positioning to the identity of a teacher based on his earlier experience of buxiban teacher who worked hard and meet the students’ needs.

Interestingly, though Mill was quite confident of buxiban teachers’ professionalism and thought that buxiban teachers are more professional than the school teachers, he rejected being called an educator. He even said, “I don’t care about the students,” and “I am just a passing-by traveler.” Mill’s denial of being regarded as an educator was similar to teachers in Trent’s (2016) study.

In Trent’s (2016), the participants who were teachers of informal learning contexts tended to underscore themselves and did not view themselves as “teachers” because they did not teach in a real school or they did not have close relationships with the students. They positioned teachers as people who cared and have close professional relations with the students. In this study, Mill denied an educator identity because he positioned “an educator” as the one who could have a profound effect on students and care about all the students. This is similar to Davis and Harré’s comment that (1990, p.47), how a person recognized his own positioning was based on his categories which matched the

characteristics that he believed in. Although what Mill said and how he acted matched the characteristics of an educator, his positioning towards “an educator” did not match. The participants in Trent’s (2016) study and this study both reflect Norton’s (2013, p.5) assumption that the construction of ones’ identities are based on how they position themselves.

Theme 2: Positively positioning allows the buxiban teacher to identify his unique self worth and value

A person might be positioned by other speakers; however, identity might not be changed by other’s positioning because everyone has their own positioning categories on one thing (Davis and Harré, 1990). As a buxiban teacher, Mill encountered a few negative positioning experiences; and the most significant one was the public positioned him as a teacher who only pursued for students’ scores.

First of all, through his working experience in the secondary students’ buxiban, he showed his unwillingness to be a “machine producer” and described the buxiban as another prison for students. He expressed his dissent in this kind of teaching practice and decided to quit his job after one short year. Then, in another experience of teaching a student in F, he fought against the student’s parents for seeing him as a money-maker and gave up teaching the student. He said, “He still kept trying to ‘memorize’ the vocabulary and learned English by rote.” Mill felt strongly that this method was useless for a person to learn English. He contended with the public’s positioning about his identity of being a buxiban teacher and showed care and concern for students’ feelings toward English learning. He cared about students’ attitudes toward English and did not want to see the students merely learning English for the sake of higher scores, so he chose to quit his jobs.

This same kind of positioning toward buxiban teachers is also noted in both Kwok's (2004) and Trent's (2016). In Kwok's (2004) study, buxiban was a place for enhancing students' academic performance. Teachers in buxiban were like idol teachers who taught the students some modes of learning that were different from those taught by school teachers and aimed to highly raise students' grades. Trent (2016) investigated buxiban teachers in Hong Kong and found that his participants tended to take up their identities as "tutors" because they provided students with quick hints about exam techniques and past exam papers, and checked answers during class. In the public's thought, buxiban teachers merely teachers who are teaching for tests.

Despite the fact that a buxiban teacher's was positioned as a teacher who taught for tests, Mill was unwilling to take up this positioning. As Davis and Harré (1990) mentioned, by extracting a person's own autobiography one can know how a person conceives of himself and how he takes up his position. In this study, Mill's description of his teaching method and what he did during his class strongly struck back the public positioning towards the identity of "a buxiban teacher" in two ways.

First, in Trent's (2016) study, one of the participant thought that it was a "distance education" (meaning, psychologically remote) in buxiban because buxiban teachers had no bond with their students. Compare to buxiban teachers, school teachers cared about students and would "care" or "guide" students when they had some difficulties. However, in this study, Mill mentioned how he cared about students' feelings and he would try his best to "stand in students' shoes." In children's English learning buxiban, he was like a "care-giver" who would do whatever he could just to encourage those shy children to talk in class. Besides, he would spend extra time teaching low-achievement students without payment. And in adult English learning buxiban, he cared about the students' voices and invited the students to share their feelings after class. He even went directly to the

students after class just to get the reflections from his adult students. When he got a negative comment on his teaching, he would adjust his teaching to meet the students' need.

The reason that Mill did not take up the positioning that buxiban English teachers' teaching as a "distance education" as Trent (2016) mentioned could trace back to his only one-time buxiban English learning experience. The buxiban teacher that he met cared about students' need and tried his best to communicate with the students with exaggerated body language and tone. Although Mill and his peers were just children and might not be able to understand, the teacher tried hard to offer them instruction. Based on this experience, Mill positively positioned buxiban teachers would take care of their students and help their students when they encountered any problems.

