

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of an American English teacher's teaching experience in Taiwan. First, the past learning experience of the participant in this study, Bert, and its influence on his teaching practice were described. Second, his past teaching experience in cram schools was presented. Third, Bert's current teaching experience and practices at I-School was reported. Fourth, Bert's formal education teaching experience in Taiwan was presented. Lastly, the difficulties which the participant has encountered in Taiwan were revealed.

4.1. The Past Learning Experience

Having no teaching experience before coming to Taiwan, Bert relied heavily on his past experience of being a student in the United States when he taught English in Taiwan in the first couple of years. This experience, or an "apprenticeship of observation" which Lortie (1975) refers to, provided Bert with a framework of the teaching and learning should be like and consequently influenced greatly his practice. Besides, two of Bert's most unforgettable teachers, Miss Taylor and Mr. Ashley, served as perfect models of what good teachers are like. Even until now, Bert has always performed the teaching styles he learned from Miss Taylor and Mr. Ashley. Such teaching styles have also become the most distinctive features of Bert's teaching practice in Taiwan.

4.1.1. Bert's personal traits of learning

Looking back to Bert's school life, "loving to ask questions" and "always focusing on what teacher is saying in class" were his personal traits of learning which potentially have become the features of his teaching practice. First, Bert was never a student who passively received what the teachers taught. Bert always liked to think

and to ask teachers questions about the teaching content but sometimes this caused him trouble in class. As Bert recalled, “Academically speaking, I was a terrible student. A lot of teacher hated me because I always asked the question—why?” (02/08/2007). However, Bert complained that few teachers would immediately answer the questions he raised during the class and that what most teachers did was either to ignore his questions or to tell him that they plan to answer the question later. They told Bert to simply accept what they taught and be quiet. Bert said, “They are professional teachers! But they’re not just ready to answer my questions?” (02/08/2007). With the thirst for knowledge not easily quenched in class, Bert disliked this kind of teaching style and therefore told himself to welcome all questions from his students and to provide the answers as soon as they asked. Bert stated, “I like to give a quick answer to kids...instead of just saying something like ‘Oh, it’s just this way.’ I hate that.” (02/08/2007).

According to Bert, the emphasis on encouraging students to use their brains was based on a meaningful purpose. By asking students questions, it propelled students to think independently and to figure out the answer on their own. What Bert was trying to educate his students was “not just the knowledge but the process of thinking. Not just English, but how to use the knowledge in their life.” (02/26/2007) Thus, in the future, it was hoped that students could “use the skill and make decisions for themselves.” (02/26/2007) Moreover, to witness students start using their brains and finally figure out the answers on their own was the most rewarding aspect of his teaching which intrinsically motivated him to keep teaching in Taiwan for fourteen years or so. He described,

You can see the light bulb, BONG. Just blow off. You know I like it that when kids do that. That instant understanding in their head, suddenly BONG! And they go on, cool! I just like watching people do that...it gives me a sense of achievement. That’s what motivates me. (08/23/2007).

Another one of Bert's learning traits was the full attention he paid to the teacher's instruction during class. When Bert was a student, he seldom did homework but always managed to pass all of his classes because he could always score high on each test. Undoubtedly, Bert attributed his good performance on the tests to his good habit in class—concentrated on the teacher's teaching in class. Bert explained,

Just listen to what the teacher says and pay attention and focus on what the teacher is saying. You learn everything that is to learn (11/07/2007).

Affected by this successful learning experience, Bert, therefore, put great emphasis on keeping students' attention in class. As observed, Bert would randomly choose one or two students and asked them questions about what he had just taught in order to maintain the whole class' attention. The following is an excerpt of how Bert dealt with students who did not focus in class in Li-Li Junior High School:

(Bert was explaining what is "trick or treat" on Halloween to students.)

Bert: Ring the door! Ding-Dong! Ring the doorbell or knock on the door. And somebody opens the door and you say "trick or treat" and then they give you candy! Well, that's fun if you live in the city or you live near the city. But what do you do in the country?

(Robert caught a student who was talking to the classmate next to him.)

Bert: (to S) Hi! What were you talking about?

S: Nothing!

Bert: What did I say? What was I talking about?

S: [silence]

Bert: (Went up to S) What was I talking about?

S: [silence]

Bert: You don't know?! I was talking about "trick or treat." And what we do in America for trick or treat. You should shut up and listen! Understand?

S: [nodded his head]

Bert: Sit down. (11/01/2006, Li-Li Junior High School)

In addition, strictly regulating students to take notes in class is another means

Bert used to make students focus in class. When Bert taught in Li-Li junior high school, he was observed to walk around the whole class and checked whether students had written down the meaning of the vocabulary items each time when he had just finished teaching one new word (09/27/2006). While at I-School, without constantly reminding the students to take notes, Bert had already trained his students to automatically jot down words that were written on the whiteboard, especially the words that did not appear in the textbook but Bert supplemented during his story-telling time or in student's news-telling activity. "Okay! Write it down!" was the most frequent order Bert gave to students during vocabulary teaching.

Besides making students concentrate in class, Bert has another reason for training students to take notes: "the more they write down, the more they'll remember." (09/11/2007). Bert further clarified, "It's not everybody will write down every word I teach. But [if] every student will write down one piece of one part of what I taught, together, they'll remember. So, one student doesn't know [how to say some word], the other students will say. So they work together as a team!" (09/11/2007). Thus, as long as one student did not know how to say a word, Bert would encourage the whole class to look up the word in their notebooks and tell their classmates the answer. Also, when teaching a new word, Bert would ask student questions like "What is the opposite of the word '_____' (*the new word he just taught*)?" so that students could frequently refer back to their notebook, find the answers, and review the vocabulary items they learned before at the same time. Bert not only created positive co-operative learning environment for every student but also indirectly taught students to make good use of the individualized vocabulary dictionary of their own, which was the notebook they used to write down any new vocabulary items they learned in class. The researcher remembered that one evening when she was at I-School and about to observe the class, she met one girl who lost her

notebook. The girl was nervously and anxiously looking for her notebook. She told the researcher that “I study that notebook every day. My whole effort was in that book!” (10/09/2007). This incident clearly showed how important the notebook was for the girl. This short conversation with the girl has proved that Bert successfully conveyed to his students the idea of valuing their own learning and they will learn more by focusing in class.

4.1.2. Two important teachers

There were two teachers in Bert’s high school who significantly influenced Bert’s teaching behavior—Miss Taylor and Mr. Ashley. Miss Taylor was Bert’s algebra teacher. Bert described Miss Taylor as a teacher who was “really patient and willing to help students after class” (02/08/2007). Bert remembered that Miss Taylor always conducted the kind of competition called “who can get the homework done faster?” At that time, there was one student who always competed with Bert to win the championship in class. Under such positive competitive atmosphere set by Miss Taylor, Bert’s motivation of learning algebra was indeed aroused. “Miss Taylor really pushed me to become a good algebra student,” Bert said. (02/08/2007). When a new semester began, Bert took the geometry class which was instructed by another teacher, hoping to learn math as happily as in the algebra class. However, the geometry class was not as attractive as Miss Taylor’s algebra class and Bert lost all his interest in geometry. Consequently, his grades declined rapidly. When Bert mentioned this past learning experience, he concluded that he learned “teachers truly affect the grades” (02/08/2007). Bert also realized, “if the teacher is interesting, the students are more likely to do the work than the teacher [who] is boring” (02/08/2007).

