

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Discussions

This chapter presents the results of the questionnaire, open-ended interviews, and classroom observations, followed by the discussion of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, along with factors related to the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire contained two parts and was used to reveal seventeen senior high school English teachers' background information and their beliefs about reading instruction. The second part included twenty-one statements, which were divided into three categories: the text-based approach, the reader-based approach, and the interactive approach. The statements used a Likert-type scale and next to the statements were four columns: "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree." The teachers' responses to the statements were converted to scores, that is, favorable statements would be scored 4 for "strongly agree" down to 1 for "strongly disagree." The average of each statement was calculated to see if any statements were more favorable (see Appendix E).

The average scores of the seven statements in each category were listed in Table 2. It was obvious that the average of text-based statements was the lowest, indicating that the teachers showed the least preference for the text-based approach. However, the average of reader-based statements was close to that of interactive statements, suggesting that the teachers preferred both reader-based and interactive approaches.

Table 2

The Average Scores of Seven Statements in Each Category

Category of Statements	Average of Seven Statements
Text-based	2.67
Reader-based	3.11
Interactive	3.07

Based on the rationale of the questionnaire, a score of three indicated that the teacher agreed with the statement, while a score of two suggested that the teacher disagreed with the statement. The result that text-based statements received an average of 2.67 points showed that the teachers did not fully agree with text-based statements. However, they generally agreed with reader-based and interactive statements, both of which averaged higher than three points.

Table 3 showed the average score of each text-based statement. The results indicated that only one statement averaged higher than three points, while the rest averaged lower than three.

Table 3

The Average Scores of Text-based Statements

Statement	Average
1. Students need to understand the meanings of new words so that they can comprehend the text.	2.35
5. I will first teach vocabulary, then derivatives, and finally the text.	2.71
9. Students who are unfamiliar with grammatical rules are often unable to comprehend the text.	2.53

Table 3 (continued)

Statement	Average
12. The explanation of grammar and sentence patterns is necessary for students to comprehend the text.	2.88
15. The purpose of reading instruction is to help students read accurately.	2.53
17. I will translate the text into Chinese word for word, sentence for sentence, to help students comprehend the text.	2.59
21. The larger the vocabulary students have, the easier it is for them to comprehend the text.	3.12

Among the seven text-based statements, Statement 21 received the highest average, while Statement 1 got the lowest. On the whole, the teachers agreed that if students have a larger vocabulary, they would find it easier to comprehend the text. However, the average score of Statement 1 indicated that eleven out of the seventeen teachers disagreed that it is necessary for students to understand new words before comprehending the text because students can guess word meanings by using either linguistic clues or contextual ones.

Among the statements that averaged lower than three points, Statements 12 and 17 are typical of the text-based approach and they averaged nearly three points. The fact indicated that although the teachers showed the least preference for the text-based approach, they still valued grammar instruction when it comes to reading instruction. They believed that these traditional teaching methods would help students gain a better understanding of the text. However, they did not think it works to translate the text word for word, sentence for sentence. The average score of Statement 5 also

indicated that the teachers might not follow traditional teaching procedures: first elaborating on new words, then derivatives, and finally the text. They might first elaborate on the text and explain unknown words when coming across any.

Table 4 presented the average score of each reader-based statement. Four among the seven statements averaged higher than three points, and the rest averaged nearly three points.