Secondly, in Trent's (2016) study, buxiban teachers were positioned as teachers who only taught for exam. In this study, Mill's had different belief in different working place. In children's English learning buxiban, Mill wanted to "bring happiness" to the children. Mill's belief of buxiban English teachers as "bringing happiness" to students still dated back to his earlier buxiban English learning experience. As he described it, it was an interesting and fun class. Mill did not remember what he had learned, but he remembered the teacher's actions and hard work. In that atmosphere, English was just a tool for communication and Mill was willing to learn in that class; thus, as being an English teacher in the children's English learning buxiban, he tried to imitate that buxbian teacher he met in his childhood and brought happiness to students in class.

And in adult English learning buxiban, Mill regarded himself as "a sushi-dish" or "a merchandise", and the students were like customers. In adult English learning buxiban, students had right to choose their teacher and the students chose his class because they loved what he taught and they had resonance with him. He described himself as "a

passing-by teacher traveler” because the students would come and go. Under this kind of working environment, he regarded himself as a role model for the students to learn from and was willing to share his life experiences on English learning while teaching. Through sharing his experiences with the students, he believed that he taught “something useful.” The belief of teaching “something useful” to students could connect with his English teaching experience in Cambodia where he worked as a “helper” who tried to make students learn English successfully. With these beliefs, Mill obviously refused to take up the negative identity that the public positioned him; instead of this, his positive positioning toward himself allowed him to identify his unique worth and value. Similar refusal to other’s positioning was also presented in Duff’s (2002) study—a group of students refused to take up their teacher’s positioning as non-local students, so they remained silent while teacher asked them to share their experiences in the class.

As Maclure (1993) noted, identity is a continuous struggle for teachers, and it is an argument connected to the teacher’s belief and how he implement in his teaching. In this study, the buxiban teacher fought against the public’s positioning and decided to become a considerate teacher who care about the students. Based on his earlier English learning and teaching experiences, the buxiban teacher refused to take up public’s positioning, and finally identify his unique worth and value as being a teacher who brings happiness to his students and “a role model” as a successful English learner for his students.

My Reflection

At the beginning of this study, the reason for me to embark on the journey of Mill’s was initiated by a question of how exactly of Mill as a buxiban English teacher and a school English teacher as myself are different in our development of our practice. At this point, I would like to address my own question by following topics: Mill’s thorny road to be a buxiban teacher, my response to the professionalism of a teacher and my visit to

Mill's classroom.

First, from Mill's story, it is easy to find that it was a thorny road to be a buxiban teacher. I, as a school English teacher, described my journey of being a teacher as "climbing the ladder." In order to be a qualified school English teacher, I spent time taking educational courses, being a study teacher for half a year and then finally passed teacher's certification exam to attest that I became a qualified English teacher. During my journey, there was always a teacher educator who offered guidance to me. However, in buxiban system, the working environment was competitive rather than supportive. Mill did not receive any teaching skills from other teachers, so how he taught could only base on his own learning or teaching experiences. Without a conventional teacher's certificate, Mill needed to strive hard for different kinds of English certification examinations to prove his own professionalism all the time. The road to a buxiban teacher was paved with adversities.

Second, when facing on Mill's argument—buxiban teachers are more professional than school teachers, my response is "it depends." In Mill's thought, the working environment for school teachers is not as competitive as buxiban teachers', so school teachers did not need to polish their English abilities. I could not deny that the working environment is more supportive at school; however, there are still many school teachers who take English certification exams every year in order to certify their own English proficiency. As for school teachers teach "boringly", I will say that school teachers nowadays requires to make creative lesson plans to meet students' needs. Not all the teachers teach "boringly." It would be unfair to tar all the school teachers with the same brush.

Third, after visiting Mill's classroom, I found students had zero interaction with the teacher. In my imagination, the adult students would have intensive interaction with Mill;

however, I was disappointed to find that no students tried to answer Mill's questions in class. As Mill mentioned, children learned English in a happy environment and they had a lot of interaction with the teachers; however, since when do the children not regard English as a language but a subject and need to "memorize English?" My visit to Mill's classroom made me frustrated.

To conclude my journey of Mill, I would say there are a lot of misunderstandings that Mill have towards school teachers, which might due to his earlier learning experiences. Through dialogues between Mill and me, I found that his negative impression of school teachers has deeply rooted in his mind and it is hard to change his prejudice against school teachers. Although Mill came to visit my classroom, my teaching did not change Mill's negative positioning towards school English teachers. He expressed his appreciation to my teaching which had some kind of differences from what he experienced before; however, he still thought that my teaching was boring because the students could have anticipated what I was going to do next. Mill's story depicts the potential hostility between school and buxiban teachers as if there is a watershed between them. However, both school and buxiban teachers nourish the same soil and play important roles in the Taiwanese educational system. Is it necessary for us to have this kind of hatred? If not, how could we resolve such hatred? My wish is that one day the two groups of English teachers would work closely together to educate Taiwan's English learners.



CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The present study started from a buxiban English teacher, Mill, who I encountered while pursuing my Master's degree. I was stroke by his confidence in his English teaching and began to inquire how a buxiban teacher became an English teacher as he is now. The conventional educational research focused on investigating how school teachers constructs their identities (see Masoumpanah & Zarei, 2014; Xu, 2013). However, in Taiwanese educational system, there is another group of teachers who work outside of school—that is buxiban teachers. Based on this, I began to explore how Mill as a buxiban teacher positions himself and how he perceives others' positioning in the overall Taiwanese educational context.

Summary of the Study

Starting from poststructuralist theory—positioning theory by Davies & Harré (1990), this study aimed to explore the positioning of a buxiban teacher in the Taiwanese English educational context. In order to understand how a buxiban teacher constructed his identity through positioning and being positioned. I conducted a narrative inquiry research by collecting narratives, interviews, dialogues about Mill's English learning and teaching experiences in addition to a field trip to Mill's current work place. The results was presented as two topics: Mill's English learning journey and Mill's English teaching experience.

Comparing and contracting Mill's experiences with Davis and Harré's (1990) positioning theory, it is clear that Mill's identity construction is highly related to his own learning experiences. Mill faced a lot of difficulties while learning at school and his school teacher gave him a negative positioning which made him decide to be a buxiban

teacher. Because of this negative school experience, he also had negative positioning toward school teachers. He believed that he could be a buxiban teacher who really cared about the students and listened to the students' voice and refused to be "machine producer" like his school English teacher. He fought against public positioning of him and strived hard for the happiness that one could get from English learning. In the end, he found his own unique worth and value being an English role model for his students by sharing his life experiences.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study contributed to contemporary research that a teacher's earlier learning experience may have an impact on his teaching belief, which presents on his implementation procedure of his current teaching context. Through different incidents of the earlier experiences, the teacher might gradually position his own belief as "a teacher" and then constructed his own positioning of how a teacher should be. By taking up his own positioning of a teacher, he constructed his teacher identity. The finding of this study also noted that a teacher's identity might be challenged by other's positioning; however, he could choose not to take up that identity and even found his unique worth and value via refusal of other's positioning (Davis and Harré, 1990).

Limitations of the Study

Although this study has demonstrated that positioning may have further impact on a teacher's identity construction, it still have some limitations. For one, there was only one participant explored in this study. Moreover, the data collection only included one observation on Mill's class. If the researcher got more chances to observe Mill's English class, more resources such as the Mill's interaction with his students and colleagues could have been recorded and the conclusion might be more comprehensive.

Suggestion for Future Research

In order to know how deep a teacher's past learning experiences would impact on his teaching, more in-depth investigations are necessary on the relationship of how a teacher's learning experience reflects his teacher's belief and teacher identity construction. Furthermore, the researchers could focus on how the teacher perceives his or her own English learning experiences in the past and have further research on how deep a teacher's English learning experiences reflect his or her own English teaching. Through this, we can have more understanding of how a teacher's identity may be constructed by positioning others and then how teachers could take their interaction with students seriously.

Concluding Remarks

Finally, this study wishes to build a bridge between the two teaching contexts and arouse policy makers' awareness to the fact—that language teaching in formal and informal contexts is not a dichotomy, but a close relationship. Mill's reluctance of being a school teacher and dedication to be a buxiban teacher shows a great impact that the earlier learning experiences that profoundly impact a teacher's identity construction. Through this study, the researcher thus expects that all the teachers who work in any kinds of educational systems can pay attention to the issue of positioning that exists in their current teaching contexts and be aware of how their positioning might have an impact on their students' identity construction.



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APPENDIX

Interview 1 — Mill's English learning background

1. You've been to English buxiban when you were in elementary school. Can you tell me your English learning experience at that time?
2. You mention that you are a self-learner in English, and why is that? And what did you do in your school English class?
3. How do you learn English during college year?

Interview 2 — Mill's working experience

1. Why do you want to be a teacher?
2. Why do you choose to teach in buxibans, instead of teaching at mainstream schools?
3. Please tell me the difficulties that you've ever faced in these different contexts (children's English learning buxiban, secondary school students' buxiban and adult English buxiban) and how you overcame them.

Interview 3 — Mill's teaching style

1. Please tell me how you design your teaching materials and how you interact your students in class in these different teaching contexts.
2. You've ever told me that you want to bring something useful to your students. What do you mean by "teaching something useful?"

Interview 4 — Mill's grammar class

1. How did you design today's teaching materials?
2. Why did you teach like this?
3. What is your teaching rationale?