The other teacher who Bert admired most was his science teacher, Mr. Ashley. As Bert recalled, Mr. Ashley was the teacher who “really enjoyed teaching, really enjoyed science, and he always had some kinds of stories to tell kids” (02/08/2007).

Bert still clearly remembered Mr. Ashley's stories about his being a chemist and how he turned the rats' hair purple by feeding them food which contained a certain kind of dye. In this science class, Bert experienced Mr. Ashley's passion for science and for teaching which also triggered students' passion for learning the knowledge Mr. Ashley conveyed. Bert understood:

if you are interested in teaching, the kids are interested in what you're saying or what you're doing. THEY WILL LEARN FROM YOU! (11/07/2007)

Deeply influenced by Mr. Ashley, Bert was, therefore, always observed to tell fun stories to students so as to arouse students' learning interest and maintain their motivation in class, which has become the most distinctive feature of his teaching. Bert could tell every story which happened to him, whether it was real or not. He stated, "I like to use stories a lot...I love to tell stories. I have so many different stories about everything in Taiwan. My friends' stories, my stories, everything." (02/15/2007) As the researcher observed, Bert's story-telling time had always been the most interesting moments for Bert's students. Students were so fascinated by Bert's stories that it had become a routine before the start of the class. If there was no story to tell at the beginning of the class, students would feel disappointed. The following is an example of a short conversation of how students love Bert to begin the class with a story:

(Bert began the class with greeting students.)

Bert: Good afternoon!

Ss: Good afternoon!

Bert: Let's see...I have no story for you today.

Ss: [surprisingly] Why?

Bert: Because my knee is hurt. So I stay home and don't go anywhere. I teach English and go home.

S1: [in loud voice] No story, no class! No story, no class!

(11/08/2006, Li-Li Junior High School)

According to Bert, many advantages were manifested by means of telling fun stories in his EFL teaching. First, “it creates a subtle peer-pressure,” Bert said. (02/26/2007). When Bert is telling the fun story in English, students who are able to understand the story would laugh about it. On the other hand, students who do not understand the story would want to know what happened in the story because they want to laugh with their peers, too. Hence, for low achievers, story-telling is able to trigger the motivation of learning English more. Second, new vocabulary can also be taught when Bert told the stories. Take Bert’s car accidents on Halloween when he was twelve for example. When this Halloween story was shared with students in Li-Li Junior High, vocabulary words like “crosswalk”, “ambulance”, “tractor”, “hay”, “trailer”, “flashlight” and “pick-up truck” were taught at the mean time (11/01/2006). Even after six months, when the researcher interviewed the students from Li-Li junior high school on their impression about Robert’s teaching, the students interviewed could still recollect the story and the words they learned in that class.

S1: (in Chinese) I remember one time he was telling when he was a child in America...because the land is so big in America, they have a lot of farming land...and they have some tractors.

S2: (in Chinese) That’s his Halloween story.

S1: (in Chinese) Yes! Yes! And he was telling about how he got hurt.

S3: (in Chinese) And the English for “*dao-tsao*” (稻草) is...(thinking)

S4: Hay!

S1: (in Chinese) And there’s another one—tractor. (05/28/2007)

Third, telling fun stories helps students to focus on the teachers. With the funny and interesting teaching style, Bert would randomly tell a fun story or make a joke in English at anytime during class. Thus, the students had better pay attention in class. If one student did not quite focus in class and lost the track of the story, he/she might not be able to comprehend the story or the joke. Also, Bert would have plenty of

exaggerate gestures, poses, voices and facial expressions while he was telling the stories. These also helped to grab students' attention and extend their span of attention in class.

Last but not least, story-telling can make learning content more attractive and the outcome sustained longer. Bert explained this advantage by illustrating how to teach "Galileo and Copernicus" by story-telling:

Galileo proved that Copernicus' theory of "the sun as the solar system was correct." And how did he do that? Well, he looked at the sky and discovered that sometimes the stars went backward. That the stars would go across the sky and sudden[ly] would go backward, and then go forward again. Now why he would do that? Well, because the stars are going around the sun and the earth is going around the sun. And some planets move faster than other planets (11/07/2007).

Instead of just taking ten seconds to read the sentence, "Galileo proved that Copernicus was correct," to the students, Bert believed that if the teachers spend ten minutes telling such kind of stories shown above, students would contribute all their attention to the teachers and their learning outcome would sustain longer because the teachers would have arouse students' curiosity and desire to know more.

To summarize, some of Bert's teaching practice was greatly influenced by his past learning experience when he was a student. As a student, he loved to ask questions and paid full attention in class. These two learning traits have therefore converted into his two emphases when teaching English in class. First, he encouraged students to ask questions and "use their brains." Second, he also strictly demanded students to focus in class by constantly asking them questions and requiring students to taking notes in class. As for the two unforgettable teachers in Bert's high school, Miss Taylor and Mr. Ashley, their teaching have inspired Bert to develop his two other distinctive features in his practice—making learning interesting

and telling fun stories. From observing Mr. Ashley, Robert recognized that students' motivation can be aroused more easily and the learning outcome can sustain much longer when teachers make their teaching interesting. As a consequence, teachers should have the ability to make the class interesting to students. One of the methods is through telling fun stories. For Bert, the advantages of story-telling are (a) to create a subtle peer-pressure, (b) to teach new words, (c) to propel students to focus in class, and (d) to make learning content more attractive and be remembered longer.

4.2. Past Cram School Teaching Experience in Taiwan

As a foreigner who just came to Taiwan, Bert initiated his teaching practice in cram schools in Kaohsiung. His first job was to teach a group of junior high school students in C. S. Language Institute. However, being an English teacher in Taiwan was not as easy as Bert had imagined in the first place. He experienced a great culture shock from teaching those junior high school students. Then, he went to teach children English at Jolly School where he gained most of his teaching experience of teaching young students in this cram school. One year later, Bert shifted to teach adults in two chained cram schools, Green Village and Doris' English Center. While teaching adults, Bert gained most of his teaching experience by experimenting new teaching approaches, observing his students' reactions and taking suggestions from students' feedback. Currently, Bert is teaching at an independently-run cram school, I-School, where he is responsible for the curriculum design and its implementation. All in all, "every place I worked always benefits me in some way," Bert said(02/08/2007). As for how exactly Bert's past working experience benefited his English teaching, they were described as follows.