Table 4

The Average Scores of Reader-based Statements

Statement	Average
2. Having students predict the development or conclusion of the text can facilitate comprehension, while the instruction of vocabulary is unnecessary.	2.94
4. Without the teacher's elaboration of vocabulary and grammar, students can still fully comprehend the text when they have enough background knowledge.	3.12
7. It is unnecessary to elaborate on vocabulary because students can get the meaning from the context.	2.71
10. Students can comprehend the text by applying such reading skills as skimming, scanning, and guessing.	3.47
13. To help students comprehend the text, it is necessary to provide films, realia, or cultural background related to the text.	3.35
18. I will avoid elaborating on grammar because the goal of reading instruction is to help students become independent readers.	2.71

Table 4 (continued)

Statement	Average
20. To help students comprehend the text, it is necessary to activate their background knowledge.	3.47

Among the seven reader-based statements, Statements 10 and 20 received the highest average (3.47 points). It showed that the teachers believed that reading skills as well as background knowledge are of great help to students' reading comprehension. They also believed that the elaboration of vocabulary and grammar is not the only way to help students comprehend the text. The averages of Statements 4 and 13 were also higher than three points, confirming the importance of background knowledge to reading comprehension.

It is interesting to note that Statement 2 averaged nearly three points. As shown in Appendix E, thirteen among the seventeen teachers agreed with Statement 2. Among the thirteen teachers who agreed with Statement 2, ten teachers disagreed with Statement 1. The ten teachers disagreed that the instruction of vocabulary is necessary for reading comprehension. As for the other three teachers (Teachers 9, 12, and 14), they agreed with both Statement 1 and Statement 2. It can be inferred that they agreed with the first half of Statement 2. In other words, they agreed that having students predict the development or conclusion of the text can facilitate comprehension. However, they still considered it necessary to instruct new words so that students can understand the text.

The fact that Statements 7 and 18 averaged nearly three points is also worthy of explanation. In the context of the reader-based approach, teachers should highlight the

importance of students' background knowledge and reading skills rather than the instruction of linguistic knowledge. That is, the elaboration of vocabulary and grammar is by no means indispensable. However, five among the seventeen teachers disagreed with Statement 7, and there were also five teachers who disagreed with Statement 18. They considered it necessary to elaborate on vocabulary and grammar to help students comprehend the text. In other words, even though they agreed with the reader-based approach, they still believed vocabulary and grammar are valuable.

Table 5 presented the average score of each interactive statement. Five out of the seven statements averaged higher than three points, and the other two averaged nearly three points.

Table 5

The Average Scores of Interactive Statements

Statement	Average
3. To arouse students' interest in learning, it is necessary to do pre-reading activities.	3.24
6. Only the grammatical rules that hinder students' comprehension of the text need to be explained.	2.71
8. Besides vocabulary and grammar, reading skills need to be taught, too.	3.47
11. Only the vocabulary that causes comprehension difficulty needs elaboration.	3.06
14. Only the sentence patterns that hinder students' comprehension of the text need to be elaborated on.	2.65

Table 5 (continued)

Statement	Average
16. After the instruction of the text, it is necessary to have students integrate reading and writing skills.	3.12
19. I will encourage students to comprehend a new paragraph on the basis of contextual clues and background knowledge.	3.24

The fact that five statements averaged higher than three points indicated that the teachers generally agreed with these statements. They considered it necessary to do pre-reading activities to arouse students' interest. They believed that reading skills as well as vocabulary and grammar need to be instructed. However, only the vocabulary that impedes comprehension needs to be elaborated on. They agreed that students should be encouraged to comprehend a reading passage by using contextual clues and their background knowledge as well. They also agreed that it is necessary to have students integrate reading and writing skills after the reading instruction.

The fact that Statements 6 and 14 averaged nearly three points is worthy of discussion. As shown in Appendix E, eleven out of the seventeen teachers agreed that only the grammar and sentence patterns that hinder comprehension need to be explained. Still, six teachers believed that it is necessary to instruct grammar and sentence patterns to ensure that students can comprehend the text, and like the others, they also believed reading skills need to be taught. The fact that Statement 8 received the highest average showed that the importance of reading skills is recognized by all the seventeen teachers.

Based on the rationale mentioned in Chapter Three, the results of the

questionnaire indicated the orientations of the teachers. As shown in Table 6, none of the seventeen teachers was text-based, four were reader-based, one was interactive, nine were dual-oriented (8 reader-based/interactive and 1 text-based/interactive), two were multiple-oriented, and one showed no particular preference.

