

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

This study is aimed to probe into senior high school English teachers' beliefs about reading instruction and their classroom practices and to investigate the correlation between their beliefs and practices. Factors that cause the discrepancy between their beliefs and practices, if any, are also explored. The first section presents the summary of the results and addresses the research questions raised in Chapter One. Implications and limitations of the study are proposed in the following sections. The last two sections provide suggestions for future studies and for senior high school English teachers as well.

#### *Summary of the Results*

Based on the results of the questionnaire, open-ended interviews, and classroom observations, the answers to the research questions are summarized as follows:

(1) What are senior high school English teachers' beliefs about reading instruction?

The results of the questionnaire respond to this research question. Among the seventeen teachers, one showed no significant orientation, four were reader-based, one was interactive, nine were dual-oriented, and two were multiple-oriented. Of the nine dual-oriented teachers, eight were identified as reader-based/interactive and one was text-based/interactive.

According to the results, the teachers tended to prefer the reader-based and interactive approaches and showed the least preference for the text-based approach, which explained why none of the teachers was categorized as text-based in their theoretical orientations. The teachers were inclined to activate students' background

knowledge, motivate students to apply reading skills, and have students alternate between reader-based and text-based processing to check and restructure their comprehension of the content when they read.

(2) How is reading instruction delivered?

Classroom observations were conducted to address the second research question. Two participants (one identified as reader-based and the other identified as interactive) were observed in the class hours for finishing teaching a lesson/unit, which took three and nine class hours respectively. The observed class hours were part of their regular classroom instruction and representative of their reading instruction. The reading instruction in each class hour was generally divided into pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities. These activities were divided into text-based, reader-based, and interactive activities. The transcribed classes were coded by two raters using a classroom observation checklist as different orientations.

Teacher A spent three class hours finishing instructing a lesson to a senior class. It is worthy of note that Teacher A did not lecture on the reading passage in the textbook. Instead, she elaborated on supplementary materials, including a translation handout, lyrics to a song, and a cloze test on the reading passage. The topics of the translation handout and the song were related to the topic of the reading section. The translation handout was originally meant for multiple-picture guided writing, in which students were supposed to observe the sequence of the pictures and write a coherent composition by applying as many sentence patterns as possible.

Teacher A spent most of the class hours (75%) conducting text-based activities, while only 4% of the class hours were spent on reader-based activities. She elaborated

on specific vocabulary, transitional words/phrases, sentence patterns, and grammar in the translation handout as well as in the lyrics to the song. Although she did not lecture on the reading passage, she elaborated on the cloze test to help students get the main idea of the text.

Teacher B, on the other hand, spent nine class hours finishing teaching a unit to a freshman class. Among the nine class hours, two class hours were used to give students quizzes and tests on a vocabulary book and a monthly magazine. Teacher B lectured on the text, used supplementary handouts, played some songs, showed a part of a film, and gave students quizzes and tests. Except for the warm-up and writing practice sections, she elaborated on all the sections of the textbook. She also used vocabulary and grammar handouts to equip students with more detailed information. Moreover, she acquainted students with the text by playing some songs and part of a film related to the text.

Most of the activities Teacher B conducted in class were text-based (83.6%), a few were reader-based (4%), and few were interactive (1%). Teacher B spent most of the class hours instructing vocabulary, idioms, and phrases, elaborating on grammar and sentence patterns, translating the text, and giving students quizzes on vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar. Altogether, she spent more than one-third of the class hours on quizzes and tests (36%). When interviewed why she did so, Teacher B explained that in addition to the textbook, the students also had to study a vocabulary book and a monthly magazine without the teacher's instruction. She gave the students quizzes and tests to assess how much they had learned from these materials as well.

Classroom observations showed that both participants spent most of their class

hours conducting text-based activities. That is, they adopted the text-based approach to reading instruction. It turned out that there was inconsistency between their beliefs and practices.

(3) What are the factors, if any, that may influence the practices of reading instruction?