4.2.1. First Day at Work

Before revealing his first job experience, Bert recalled the amusing scene of the first culture shock he experienced on his first day in Taiwan and how he managed to

acquire his first Job.

I flew in Taoyuan airport, and took a bus to Kaohsiung. Got off the bus, a huge cockroach landed on my face, “Welcome to Taiwan, Babe!” Taiwan cockroaches fly! They were flying around! Anyway, I found a hostel to stay. And I started to walk up and down the street...I went to different bushibans [cram schools], “Do you need English teachers?” “Yeah, we need English teachers. Sure.” So I started working (02/08/2007).

After finding himself a hostel to temporarily settle down, Bert immediately went to inquire several English cram schools for a job opening. The first cram school which accepted Bert was C. S. Language Institute. “It was a pretty popular school in Kaohsiung,” Bert said. Soon after being employed, Bert was appointed to teach twenty-five junior high school students in one classroom. After teaching them for a while, Bert asked those twenty-five students, “Is there any question?” To Bert’s surprise, he found no students had any response to him but looked at him bewilderedly. Bert described, “There’s nobody raising their hands, nobody talking, nobody interacting like what we did in the United States” (02/08/2007). Not being able to tolerate this non-interactive classroom atmosphere, Bert quit the job on the first day! He agitatedly expressed what he thought at that time, “...this is garbage...I’m not gonna put up with that. So I quit!” (02/08/2007). Bert never anticipated that Chinese culture of learning would be so different from his own until he taught the junior high school students in C. S. Language Institute that day. “The kids were expecting a lecture. I am expecting some interactions. I’m expecting kids to ask questions and communicate,” Bert said (11/07/2007). For a young American who came to Taiwan with full of passion for teaching, “that was a really bad experience,” Bert murmured.

4.2.2. Jolly School

The second cram school Bert worked for was Jolly School. The students there

were all young kids who were about seven or eight years old. Although young students had some behavior issues to deal with, Bert was relatively more accustomed to the classroom atmosphere there because the young students at Jolly School were not quiet and active. At Jolly School, Bert gained most of his teaching experience of teaching young students in the first year.

However, after teaching children for one year, Bert encountered some problems. First, as mentioned above, young students were so active in class that the approaches which Bert adopted had to be all physical activities or games. This kind of teaching approaches required so much energy that Bert felt extremely exhausted after work every day. Bert revealed,

Because I'm a very active teacher, I can teach four hours a day and then I'll go home and die. There's just no way. Running around the room, jumping up and down... (02/08/2007)

Second, though Bert had successfully handled young students by playing games or doing physical activities in class every day, he was not satisfied with that. He realized that what he did at Jolly School was just “speaking English, not teaching English” (08/28/2007). Upon realizing the inappropriate teaching behaviors he performed every day—using physical activities to replace teaching skills, Bert started to seek for changes in his teaching. He read books, spent time and effort researching on the Internet on how to teach children English and what teaching methods worked best for young students and then experimented these methods in class. Luckily, Bert's experiments went smoothly on young students because “children are more forgiving. Even if you make mistakes with them, it's not a big deal” (08/28/2007). In addition, in order to ensure whether students comprehended his explanations or not, Bert would sometimes speak Chinese to children as a kind of support for his teaching. However, this kind of alteration was not favored by the supervisor of Jolly School.

One day, after the supervisor at Jolly School finished observing Bert's class, Bert was directly warned by the very supervisor with the following statement, "You don't have to do things like other teachers [the Chinese teachers] do." When hearing this, Bert was deeply frustrated to know that the supervisor of Jolly School did not appreciate his effort but merely treated him as a circus monkey whose function was only to play games and speak English to young kids. Meanwhile, Bert was also upset about why the foreign teachers always failed to be treated as a real teacher but only used as an image projected by the cram school to attract more students. "It's also kind of racial discrimination," Bert exclaimed,

"I don't wanna just to be an image. I wanna be seen as a teacher...why can't I be that way? Why can't I be a, as you call, a real teacher?" (11/07/2007).

Suffering from great exhaustion in body and deep disappointment in mind, Bert left Jolly School and continuously searched for the chances to fulfill his dream—to be a real teacher.

4.2.3. Experience in Doris' English Center and Green Village

Bert officially began his journey of becoming a real teacher by teaching adult in Doris' English Center and Green Village. Just like what he did at Jolly School, Bert sharpened up his teaching skills by trial and error. However, not every experiment turned out to be as successful and feasible as that at Jolly's School. As Bert indicated, "they [adult students] always have their ideas of how they are gonna learn." (02/08/2007) Not being easily manipulated like young students, adult students usually expressed their own opinions about how teachers were supposed to teach. Also, as a "paying customer" for the cram school, adult students not only were demanding the quality of their own learning outcome but also requested a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. In other words, adult students hoped to learn English efficiently without too much pressure. Hence, "when you are teaching

adults, your brain has to be working,” Bert pointed out. “It’s a balance between entertaining them [adult students] and getting them learn.” (08/28/2007) Although Bert claimed that it is a difficult balance for him, yet he still learned “more from adults than I[he] was learning from kids” (02/08/2007)..

The first lesson Bert learned when teaching adults was to be cautious about his personal statement in class and his attitude toward students. He said, “[if] you make a mistake with adults and they go away and never come back.” Take one incident that happened in Green Village for example. Bert remembered that it was a class where he was asking the whole class about their occupation. One lady replied to Bert that she worked at a KTV. In an attempt to be humorous and to bring up the delightful atmosphere in class, Bert joked about her work in front of the whole class by deliberately mistaking this lady as someone who worked in the special night club, providing sexual services. The lady explained that she was just the accountant in that KTV. Even though Bert did this to that lady without any malicious purpose, he never saw that lady again in class. Such consequence was indeed an embarrassing experience and a warning for Bert to remember forever. Moreover, owing to the absence of the lady, Bert learned to judge the effectiveness of his teaching approaches by observing the number of students in his class as well. He concluded from his observation,

“[if] student’s number goes up, you know you are doing something either entertaining or something right. If the student’s number go[es] down, then you are probably doing something that [is] not very suitable.” (08/23/2007)

Second, Bert learned that the class dynamics is very important, especially in the conversation class. The way Bert controlled the class dynamics was to involve each adult student in the conversation. Usually Bert would pick up an interesting topic for each adult to express their opinions about it. As the flow of conversation went

high, meaning students discussed the topic fervently, Bert would leave the flow progressive and be quiet. On the contrary, if the flow went low, meaning the students were not quite interested in that topic, then it was time for Bert to change the topic. As a consequence, in order to maintain the class dynamics in an interactive state, the teacher served as a “pilot” who directed the conversation in class and “has to be able to be very observant of where you are in the conversation,” Bert suggested (08/28/1007). Also, another technique for Bert to keep a dynamic classroom is to “stand up” (08/28/2007). Bert mentioned that most foreign teachers who taught adult English preferred to sit down and have the conversation with students during class. However, this kind of teaching style may inevitably developed into a trap that the teacher only conversed with one student in class. Such development would deteriorate the group dynamics in class which left the rest of the students feel bored. Therefore, Bert chose to stand up, walk around the class, and ask questions to students at appropriate time so as to keep everyone actively involved in the conversation.