Table 6

Results of the Questionnaire

Teacher	Text-based	Reader-based	Interactive	Orientation
1	16	25	24	Dual (R&I)
2	17	21	20	Reader-based
3	23	20	21	Dual (T&I)
4	18	21	21	Dual (R&I)
5	16	24	24	Dual (R&I)
6	18	22	20	Reader-based
7	14	21	20	Reader-based
8	15	22	21	Dual (R&I)
9	20	24	19	Reader-based
10	19	18	22	Interactive
11	25	24	27	Multiple
12	19	21	21	Dual (R&I)
13	24	22	22	Multiple
14	19	23	21	Dual (R&I)
15	18	21	21	Dual (R&I)
16	19	19	19	No significant orientation

Table 6 (continued)

Teacher	Text-based	Reader-based	Interactive	Orientation
17	20	24	22	Dual (R&I)

Note. T = text-based; R = reader-based; I = interactive.

The results indicated that most of the teachers were either reader-based or dual-oriented in their theoretical orientations. These teachers accounted for 76.5% of all the seventeen teachers. It is worthy of mention that among the nine dual-oriented teachers, only one was text-based/interactive, while the rest were reader-based/interactive. The results shown in Table 6 agreed with those shown in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Only the teachers with particular theoretical orientations were selected to be the participants in Phase II. Based on the results of the questionnaire, none of the teachers was categorized as text-based. As a result, one reader-based teacher and the only one interactive teacher were selected to participate in the second phase. It is worthy of mention that although there were four teachers identified as reader-based, only one was willing to be observed and audiotaped, which caused some limitations to the study. The reader-based teacher was named Teacher A and the interactive teacher was named Teacher B. Their background information was shown in Table 1 in Chapter Three. They were interviewed and their classrooms were observed.

Open-ended Interviews

In Phase II, the participants were interviewed before and after classroom observations. They were first interviewed before classroom observations to draw forth their beliefs about reading instruction and to confirm the results of the questionnaire.

They were then interviewed after classroom observations to review their classroom practices and to explain the rationale behind some of their practices which were found to be inconsistent with their beliefs.

The interviews before classroom observations were conducted with the focus on nine issues. The interview questions were intended to identify the participants' beliefs about eight aspects of their teaching and reveal the arrangement of the textbooks in use:

1. efficient reading instruction
2. reading skills that students need to learn
3. factors benefiting reading comprehension
4. factors hindering reading comprehension
5. factors enhancing reading instruction
6. factors impeding reading instruction
7. sections in a lesson/unit that must be instructed
8. sections in a lesson/unit that can be skipped
9. arrangement of the textbooks in use

Questions with similar topics were discussed together (e.g., Q3 and Q4, Q5 and Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q9).

The participants' responses to the interview questions were summarized in Table 7. The participants' theoretical orientations were judged from their responses, and the results were intended to verify the results of the questionnaire.

Table 7

Summary of Responses to Interview Questions

Issue	Response	
	Teacher A	Teacher B
1. Efficient reading instruction	Related materials	Preview
	Structure of the text	Language forms
	Writer's standpoints	Grammar
		Sentence patterns
2. Reading skills that students need to learn	Main idea	Discussion
	Structure of the text	Skimming
	Coherence	Scanning
	Reading for content	Guessing
3. Factors benefiting/ hindering reading comprehension	Background knowledge	Prior experience
	Reading skills	Linguistic knowledge
	Vocabulary	
	Fear of long passages	
4. Factors enhancing/impeding reading instruction	Learning experience	
	Students' attitudes	Students' proficiency
		Prior experience

Table 7 (continued)

Issue	<u>Responses</u>	
	Teacher A	Teacher B
5. The use of textbook sections	Reading passage	Warm-up
		Reading passage
		Post-reading
		Vocabulary
		Word file
		Sentence patterns

The interview with Teacher A took about 30 minutes. Teacher A's responses to the interview questions were stated as follows. Regarding efficient reading instruction, Teacher A focused on using related materials, introducing the structure of the text and the writer's standpoints. She would use materials related to the text, such as news reports, lectures, films, and so on. She would also introduce the structure of the text so that students could have a general idea of what the text is about. What's more, she would have students tell the writer's viewpoints to gain a better understanding of the text.