The results of classroom observations revealed the inconsistency between the participants' beliefs and practices. Both participants adopted the text-based approach in conducting classroom practices, though they were respectively identified as reader-based and interactive in their theoretical beliefs. The interviews conducted after classroom observations revealed the factors that caused the discrepancy. The factors included students, teaching materials, schedules, examinations, and teachers. Students' proficiency levels, interest, the number of students in a class, and the tone of a class had influence on the participants' instruction. Students' proficiency levels differ in each class, and not all students are interested in English. Therefore, teachers need to discipline a big class and motivate the class whenever necessary.

Besides, the content and length of the text as well as the related materials would also affect the way the participants conducted classroom activities. The participants pointed out that when a reading passage is long and contains a large amount of vocabulary, they would usually elaborate on the vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns in it. They would even translate it to help students understand.

In addition to students and teaching materials, schedules and examinations were influential factors, too. The participants had to follow a common schedule for each grade, and they had to cram their individual schedules with quizzes and examinations.

When their own schedules were tight, they could not but opt for the text-based approach to follow the common schedule.

The participants themselves were another factor. To help students perform well on the examinations, the participants would adopt the text-based approach as they considered it the most efficient way. Although reader-based and interactive approaches were more effective in motivating students to learn English, the participants chose the text-based approach to save themselves trouble in preparing lessons.

Such factors as students, teaching materials, schedules, examinations, and teachers were interwoven with one another. They could benefit or hinder the participants' reading instruction and in turn enhance or impede students' reading comprehension.

### *Implications of the Study*

Based on the results of the study, some implications were proposed. First, when conducting reading instruction, the participants adopted the text-based approach although they showed preference for the reader-based and interactive approaches when they responded to the questionnaire. Their preference for reader-based and interactive approaches may be influenced by the prevalence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as CLT is the mainstream in the field of English teaching in Taiwan and the principles of CLT are set as the standards of the current English curriculum. Though the teachers are well informed of the CLT principles, however, due to such factors as students, teaching materials, schedules, examinations, and teachers themselves, they conducted their instructional practices in totally different

ways.

Second, testing remains a major way to assess students' learning outcomes.

Though there are various ways of assessment, testing is regarded as a comparatively fair and just means. It is undeniable that teaching is still guided by testing, no matter how long the reformation of the educational system has been put into practice.

Teachers will do whatever possible to help students do well on examinations. Testing takes up certain amount of time and in turn decreases the time available for teachers' instruction. Under such circumstances, teachers are likely to conduct what they consider to be effective rather than what they believe to be ideal. This factor leads to the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices.

Finally, teachers' schedules are tight, as they have to cram their students for entrance examinations with textbooks and supplementary materials. The information provided by textbooks may be systematic and plentiful, but textbooks are not updated every year and the information provided is never sufficient. Since language is dynamic and changes with each passing day, new information will spring up and teachers need to update what they already know and provide students with as much new information as possible. With tight schedules, teachers may thus opt for certain approaches to meet the need.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

Although all of the research questions in this study were answered, there were still some limitations. First, there were merely twenty-one statements reflecting three approaches to reading instruction in the questionnaire, with each approach containing only seven statements. These statements might not be enough to identify precisely the

teachers' beliefs about reading instruction.

Second, it might not be sufficient to conduct classroom observations in the class hours for finishing teaching a lesson/unit. Since the participants had to follow a common schedule for each grade and the schedule was too tight to include all the lessons/units, some lessons/units were assigned for the students to study on their own. Although the observed class hours were part of the participants' regular classroom instruction, the observed class hours might not precisely represent what the participants would do in class. Take Teacher A for example. She did not lecture on the reading passage as it was assigned as a self-taught lesson. It might not be enough to observe the participants instruct either teacher-taught or self-taught lessons/units since they might conduct different classroom activities. That is, the participants might conduct different approaches depending on the content of a lesson/unit. Furthermore, as each of the participants taught two classes of the same grade, there was no knowing if they would conduct different reading instruction to different graders.

