

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

English is a global language and it is the language of business, technology and academe. As reported by the British Council, eighty percent of the electronically stored information in the world is in English and 66 percent of the world scientists read in it (Power, 2005). “Conquer English, conquer the world,” a commercial slogan of a Taiwanese private language institute, has faithfully conveyed a stunning truth—English has become the *lingua franca* around the world.

The globalization of English has led to a consequence of English learning fever among many non-native English speaking countries. David Craddol (as cited in Cohen, 2006) reported that under his plan, World English Project, countries would recognize the advantages of English as a global tool and would introduce English instruction earlier in school. For example, Malaysia has been teaching school-level math and science in English since 2004. Meanwhile, French government, which is well-known for defending the purity of French, recommended that basic English be treated like basic math, a part of mandatory core curriculum beginning in primary school (Power, 2005). As a member of global village, Taiwanese government has also introduced English to elementary school curriculum in Grade 5 and 6 in 2001. Every student is entitled to one to two hours of English instruction per week. The English learning level has been lowered to Grade 3 since 2005.

Another consequence resulted from English learning fever is the huge need of recruiting native English speakers to teach children’s English. Since 1987, Japan has implemented the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) to recruit from the United States native speakers as Assistant Language Teacher (ALT), the Great Britain

and New Zealand. South Korea also launched a similar program, the English Program in Korea (EPIK), in 1996. Two year after South Korea, the Hong Kong government launched a large-scaled program called Native English Scheme (NET), in which 700 native speakers were hired to teach English in 450 Hong Kong secondary schools. In 2004, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan also recruited native English teachers with the aim of improving students' English communicative ability. Before this national program was launched, two regional programs had already been initiated by Hsinchu City and Ilan County in 2001 (Cheng, 2004). Although the original reasons for the central and local governments in Taiwan to recruit NESTs may be varied, neither the Taiwanese central government nor any local government can claim their recruitment program successful even after a few years of practice. Since then, the strengths and weaknesses of NESTs' teaching began to receive much attention in research (Ting, 2001; Lin, 2002; Liu, 2004; Cheng, 2004; Chen, 2005). Drawing upon the results proposed by the researches mentioned above, NEST' lack of TEFL professional knowledge and their lack of long-term commitment of teaching in Taiwan may be the main causes which lead to the failure of the programs in Taiwan (Chen, 2007; Wen, 2006; Chou, 2005; Lin, 2002).

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

Based on the problems mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to investigate the experience and the teaching of one NEST, Bert, who has successfully taught English in Taiwan for fourteen years. By investigating his past teaching experience, his classroom practices, and the difficulties which he has encountered in Taiwan, it is hoped to shed some light on how a NEST in Taiwan could develop himself to be an English teacher and to successfully teach English for a long time. If more cases of the NESTs' successful teaching experience and their classroom practices are provided, beginning NESTs in Taiwan are more likely to develop their

understanding of their work (Shulman, 1986, as cited in Tsui, 2003).

1.3 The Significance of the Study

The study is significant for three reasons. First, unlike most studies on NESTs' teaching in Taiwan which were mainly conducted in a quantitative way, this study offered in-depth information about the teaching repertoire of one NEST who has successfully survived both teaching and living in Taiwan for a long period of time. By collecting and analyzing data through interviews and classroom observation, the findings may contribute to our growing understanding of NESTs' classroom practices, their effectiveness and their problems in teaching. Second, the exploration of Bert's past teaching experience and his difficulties in Taiwan may provide some useful and practical suggestions for newly-arrived NESTs in terms of their pedagogical and psychological preparation. Third, with the governments' eagerness to solve the problems of NESTs' insufficient professional knowledge and high turnover rate which directly impede the effect of the recruiting program, the findings of this study may also derive important suggestions for the government to make practical policies.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background mentioned above, the success of the NESTs' program lies in NESTs' sufficient TEFL knowledge and their willingness to teach English in Taiwan for long. Thus, this study aimed at exploring the teaching experience and classroom practice of a NEST, Bert, who has successfully taught English in Taiwan for fourteen years. Three research questions of this study were addressed as follow.

1. What is the participant's fourteen years of teaching experience and its influence on his development as an English teacher in Taiwan?
2. What are the participant's classroom practices, teaching effectiveness and problems in teaching?
3. What difficulties has he encountered as a NEST in Taiwan?