Concerning reading skills, Teacher A believed that students should learn to find the main idea, to examine the structure of the text, and to find the coherence among the introduction, development/climax, and conclusion. She pointed out that students should read for content, predict and sample only parts of the actual text, and recreate the writer's meaning. She also indicated that everything in students' prior experience or background knowledge plays an important role in the reading process.

As to factors that may influence students' reading comprehension, Teacher A suggested that plentiful background knowledge, good reading skills, and a large vocabulary are the factors that may enhance students' comprehension, while fear of reading a long passage, unsuccessful learning experience, and limited knowledge of word meanings may impede students' comprehension. Regarding factors that may affect teachers' reading instruction, she pointed out that students' attitudes play an important part. She suggested that if students have an open mind and are active in classroom discussion, then reading instruction can be smoothly conducted. However, if students fear learning a long passage, then it may cause hindrance to reading instruction.

Concerning the use of reading textbooks, Teacher A used the Lungteng version (see Appendix G), which includes sections like pre-reading activity, reading passage, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, a look at the language, now hear this, patterns in action, and writing corner. She would elaborate only on the reading passage and skip the other sections. She would first use related materials to elicit students' background knowledge, then introduce the structure of the text, and have students apply reading skills to get the main idea.

In a word, Teacher A focused on helping students derive meaning by activating their prior knowledge about the text and the world in general to recreate the author's meaning. She would have students constantly apply reading skills to comprehend the reading passage. Judging from her responses to these interview questions, Teacher A was identified as reader-based in her theoretical orientation, which agreed with the result of the questionnaire.

The interview with Teacher B took about 20 minutes. The following is a summary of Teacher B's responses to the interview. As to efficient reading instruction, Teacher B suggested that students should preview the text to have a general picture of it. She would then instruct the vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar that hinder students from comprehending the text. Besides, she would have students discuss issues related to the text.

Regarding reading skills, Teacher B laid emphasis on such skills as skimming, scanning, and guessing the meaning from the formation or the context. She would ask students to skim the text for the main idea. She would also have them scan for key points and guess word meanings by analyzing the form (i.e., word base, prefix, and suffix) or using contextual clues.

Concerning factors that may influence students' reading comprehension, Teacher B indicated that sufficient prior experience and linguistic knowledge may benefit students' comprehension. She also pointed out that when coming across a reading passage, students with abundant knowledge tend to grasp the gist of it more easily, and that students without such knowledge often fail to get the main idea. Regarding factors that may affect teachers' reading instruction, she believed that students' proficiency levels and their prior experience have an effect on the proceeding of reading instruction. She stated that if students have sufficient background knowledge, it will be easier for teachers to instruct the reading passage.

As to the use of reading textbooks, Teacher B adopted the San Min version (see Appendix H), which includes such sections as warm-up, reading tip, reading passage, post-reading, vocabulary, word file, sentence patterns, expansion, and writing practice.

She would usually teach all the sections, but when her schedule was tight, she would skip expansion and writing practice. She would focus on the elaboration of the vocabulary and sentence patterns that cause comprehension difficulty, the activation of students' prior experience, and the application of reading skills.

Simply put, Teacher B laid stress on the activation of students' background knowledge, the application of reading skills, and the elaboration of the vocabulary and grammar that impede comprehension. Judging from her responses to the interview questions, Teacher B was identified as interactive in her theoretical orientation, which agreed with the result of the questionnaire. Overall, the results of the interviews were consistent with those of the questionnaire.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to confirm the information obtained through the questionnaire and the interviews. That is, they served the purpose of checking whether the participants' instructional practices were consistent with their theoretical beliefs.