Third, it might not be enough to conduct classroom observations by audiotaping and note-taking. It would be more accurate and precise to record the participants' instructional practices by videotaping, as videotaping can record many details of classroom practices that are not necessarily noticed on the spot and can be examined many times. However, when asked to be observed in the class hours for finishing teaching a lesson/unit, the participants preferred not to be videotaped. Videotaping might interfere with the participants' instruction and hinder them from conducting instruction consistent with their beliefs.

Finally, the classroom observation checklist might not be thorough enough. The

items of classroom activities might not be specific enough to describe all the activities the participants conducted. Thus, the item “Other activities” was used to compensate for the lack of more specific items. What’s more, the division of classroom activities (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities) might cause trouble in categorizing the participants’ classroom activities. It was because although the reading instruction in each class was generally divided into pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities, the participants did not conduct classroom activities accordingly. For example, Teacher A skipped while-reading activities as the lesson was assigned to the students as a self-taught lesson. She did not lecture on the reading passage of the textbook. Instead, she elaborated on a cloze test related to the reading passage. Teacher B did not include pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities in a single class; instead, she spent several classes conducting these activities separately. In the beginning, the division of classroom activities made it difficult to categorize classroom activities. However, when the division was left alone, it was easier to categorize the participants’ activities as text-based, reader-based, or interactive.

### *Suggestions for Future Studies*

Based on the limitations of this study, some suggestions were provided for future studies. First, more statements can be included in the questionnaire. If there are more statements in the questionnaire for the participants to respond to, there will be more accurate data for the researcher to analyze.

Second, if time permits, it will be better to conduct classroom observations in the class hours for teaching more lessons/units, as more data can be collected and



analyzed. The class hours for finishing teaching one lesson/unit may not fully or precisely represent the participants' regular classroom instruction. If the participants happen to teach different graders, it will be more thorough to observe them conduct reading instruction to different graders. It is better not to conduct classroom observations before monthly examinations as the participants may be busy helping students review what they have learned and they may also give students lots of tests instead of instructing the reading.

Third, more detailed information will be obtained if the participants welcome videotaping. Like audiotapes, videotapes can be replayed and examined many times. Moreover, videotapes can capture many details of classroom practices that are not necessarily noticed on the spot, like what the participants write on the blackboard.

Finally, more activities can be included in the classroom observation checklist and the division of classroom activities can be left out. With more activities provided, the categorization of reading instruction in each class will be more accurate. Moreover, it will be easier to categorize classroom activities if there is no need to give attention to the division. The division of classroom activities may cause trouble in categorizing the participants' classroom activities since the participants may not conduct pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities accordingly.

### ***Suggestions for Senior High School English Teachers***

Though teachers may agree with certain approaches, they may still adopt different approaches under some circumstances, causing inconsistency between their beliefs and practices. There may be no answer to such situation. However, to find a balance between beliefs and practicality, teachers may try the following resources.

First, they may participate in more symposiums on reading instruction so that they can update their teaching approaches and absorb more new knowledge on reading instruction. They may also attend workshops and teaching demonstrations to exchange their teaching experience with one another and learn from others. Once the teachers at a school share similar ideas about teaching, they can make changes in their teaching.

Second, as the patterns of test items in school examinations have an impact on teachers' instruction, teachers may reach a consensus that the patterns of test items can be flexible and innovative. Besides the text-based approach, teachers may integrate the reader-based and interactive approaches into test items, causing a positive backwash effect. That is, aside from testing students' linguistic competence, school examinations should also contain other language competence, including "grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence." (Canale & Swain, 1980) After all, the use of grammatical rules of a language is not the goal of language education. Instead, the ability to use language appropriately should be the goal of language education. Students should be assessed with a communicative test, which requires them to put authentic language to use within a context (Brown, 1994).

Finally, teachers may hold their beliefs and conduct their reading instruction accordingly. Though they may not be able to change the examination system, they can adopt different approaches and conduct various activities to arouse students' interest in learning English and enhance the effectiveness of teaching. Teachers may make a change in teaching reading, and it will certainly make a difference in their instruction

and students' understanding.