Third, another lesson which Bert learned in terms of class dynamics was that “one student can affect the whole class,” Bert asserted (08/28/2007). Based on the experience which he had accumulated for many years, Bert realized that as a cram school teacher, you were not allowed to let each student feel bored or being left out in class. If the teacher ignored one particular student in class, the whole class would eventually become bored. Consequently, a terrible chain-effect would be triggered. Namely, one student dropped the course, and the rest of the students in class would follow his/her steps one by one. Even so, Bert still discovered one useful approach to keep adult students interested in class instead of feeling bored. It was the old trick which he learned from his high school teacher—“telling lots of stories” (See 4.1.2). Bert continued, “if you are a good story-teller, you can be a good adult teacher” (08/28/2007).

Fourth, “pick up a marker and write words on the board,” Bert continued. (08/28/2007) In spite of the necessity for teachers to pay attention to the class dynamics, teaching as much vocabulary as possible was also regarded as an important approach in adult class. As Bert mentioned, it was because adult students prefer to learn as many words from the teachers as possible. Thus, the best approach for teachers to implement in class was to write down every word which was considered high-leveled and useful for students as soon as the teacher uttered one or heard students saying one. Thus, in order to fulfill the need of adult students, Bert always kept the following questions in mind.

What is it that I am listening to? What words am I hearing? What level is this class? Do I need to be teaching this word? What words are going to be useful? Is that word a common word or an uncommon word? Is it a high-level word? Do I have good story for this word? (08/28/2007)

Noteworthy, from the questions above, it indicated that Bert came up with good stories not only to keep students interested in class but also to teach those words to students.

Fifth, the way Bert corrected adult students’ oral mistakes was to repeat what they just said with grammatically-correct sentences. Unlike the approach he employed on the young students, which was to stop them at anytime when the error occurred, Bert would patiently focused on what the adult student was trying to express to him and then repeated his/her expression with grammatically-correct sentences when he/she finished his/her talk, waiting for him/her to correct the error themselves. An example was illustrated by Bert as follows:

When I teach adults, I never like to tell the adults, “Sorry, stop.” Because usually adults are trying to tell me something. So what I do is I’ll repeat what they just said, “Let me see if I understand. You WENT to Kenting yesterday.” “Yeah. Yeah. I went to Kenting yesterday.” (02/15/2007)

Lastly, when teaching in Green Village where any students are permitted to freely attend any courses at any levels, Bert also learned how to weed out students whose level was below the majority of the class—by asking them questions corresponded to the level of the majority. Bert believed that with this approach, students whose level was not in correspondence with the level of the class “would feel a lot of pressure and never come back” (08/28/2007) because they were not able to answer all the questions and felt embarrassed in front of the class. In this case, Bert would be more likely to teach the class more effectively and efficiently for “students could be able to learn together only when their levels were the same.” He further asserted, “You can’t bring the level of whole class down for one student; you have to maintain the majority” (08/28/2008). Additionally, if this situation was not dealt with in time, such kind of students would be likely to be ignored or isolated by the teacher or the other classmates. If this was the case, it was certain that they would feel bored in class. Again, it was the last scene which a cram school teacher would like to deal with—facing the threat of losing the whole class of students one by one because “one bored student can affect the whole class.”

To summarize, Bert gained his first teaching job at C. S. Language Institute merely by asking the cram school for a job opening. However, the non-interactive learning culture discouraged Bert from teaching English there. He transferred to teach children’s English at Jolly School where students were more active and the class atmosphere was more interactive. However, feeling exhausted to the teaching there and depressed by being viewed as an image by the school administrators at Jolly School, he left Jolly School and shifted to teach adult English in Green Village and Doris’ English Center. Most of Bert’s teaching experiences were gained from teaching in Doris’ English Center and Green Village. Although teaching adult students was not an easy job for Bert because they were much demanding than

children, yet Bert still learned a lot of valuable teaching skills from them. First, he learned that never make mistakes with adults or they would never come back. Second, the class dynamics matters a lot. Third, one student can affect the whole class. Fourth, teach as many useful words as possible. Fifth, correct adults' error by repeating with grammatically-correct sentence when they finished talking. Lastly, do not bring the level of the class down for one student. Go with the majority.

4.3. I-School

I-School was a place where Bert maturely manifested his teaching skills learned from his past working experience. It was a cram school where the students can receive intensive English teaching courses. Bert is currently teaching at I-School and therefore the researcher had the opportunity to observe his class there. Besides being a teacher at I-School, Bert is also partly in charge of the operation affair as an academic director, from which he learn valuable experiences. Thus, Bert's experience at I-School is presented in three parts. First, his experience as an academic director at I-School is reported. Second, Bert's current classroom practice at I-School is described in terms of oral activities, vocabulary, reading and writing so as to obtain a complete contour of Bert's teaching at I-School. Third, Bert's classroom management skills are also be addressed.

4.3.1 The experience of managing I-School

Unlike his past working experience as an employed teacher, Bert was involved in the curriculum design and its implementation as an academic director. Owing to this status, the first priority for Bert to cautiously deal with was his "*reputation.*" In order to maintain his reputation, Bert strictly demanded himself to "show up in class on time." Bert always reminded himself of an old saying, "What takes a life time to build but a few minutes to destroy? Reputation!" (10/18/2007). Recognizing the fact that one can easily destroy the reputation he/she has built for a long time, Bert seldom

started the class late unless there was something unexpected happening and preventing him from showing up on time. Bert admitted that although he sometimes might feel reluctant to teach the class and hoped to take a rest, he still rode on his motorcycle and headed for I-School eventually. Bert said, “It’s ninety percent showing up. Once you show up, you’re gonna do it [the teaching].” (10/18/2007) Even if he was really unable to arrive at the class punctually because of some accidents happening on the road, Bert would definitely inform the school as soon as possible in order to allow them to arrange a substitute teacher for his class in time.

Second, “parents” were another issue which Bert learned to deal with at I-School. Compared with the parents several years ago who did not care about their children’s learning, more and more parents nowadays concern much about what kind of learning their children would receive in the cram school and how high the quality of teaching it could provide. Bert described,

“A lot of parents come in and say ‘Show me your curriculum. Show me how my kid is able to speak.’” (08/23/2007)

In order to make parents feel secure, Bert would patiently explain the curriculum to them. From the experience of explaining the curriculum to parents, Bert noticed that “if parents come in, and they feel that it [the curriculum] is a little bit too open-ended, then they’ll get a little bit nervous about bringing their kids in.” (08/23/2007). Thus, as a curriculum designer, Bert had to make definite goals for the curriculum.