The observations took three and nine class hours respectively. The class hours differed as the participants had their own schedules and instructed reading passages in different ways. Among the four teachers who were identified as reader-based, Teacher A was the one that was willing to be observed and audiotaped, and was thus invited to be one of the participants. Teacher A was a homeroom teacher and taught two senior classes. She would usually finish teaching the reading passage in the textbook first, and then elaborate on supplementary handouts like news reports and past exam questions. Teacher B, the only one identified as interactive, was the other participant.

She was also a homeroom teacher, and she taught two freshman classes. She would first elaborate on most of the units in the textbook and then spend one week giving tests on vocabulary, cloze test, reading comprehension, and translation to help students review the units and prepare for monthly examinations.

The participants were observed and audiotaped for three and nine class hours respectively. Teacher A was scheduled to teach Lesson Eight to a senior class of 38 students, *A Christmas Carol: A Version for Readers' Theater*. Instead of adopting the textbook, she used related materials, including a translation handout, lyrics to a song, and a cloze test on the reading passage (see Appendix I). The theme of these materials was related to that of the text. The cloze test was actually the summary of the reading passage in the textbook. Teacher B, on the other hand, taught a freshman class of 42 students Unit Ten, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and she also used supplementary handouts, including a vocabulary handout, lyrics, and songs (see Appendix J). The songs were taken from the movie, *The Phantom of the Opera*. The sequences of their classroom activities were shown in Appendix K.

The observed sessions were part of the participants' regular classroom instruction. The transcribed classroom activities were coded by two raters using a classroom observation checklist as different orientations. The checklist (see Appendix C) was adapted from Lloyd's (1995; 1996) categories of reading comprehension instruction and Kinzer's (1988a) categorization of reading models (i.e., text-based, reader-based, and interactive) and was used to identify the participants' classroom activities and calculate the duration of each activity. The reading instruction in each class was generally divided into pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading

activities. However, the participants did not conduct all of these activities in each class. Thus, the raters were asked to neglect such categories as pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. They were required to focus on classroom activities and divide these activities into text-based, reader-based, and interactive. On the checklist, sixteen activities were text-based, and sixteen were reader-based.

Interactive activities included both text-based and reader-based activities on condition that interactive teachers would elaborate only on the vocabulary and grammar that cause students' comprehension difficulty, and they would assess students' learning of vocabulary and grammar in the context. They would also have students apply what they have learned from the text and integrate with other skills. The raters were asked to identify interactive activities based on such rationale and indicate interactive activities, if any, on the checklist. Based on the majority of their classroom practices, the participants were identified as reflecting a dominant orientation. When the raters completed the checklists, the outcomes of their categorizing classroom activities were compared on the basis of the frequency of the activities. Interrater agreement of 92.6% was reached in the twelve transcribed classes. Disagreements over the coding of Teacher A's classroom activities were resolved through discussion.

The Results of Teacher A's Classroom Observations

In the three observed classes, Teacher A employed related materials, elaborated on these materials, played a song, and gave students a test on Lesson Eight. Table 8 showed the results of her classroom observations.

Table 8

The Results of Teacher A's Classroom Observations

Activity	Duration (min.)	Percentage
1. Instructing vocabulary, idioms, and phrases.	11	7.33%
2. Instructing derivatives, collocations, synonym, and antonym.	3.5	2.33%
3. Explaining grammar and sentence patterns.	10	6.67%
5. Providing Ss with realia, props, pictures, films, etc.	8	5.33%
6. Other activities. (Having Ss write their translations on the blackboard.)	4.2	2.8%
10. Eliciting what Ss have learned.	2.5	1.67%
12. Other activities. (Having Ss share their feelings about the song.)	2	1.33%
13. Elaborating on vocabulary, idioms, and phrases.	18	12%
14. Elaborating on grammar and sentence patterns.	16.5	11%
15. Introducing the organization of the text.	3	2%
16. Translating and paraphrasing the text.	8.5	5.67%
20. Activating Ss' background knowledge.	1.5	1%
26. Giving Ss quizzes on vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar.	30	20%
Others (Classroom management).	31.5	21%
Total	150	100%

Note. Ss = students. Activities 10, 12, and 20 are reader-based. The rest are text-based.