However, Bert still encountered another kind of parents who did not care about their children’s learning at all. They only considered the cram school a day-care center where they temporarily place their children without worrying that their children might idle around while they were at work. Because of parents’ indifferent attitude toward their children’s learning, such students would eventually cause big problems in Bert’s class. They showed no interest in learning English and became extremely

unmotivated. Eventually, this hindered not only the effectiveness of Bert's teaching but also the students' learning outcome. Bert complained, "They're not so interested in learning English mainly because parents just drop them off and don't care so much. How do you motivate them? So their level is a lot lower and they learn a lot slower." (08/28/2007). It was not until Bert taught English at I-School that he learned how important the role the parents played and how indispensable the parents' support was during the process of students' learning. Bert asserted what he had learned from this experience,

"Parents play a big role in kid's learning. If parents are interested in what their kids are learning, the kids will be interested in learning...some parents...they bring their kids here and expect the teacher to do everything. But they don't realize that it's a three-way thing. Three parts: Teacher, parents and students." (11/07/2007).

Third, Bert possessed more control over students' levels at I-School. Generally speaking, the first step for the cram school to teach a new student was to place him/her to a class where his/her level belongs to. It was more convenient for teachers to instruct students with the same level in one class. However, what Bert learned at I-School was that dividing students up into specific levels would be feasible only if there was a solid base of students for the cram schools! Namely, the cram school needed to have a large number of students to do so. Small-scaled cram schools like I-School would have to "play with the levels." (08/23/2007). Bert described with a sigh, "Okay, we're going to put these two levels together because they are relatively the same." Due to the insufficient students at I-School, Bert had no choice but to compromise with this reality and teach a class of students whose levels were slightly different. However, it might gradually increase the difficulty of Bert's instruction. The example described below could show how Bert needed to

sacrifice his teaching over the operation of I-School. During the investigation, there was a girl student who tried to study in the class which the researcher observed. After finishing teaching the girl for one class, Bert strongly discouraged his boss at the I-School from letting the girl study in this class because her level was far below the majority of the students. Bert worried that girl would not keep up with her classmates and eventually her interest in learning English would be ruined. However, the boss did not take Bert's advice under business consideration. The next class, the girl still showed up. Bert couldn't do anything but only accepted the result unwillingly.

Fourth, another reality that Bert had to face every day at the I-School was the heavy workload. Because I-School could not hire too many teachers due to their limited budget, Bert had to teach almost all of the classes simply by himself. The level of the class Bert taught at I-School ranged from basic to high-intermediate and his working hour was from afternoon to evening, Monday through Saturday. Bert described, "I teach eight hours almost every day. And on Saturday, I teach nine hours...About forty-nine hours a week of teaching" (08/30/2007). Under such heavy workload, it required so much energy from Bert that he learned to pace himself and his teaching. Otherwise, his physical condition would definitely not be able to sustain him to the last class. He said,

"One thing a teacher always need[s] to learn is how to pace yourself. Do not put all your energy and all of your passion into just one class. And after two hours, you're so dead and you can't teach the other six you have to teach the rest of the day" (11/07/2007)

In fact, Bert had thought about recruiting another foreign teacher to share his workload at I-School. However, money indeed dominated everything that discouraged Bert from successfully recruiting the appropriate co-workers! On one

hand, Bert, as a curriculum director at I-School, was concerned highly about the reputation of I-School, he would therefore hope to recruit a good experienced teacher who really had passion for teaching and who highly valued students' learning. However, "it's almost impossible!" Bert said. The first reason was that most foreigners did not care about education. Their top priority was to make money in Taiwan. Even if there were good teachers, more money should be offered to hire those good foreign teachers because "good [foreign] teachers always go where the money is," Bert said (08/30/2007). On the other hand, if Bert tried to reduce the cost by hiring a novice foreign teacher who charged less and gave in-service training to him/her, the novice foreign teacher would ask, "How much money will you pay me for showing up [in the training course]?" (08/30/2007). Again, the problem revolved back to the money issue—the more money you provide, the better teachers you can hire/make. But the truth is that few cram school owners would be willing to spend much money on hiring the foreign teachers because it increased the cost of operation. Thus, if Bert attempted to enhance the quality of the foreign teachers, he made I-School lose their profit. If he considered making more profits for I-School, he might face the threat of reducing the quality of his teaching. Bert murmured, "running a business and being a teacher is[are] a difficult balance!" (08/30/2007).

Last, as a curriculum designer, the most important thing for Bert was to implement the curriculum for some long-term goals. Two principles were followed by Bert when designing the curriculum at I-School. First, Bert appealed that "teachers should build a strong foundation of learning English for children." (02/15/2007). Although students might learn slower at the beginning of building the foundation, yet once students had finished building the foundation, their learning speed would rise like a rocket. According to Bert, the best way to cultivate the strong foundation of English learning was also through speaking. He believed that

speaking is the foundation of all languages in the world. To successfully acquire a language, students should learn to speak that language first. Only through speaking the language can the students build a strong foundation of the knowledge of that language.

Second, affected by the education he received in the United States, Bert emphasized the importance of application. He addressed,

American system really focuses on the application. Use what I just taught you to do something....And because you are doing it, you are thinking about it, you're going to remember it forever. (02/26/2007).

Bert further explained this teaching belief by comparing learning English to playing the piano. He said that if you teach a student all the knowledge of playing the piano only on the desk, after one or two years, the very student would definitely have no idea of how to play the piano in front of a real piano. "Well, it's the same with English. If you are not gonna use it, then you're not gonna be able to do it," Robert concluded. Thus, in Bert's viewpoint, memorizing words or knowledge would not be as helpful as applying them in the environment. For this reason, Bert tried to create ample opportunities for his students to apply what they have learned from him in class through such activities as news-telling activity, oral presentation, Chinese-English translation, or guided writing.

4.3.2 The classroom practices at I-School

Basically, Bert's teaching at I-School followed the sequence of the textbook. Each week, Bert meant to finish teaching one unit in the textbook. In practice, Bert spent a considerable amount of time on conducting activities for training students' communicative competence since he believed that oral ability is the prime goal for teaching English. Among them, the most educational but entertaining activity was *News-Telling*, which was regularly conducted once a week.

The second prominent feature of Bert's teaching was his vocabulary teaching. Other than officially teaching vocabulary at the beginning of a new unit, Bert's vocabulary teaching could randomly occur at anytime during the class. If it was available, Bert would conduct Chinese-English translation practice or composition writing in class as well. Bert's classroom practices at I-School were elaborated in detail as follows.

Oral activities

One of the oral activities Bert conducted at I-School was to ask each student to stand up and volunteer to read one sentence of a short paragraph with dramatic tone. The paragraph being read aloud dramatically could be either from the main story in each unit or the summary of that story designed as cloze test for vocabulary consolidation at the end of the unit. The sole activity that Bert gave to the students to do was "Give me the FU⁴! Give me the feeling!" Bert mentioned that because he noticed that students always read English monotonously, the purpose of this activity was to train students to express feelings when they were talking. Bert said, "English is not monotone. English has a lot of feelings behind it." (09/06/2007). Sometimes, students did surprise Bert by reading the sentence with an extreme dramatic tone and produced certain amusing effect in class.