Most of the activities Teacher A conducted were text-based activities, including instructing vocabulary, idioms, and phrases, elaborating on grammar and sentence

patterns, introducing the organization of the text, translating and paraphrasing the text. Take her first class for example. She took nearly half a class (24.5 minutes) to teach the vocabulary and grammar. She also conducted some reader-based activities, like activating students' background knowledge and eliciting what students had learned. With each class lasting for 50 minutes, three classes had 150 minutes in total. As a whole, text-based activities took 112.5 minutes and accounted for 75% of the class hours, while reader-based activities took 6 minutes and took up only 4%. The other 21% was spent on classroom management, including handing out and collecting examination papers, correcting answer sheets and handouts, setting up a CD player, and giving students a lecture on the importance of practice. Teacher A's classroom practices were thus identified as text-based.

The Results of Teacher B's Classroom Observations

Teacher B, on the other hand, lectured on Unit Ten, used supplementary handouts, played some songs, showed a part of a film, and then gave students quizzes and tests in the nine observed class hours. It is worthy of mention that in addition to the textbook, students were required to study a vocabulary book and a monthly magazine on their own, which were included in monthly examinations. To check if students studied the vocabulary book and the monthly magazine, Teacher B spent some time having quizzes on vocabulary, cloze test, reading comprehension, and translation, and these quizzes took about two class hours in total. Thus, in the nine observed class hours, Teacher B actually spent seven class hours teaching Unit Ten, and these class hours had 350 minutes in total. Table 9 showed the results of her classroom observations.

Table 9

The Results of Teacher B's Classroom Observations

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Duration (min.)</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Instructing vocabulary, idioms, and phrases.	37	10.57%
2. Instructing derivatives, collocations, synonym, and antonym.	19.5	5.57%
3. Explaining grammar and sentence patterns.	25	7.14%
4. Having Ss do drills in sentence patterns.	16	4.57%
5. Providing Ss with realia, props, pictures, films, etc.	64	18.29%
6. Other activities. (Checking students' answers on the vocabulary handout.)	7	2%
8. Having Ss share their personal experiences.	6	1.71%
9. Providing Ss with background information.	2	0.57%
13. Elaborating on vocabulary, idioms, and phrases.	4	1.14%
14. Elaborating on grammar and sentence patterns.	10	2.86%
16. Translating and paraphrasing the text.	17	4.86%
18. Other activities. (Having Ss practice listening.)	3.5	1%
20. Activating Ss' background knowledge.	2.5	0.71%
24. Having Ss do the exercises in the workbook.	10	2.86%
26. Giving Ss quizzes on vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar.	63	18%
27. Other activities. (Elaborating on the examination paper.)	20	5.71%
28. Having Ss review what they have learned.	3.5	1%
32. Other activities. (Elaborating on vocabulary that hinders comprehension).	3.5	1%

Table 9 (continued)

Others (Classroom management).	40	11.43%
Total	350	100%

Note. Activity 18 is interactive. Activities 8, 9, 20, and 28 are reader-based. The rest are text-based.