Besides the activity mentioned above, Bert would also grab every chance to correct students' pronunciations or intonations during class. Usually, these errors were frequently corrected during students' oral presentation, description of a piece of news, sharing their thought, and having short conversations with Bert. Apart from correcting students in class, Bert would also correct them during recess or after class when having a casual conversation with students in English.

⁴ 'FU' was a popular Chinglish slang used among teenagers in Taiwan nowadays. In fact, it represents the word, feeling, in English.

News-telling

News-telling activity was designed to cultivate students' English oral ability for presentation. The way Bert conducted News-Telling activity was to ask students to read Chinese newspaper at home first, select a piece of news story which they were interested in, obtain the general idea of the news story, think about how to present it in English which they have learned and then present it in class. In Bert's opinion, the purposes of conducting news-telling activity were as follows: (a) to improve students' oral ability, and (b) to provide students opportunities to use their brain, thinking in English. Bert strictly prohibited students from reading English newspaper because he did not want students to memorize the English written text in the newspaper and merely recite it word by word during their presentation. After all, the whole purpose of this activity was to provide an opportunity for students to be able to express what they have known with their own words in English.

In practice, while one student was verbally reporting the news, Bert would keep asking the very student questions about the news he/she described to confirm whether the information he/she provided was understandable by Bert and other students. Several turns of question-asking and answering between Bert and the student enabled him/her to activate his/her listening and speaking ability at the same time. Plus, after the confirmation was done, Bert would give the correct expression. The correct expression Bert spoke out would also become the living material for students to learn English. The following excerpt exemplifies how Bert confirmed the information the student spoke and then gave the correct sentence

(One boy, Ian, was telling a piece of absurd news about a bakery that was fined because its smell was over the standard.)

Ian: In Taipei, one baker.

Bert: Who?

Ian: One bakery.

Bert: A baker? The person or the place?
 Ian: The place.
 Bert: That's a bakery!
 Ian: He paid one hundred thousand dollars' ticket!
 Bert: The bakery in Taipei needs to pay a one-hundred dollar ticket! Really?
 Wow~Why? (09/11/2007)

Another benefit drawn from News-telling activity was that it helped students to enlarge the size of their vocabulary. It was because there were so many words that students were unable to express in English during their presentation that Bert could teach them the vocabulary on the spot. Take the previous excerpt for example. After Bert told Ian the correct sentence "*The bakery in Taipei needs to pay a one-hundred dollar ticket,*" Bert immediately wrote down the word, *ticket*, on the whiteboard to teach the whole class. The following is another example of how Bert taught students new words.

(Susan was talking about a girl who was kidnapped by a man.)
 Susan: She [the girl] was playing with her older brother. And in the country...And there was a man, ride a motorcycle and he took the five-year-old girl in the motorcycle.
 Bert: Wait! Wait! He[the man] picked up the five-year-old girl and put her on his motorcycle?
 Susan: Yeah!
 Bert: [to the whole class] What does that call? When you take someone and say "Give me the money!"
 Ss: [silent but looking for it in their notebook]
 Bert: Come on! What's the word? What's the word?
 Angel: Kidnap!
 Bert: Kidnap! [He wrote it on the board and started to spell] K-I-D-N-A-P, kidnap! So the man kidnapped the girl. (09/11/2007)

Besides, different students could tell different news to the class, which would consequently contributed different vocabulary in different semantic field for Bert to teach. On that day, after each student finished reporting their news, the vocabulary

that Bert taught from the News-Telling activity amazingly reached up to twenty-five words. Students learned words like “stroller”, “chemical substance”, “cancer”, “bee hive”, “manners”, “explore”, “flammable”, “nursing home” and so on. Regardless of whether these words can be entirely absorbed by the students or not, the students at least had a deeper impression about the words because they were all derived from their own need of describing the news and therefore more useful and meaningful to them.

Method to oral error correction

As for the ways to correct students’ grammatical error in their speaking, two approaches were commonly observed in Bert’s classroom. The first one was similar to the approach which was adopted to correct students’ incorrect pronunciation. As soon as students produced an ungrammatical sentence, Bert would stop their talking and correct them with grammatically-correct sentence on the spot. In Bert’s opinion, grammar is the structure of conversation. The more correct grammar the students have, the better structure of conversation the students produce, and the more fluently can the students speak English. As a result, people will understand them better. For this reason, Bert stopped students immediately to correct their grammar only to prevent students from “get[ting] into bad habits” (11/07/2007). The following excerpt was the example of how Bert corrected two students’ errors in their talking.

(Bert and his students were talking about what they did last weekend.)

Kevin: Sunday, I was stay at home and...

Bert: *Last* Sunday.

Kevin: Last Sunday, I stayed at home and read book.

Bert: Read book or study book?

Kevin: Study book.

Howard: [to Bert] Were you say “I love you” to your girlfriend?

Bert: [not hearing it clearly] Say it again.

Howard: In the weekend...

Bert: *On* the weekend. *Last* weekend.

Howard: Last weekend, were you...
Bert: Were I or did I?
Howard: Did you tell your girlfriend “I love you”? (10/16/2007)

However, stopping students’ talking and correcting students’ grammar immediately might have the risk of decreasing students’ willingness of speaking because they were afraid of making mistakes and therefore avoided the opportunities to speak. In order to lower students’ anxiety of making mistakes when they spoke English, Bert would also correct students’ error by skillfully making a joke out of it. This kind of error correction was exemplified in the following excerpt.

(Stacy began telling her news.)
Stacy: One day, there was a woman walk on the road.
Bert: There was a woman walking on the road.
Stacy: Walking on the road. Then, *his*...
Bert: Wait! Wait! You just said a woman. [the class laughed.] So are you saying this is a special woman? [the class laughed again.] A special woman! She came from Thailand! [the class laughed even louder.]
(10/18/2007)

A unique method to encourage students to speak

As mentioned above, Bert observed that Taiwanese students had a tendency to avoid speaking because they fear to make mistakes. Therefore, Bert allowed his students to use Chinese to replace English words which they did not know in order to encourage students to speak English. For example, sentences like “I am very *guai* [well-behaved]” or “I am very *ching song* [relaxed].” would be frequently heard in Bert’s class. After hearing students’ Chinese words in English sentences, Bert would immediately teach the corresponding English to students from the context.