Teacher B conducted more text-based activities than reader-based or interactive activities. She spent most of the class hours conducting text-based activities, including instructing vocabulary, idioms, and phrases, elaborating on grammar and sentence patterns, translating the text, and giving students quizzes on vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar. She also conducted some reader-based activities, including activating students' background knowledge and providing students with background information. After the instruction of the text, she conducted interactive activities and had students integrate what they had learned with other skills. Altogether, the text-based activities took 292.5 minutes and accounted for 83.6% of the class hours, reader-based activities took 14 minutes and took up 4%, and interactive activities took 3.5 minutes and accounted for only 1%. The rest 11.4% was spent on classroom management, including checking assignments, distributing and collecting examination papers, and setting up visual aids. Based on the majority of the observed activities, Teacher B was identified as text-based. Overall, the results of classroom observations were inconsistent with the results of the questionnaire and the interviews.

Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

The results of Phase I and Phase II revealed that there was inconsistency between the participants' beliefs and practices. In Phase I, based on the results of the questionnaire, Teacher A was identified as reader-based and Teacher B was interactive

in their theoretical orientations. In Phase II, the results of the interviews conducted before classroom observations confirmed those of the questionnaire. However, the results of classroom observations indicated that most of the activities both participants conducted were text-based. It was obvious that what the participants conducted in class was discrepant with what they conceived.

Factors Related to the Inconsistency between Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

The factors that caused the inconsistency between the participants' beliefs and practices were revealed in the interviews conducted after classroom observations. The factors were coded as students, teaching materials, schedules, examinations, and teachers. English translation of the interviews was provided, since the interviews were conducted in Chinese to avail the participants to express themselves comfortably and freely.

Students

When asked why they conducted text-based activities most of the time, the participants pointed out that students were the major factor. Teacher A explained that students varied in proficiency levels in each class, which made it difficult for her to cater to each student's needs in class. The students in her class belonged to the natural science group, and did not devote as much time to English as to physics, chemistry, or math. Some of them feared learning English or even hated it because of unsuccessful learning experiences. This attitude was influential in her decisions on teaching approaches and made it even harder for her to conduct classroom activities smoothly.

Teacher B, on the other hand, pointed out that the number of students in a class as well as the tone of the class affected her instruction. She explained that the student

number in her class was smaller and there was no need for her to spend time trying to maintain the discipline. Moreover, since the students in her class were more active and hard-working, she was able to conduct classroom activities more smoothly.

Teaching Materials

The participants both indicated that teaching materials were another factor that led to the inconsistency between their beliefs and practices. They stated that there is a gap between junior high English curricula and senior high English curricula. The former are easy to learn, while the latter are much harder. The textbooks for senior high students may be difficult for the freshmen because the vocabulary is more, the text is longer, and grammatical rules and sentence patterns are more difficult to learn. Hence, the participants would elaborate on the vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns, and translate the text into Chinese to bridge the gap and help students comprehend the text.

In addition to the textbooks, the participants also used supplementary materials, including vocabulary handouts, grammar handouts, interesting reports, linking-up translations, lyrics to songs, etc. Teacher A even used a cloze test to replace the reading passage because she considered that the reading passage is lengthy and that students might feel bored and fail to get the meaning out of it. Teacher B also used lots of supplementary handouts, for she believed that the more the students practice, the better they learn. The participants did not distribute these handouts at random. Instead, they wanted their students to learn more. That is why they elaborated on the vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns in these handouts. The text-based approach turned out to be a more feasible choice for them to conduct instructional

practices than the other two approaches, which in turn led to the inconsistency between their beliefs and practices.

Schedules

When asked why they conducted more text-based activities than the other activities, the participants explained that they were required to follow a common schedule for each grade and the text-based approach helped them do so. The participants were scheduled to finish teaching certain lessons/units for each monthly examination. Besides the textbooks, students had to study on their own a vocabulary book and a monthly magazine for monthly examinations. To urge students to study the vocabulary book and the monthly magazine, the participants would give quizzes and tests on these, thus making their schedules even tighter.