According to Bert, allowing students to do this was because he did not want students “to be scared of not being able to say just one word” (09/07/2007) and stop talking. Besides, when students were having conversation with foreigners, saying something to fill the unknown word would decrease the opportunities of the communication

breakdown. As long as the dialogue continued, the unknown word could always be explained in another way or be understood by foreigners in context. He further explained with an example,

If you are talking to me on telephone, then you said, “Tomorrow, I have to go to school to have a *kao shi*.” Then, I’ll stop you and say, “What’s *kao shi*?” and now you have to think, “ah...it’s ... you know I have to go and write the ...piece of paper...” (09/07/2007)

With some explanation, the man on the phone might eventually become more likely to understand that “*kao sh*” means “test.” Things are the same as what happened in Bert’s class. If students did not know how to say a word, what Bert needed them to do was “to say Chinese instead so that I can stop him, take that Chinese, teach them in English and then make them say it again the right way.” (09/07/2007). The following example was the conversation which happened in Bert’s class all the time.

While the class was copying the sentence from the whiteboard, Ian raised his hand and was about to ask Bert a question. But Bert was busy checking other students’ writing without noticing him. Ken tried to help Ian to grab Bert’s attention.

Ken: Bert, Ian is *jiao ni*.

Bert: [to Ken] “Bert, Ian is calling you.” Say that again.

Ken: Bert, Ian is calling you. (09/06/2007)

At the time when the researcher was interviewing Bert about this aspect during the recess, several of Bert’s girl students were staying in the classroom, drawing pictures on the whiteboard. In order to verify to the researcher whether this personal strategy was effective, Bert turned to ask those girl students in the classroom.

Bert: [to Ivy] Are you scared of speaking English?

Ivy: No!

Bert: No. [to Susan] How about you, Susan? Are you scared of speaking English?

Susan: No. (09/06/2007)

Amazingly, when Bert asked this question to the girls, they all immediately answered “No.” Even the quietest girl in class, Susan, also revealed that she was not afraid of speaking English.

Vocabulary teaching

Bert’s vocabulary teaching was another representative feature of his English teaching. Like News-Telling activity which occupied a large proportion of each class time, Bert spent much of his teaching time on teaching vocabulary to his students, too. He not only taught students vocabulary at the beginning of each new unit but also during their news-telling activity. Sometimes, the students could learn forty to fifty words in only one class. These words might be the vocabulary words in the textbook or the supplementary words from their news-telling activity. Apparently, Bert’s emphasis on students’ vocabulary learning was not second to their oral ability learning.

Selecting vocabulary to teach

Noteworthy, as for the vocabulary from the article in a new unit, Bert did not teach every bald-faced word which was listed as vocabulary in the textbook. Instead, Bert would skip the ones which he considered unimportant or not useful and select some other words which in the same article which he considered very important and useful for the students to learn. When ask about the criteria of considering what words important or useful to teach, Bert could not point out any specific ones. Bert expressed that the criteria might be based on his innate linguistic competence as a native English speaker and his experience as an English teacher in Taiwan for so many years.

Neuro-networking theory and its examples

Bert had several techniques to enlarge the size of students’ vocabulary. Among the techniques Bert adopted, the core concept was to stimulate students’

“neuro-networking” of vocabulary in their brain—to help students relate the word to other words which possess the same or opposite meaning, like synonyms or antonyms, or to its variations of different word class. The following quotation explicitly explained what “neuro-networking” meant to Bert.

So in English, we can say “relax” or “take it easy” or “to rest”, and we put all these words together, so we call it “neuro-networking.” And that’s the important thing...So, my job...as an English teacher, is to connect those things in their [students’] head (09/07/2007).

As for Bert’s self-created “neuro-networking theory” for teaching vocabulary, some of the examples of how Bert embodied this theory with the aim to enlarge students’ vocabulary are addressed as follows.

First, Bert taught synonyms. When Bert taught vocabulary, he often pointed out its synonyms to students either by teaching them directly or asking students to figure out themselves. The following example is to show how Bert taught the word “look over” and its synonyms.

Bert: Okay. Judy, what does “look over” mean? Turn the page and tell me.

Judy: to...[unable to pronounce the word]

Bert: to...to examine! What does “examine” mean? Do not say “look over.” One word starts with “c.” [Bert gave students the first letter as a hint.] “Hey, Bert, please examine my homework.”

Angel: Check!

Bert: It means to CHECK! “Examine” means “to check”! “Examine” means to “look over”! (09/11/2007)

From the excerpt above, it was obvious to see that Bert was trying to relate the new verb phrase, look over, to its synonyms, which his students had learned before—“to examine” and “to check.” By this way, he also helped students to learn new vocabulary more quickly and to review the words that they have already learned. In other words, Bert helped students to build the knowledge of the new words on the old

ones.

Second, Bert explained how the word was formed. An example was shown when Bert was trying to teach students “geography” while one student was talking to Bert about what mid-term exam subjects he was going to take the next day.

Kevin: Tomorrow, I have [a] Chinese test! Math test! Science!
Writing!...er...and *di-li*[地理]! *Di-li* is...

Bert: *Di-li*...geography!

[Bert wrote “geo” first on the white board.]

Bert: [to the class] Hey, learn that word right there. You see this word, geo. When you see the word, “geo,” it means “rock” or “earth.” So, if I say “geography” [Bert wrote down “graphy” to finish the word]. So, “geo” means “rock”, and “graph” means “picture.” So “geography” means “a picture of the earth.” That’s what geography is. [It] Tells you where every country is! America is here, Canada is here, Mexico is there. Got it?

Ss: [Students nodded their head] Yes!

Bert: Write it down! (10/11/2007)

The example above revealed that Bert adopted his linguistic knowledge of morphology to teach vocabulary to students. With such morphological knowledge, students were more likely to memorize the word effortlessly. Also, knowing such a logical way could help students to predict the meaning whenever they encountered an unknown word which begins with “geo.”

Third, Bert related the vocabulary word to the word with a similar meaning but different usage. The following example was a proof that when Bert was teaching the vocabulary word, mine, he also tried to teach students the differences between “mine” and “well.”

Bert: What is a “mine”? Tell me in English!

Ss: [silent]

Bert: What’s a “mine”? Ivy? Joan? Susan?

Ss: [silent and puzzled]

Bert: It’s a hole in the ground that we try to get something above. If we’re talking about a GOLD mine, we dig a hole in the ground, trying to get

gold. That is called....gold mine! If you're digging a hole in the ground, and you want to get diamonds, what does that called? A diamond mine! There's diamond, there's gold. What's another one? [thinking] Oh! Iron! If you're digging a hole, trying to get iron, an iron mine.

Angel: *Shi-you*[petroleum,石油]!

Bert: *Shi-you?!...Now, if it's a liquid...[point to "mine" on the whiteboard] this is when we're trying to get something a solid. If you're trying to get a liquid, then that is called a "well" [write it down on the whiteboard]. So you can call something a "water well" or an "oil well" or what the other one? [thinking] "Gas well." But for a "mine", they're trying to get a solid. Gold, diamond, iron! Got it? (10/09/2007)*

From the above excerpt, it could be clearly recognized that Bert's student immediately related the usage of "mine" on petroleum. Although it was a wrong inference, yet it showed that Bert's neuro-networking theory did work well on students—teaching students to infer one thing to another. Meanwhile, just because of the students' wrong inference, Bert can immediately clarify what students might be confused with and teach them another new word.