The participants had their own syllabi. When asked why she elaborated on the cloze test instead of the text, Teacher A explained that she used the cloze test to help students get the key points mainly because this lesson was assigned as a self-taught one and students had to study it on their own. As for the other lessons, as her schedule was tight, she would just lecture on reading passages. Besides the textbook, she would also elaborate on the texts in the monthly magazine, which she considered interesting and useful for students. Also, she would analyze mock examination test items and teach students how to write compositions, and she adopted the text-based approach to follow her schedule. Teacher B also had a tight schedule, which is why she skipped certain sections of the textbook. Her schedule was crammed with lectures on the textbook and quizzes on the vocabulary book and the monthly magazine. She would go through every unit even though some units were assigned as self-taught ones.

Under the constraint of time, she opted for the text-based approach in order to catch up with her schedule. Though both participants had their own syllabi, the common schedule for each grade caused them to conduct practices inconsistent with their beliefs.

Examinations

The participants stated that examinations are another factor that they opted for the text-based approach. Although there are various ways of assessment, testing is still a necessary evil. The participants gave their students examinations to assess their learning outcomes. Teacher A elaborated on the exam questions for the purpose of equipping her students with abundant knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and sentence patterns so that they could do well on Scholastic Academic Test and Department Required Test. She chose the text-based approach to meet the need.

Teacher B, on the other hand, spent 36% of the session on quizzes and tests in the nine observed classes. She explained that as students had to study the textbook, supplementary materials, a vocabulary book, and a monthly magazine, examinations were given as a means to evaluate their understanding. Since examinations consumed plenty of time and there was a common schedule to follow, she had no alternative but to adopt the text-based approach. She commented:

“Because there is a lot that needs to be continually elaborated on so that students will be impressed, I need to keep on reminding them of the vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns that are often tested in examinations.”

Teacher B also indicated that the patterns of questions of midterm examinations or finals had an impact on her instruction. She focused on the elaboration of the

vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns in order to help students do well on these examinations. Like Teacher A, she also adopted the text-based approach under the influence of such examinations as midterms, finals, and college entrance exams.

Teachers

The participants themselves were one decisive factor, too. They might stick to what they believed to be efficient even though they were aware that there are other ways to instruct reading. For example, Teacher A said:

“I use a more traditional approach because I’m used to it. I know there are other teaching approaches and I used to adopt different approaches. Students were happy in class, but they didn’t do well on exams. So, I feel the traditional approach is nice. At least, I can help students get the key points and do well on exams.”

Teacher B had similar reasons:

“When I finished graduate school, I was eager to put theory into practice and thus tried various teaching methods. But it took me more time to prepare lessons, and sometimes I had to catch up with my schedule. Besides, students didn’t get better grades. So, I gave up.”

It seemed that the participants’ teaching was guided by testing. Although the participants had tried different approaches before, they finally chose to adopt the text-based approach in order to help students get the main points and do well on examinations. Moreover, the text-based approach availed them to finish teaching the lessons for monthly examinations, and they would not fall behind their schedules.

In addition to continuing advanced studies (e.g., graduate studies), attending symposiums on reading instruction is another way to inspire the participants to try

different teaching approaches. However, in the past three years, Teacher A did not attend any, while Teacher B attended just once. The reason for Teacher A's absence from symposiums was that she found it troublesome to ask for leave and find other teachers to substitute her.

To sum up, these factors were interwoven together and affected the participants' practices. Students' proficiency levels would influence how the participants adopted teaching materials. The difficulty of the teaching materials would in turn have an effect on how the participants elaborated on them. To evaluate the students' understanding of these materials, the participants would give the students many quizzes and tests. When there were many quizzes and tests, the participants would have to catch up with their schedules by skipping part of the teaching materials. If the participants decided to adopt other approaches, they would have to spend more time preparing lessons and design classroom activities. They might thus fall behind the common schedule for each grade. They might or might not be aware of their beliefs about their own ways of conducting reading instruction. Still, these factors influenced how they conducted classroom activities and caused the inconsistency between their beliefs and practices.