Adopting funny stories to teach vocabulary

In addition to Bert's neuro-networking theory and its instruction, Bert would sometimes use funny jokes which related to the vocabulary word he was teaching to enhance students' comprehension. The following was an example of a funny joke used by Bert to teach the word, *invisible*.

Bert: This one [invisible] is very easy. Joan?

Joan: Something you can't see.

Bert: Yeah. There you go! "Invisible" means you can't see it...[began to tell the funny joke] I was watching a movie and there's a guy in the movie and said, "I have a superpower!" And everybody said "what's your superpower?" And he said "I can become invisible!" and then everybody said, "Really? Okay! Show us!" And then he said, "But I can only become invisible when no one is looking!"

Ss: [laughed out loud] (10/09/2007)

As long as students can understand the meaning of “invisible” which Bert explained in the first place, it would not be difficult for them to see the humor of the punned sentence, “I can only become invisible when no one is looking.” This kind of example could be frequently seen in Bert’s class when he taught vocabulary to students. Obviously, it was another evidence of how Bert adopted stories to help him reach the purpose of his teaching. (See 4.1.2) By telling funny stories/jokes, it would not only consolidate students’ understanding of the very vocabulary word but also become a means to judge whether students truly understand Bert’s instruction of that vocabulary word.

The assessment of students’ vocabulary learning

When it comes to the assessment of the vocabulary Bert taught in class, the most formal one was so-called “*mo ni kao*” [模拟考]. This is a Chinese pronunciation which corresponds to a “mock exam” in English. Bert said that “*mo ni kao*” was a test simulated the form of General English Proficiency Test. For some reason, Bert always pronounced it in Chinese when referring to this assessment. In fact, it was a test which students were asked to fill in the blank with the correct word in a sentence. Students had to figure out the answer from the context of the sentence and the answer was always the vocabulary word which they have just learned. It usually consisted of ten to twelve questions at a time. This kind of assessment was always conducted when Bert finished teaching one unit in the textbook. As for the procedure of conducting *mo ni kao*, Bert would ask students to copy the questions displayed on the board first. If students had any questions about the spelling of the words when they write down the questions, they were free to ask Bert anytime. When all the questions were jotted down, the students could therefore answer the questions by themselves.

In order to help students to answer the question, Bert would frequently speak Chinese in class when he wanted to give hints for students. When giving hints to students, Bert needed to explain the sentence structure of the question and indicated students to choose a correct word to fill in. Thus, he would explain the grammar and speak Chinese to let students understand what he said as quickly as possible.

(Bert was checking one student's answers in his simulated test. After checking the answers, Bert began to explain the question to him.)

Bert: Superman is the most "literature" super hero?!

"Literature" is a noun. 它是名詞。我們在找 most，most 就是要什麼？就是要形容詞，對不對？The most 怎麼樣的 super hero？The tallest? The strongest? 怎樣？

["Literature" is a noun. We are looking for "most." What do we need to write after "most"? We need an adjective, right? So, the most blah super hero? The tallest? The strongest? Or what?] (10/16/2007)

As described above, Bert explained the characteristic of superlative to student in Chinese and taught the student to use that characteristic to choose a correct word for answer. In fact, during the whole mock exam, Bert was often seen to indicate the correct answers for many students by explaining the grammar in Chinese just like the excerpt above.

However, even though Bert called this kind of assessment a mock exam, it was not a test essentially but at most an exercise for students to complete by themselves individually first and then confirmed the answers by the whole class. If there were some words the students forgot, they could always refer back to the textbook and find out the answers. Besides, the punishment, or the homework, from Bert was only to audio-tape the sentences a few times at home. Without the real pressure of taking a test, students were unlikely to take mo ni kao seriously, meaning making effort to memorize the vocabulary they learned. All they were required to do was to use their short-term memory to fill in the answers and complete the exercise for this time. As

a consequence, the students were observed to be more likely to forget the words they learned in the speaking or writing activity. An example took place when students were required to translate one Chinese sentence into English. During the translation, different students had respectively asked Bert how to say “*fa xian*” [發現] in English for several times. However, Bert had just taught the word, discover, in the previous mo ni kao two days ago. The students had asked this word for so many times that it propelled Bert to nearly lose his temper.

(After telling several students privately in class that *fa xian* means “to discover”...Susan asked him again.)

Susan: Bert, how to say “*fa xian*”?

Bert: *Fa xian*?! [to himself] How many times do I have to teach that word? I teach like ten million times in class, right? [to the class] “*fa xian*”, find out, or discover. (10/18/2007)

From the example above, it is obvious that sometimes the learning outcome was not always as good as what Bert had expected although he had made so much effort during his vocabulary teaching.

Teaching Reading

Unlike his abundant and special skills in teaching oral skills and vocabulary, Bert did not show many innovative skills in teaching reading. The scarce skills which were found in this aspect was that he would write down the new words he was about to teach in the article on the whiteboard and ask students to find those vocabulary words in their books and underline them. According to Bert, it was a technique used to train students’ scanning skill. Bert explained,

What I do is to write the vocabulary on the board, have the students underline the words in the book, so now they are learning scanning. That’s another important technique. (08/30/2007)

After teaching the meaning of all the vocabulary listed on the whiteboard, Bert

would read the article to students first and ask students to read aloud the whole article again. However, without any explanation of any sentence with complicated grammar or any indication of the structure in the article, Bert moved straightly to the post-reading exercise. By asking students the answers to the post-reading questions, Bert helped students to further verify their reading comprehension. Bert believed that the only purpose of teaching reading was “to ask students to obtain the main idea in order to let them comprehend the whole meaning of the story.” (09/11/2007) It was not necessary to teach students every single sentence in the article.

However, Bert’s interrogatory style of teaching reading comprehension with the hope for students to fully capture the main idea of the whole story was perhaps too optimistic. Sometimes, students were found not to gain the complete understanding of the article even though they might have been taught each new word in the article. One example was when Bert was asking students where the diamonds are naturally formed. In order to answer this question, students needed to comprehend the following two sentences which are with a relative clause.

...but it is certain that both extreme heat and enormous pressure are needed. It is, therefore, likely that diamonds were formed far below the Earth’s surface where these conditions exist.(New Century Reading, Level 4, p.73)

After inquiring all the students in class, Bert found no one could answer the question. In order to enable the students to answer the question, Bert started to ask students an easier question as a guidance for them to understand. First, he asked students “where are the diamonds made?” Still, no one answered him but kept looking for the answers in the article. After few minutes, there was finally one student who spoke out the answer—“Diamonds were formed far below the Earth’s surface.” Followed by the answer given, Bert continued to ask the whole class another question.

Bert: In this sentence, it says “it is, therefore, likely that diamonds were formed far below the Earth surface where these conditions exist.” What

conditions? What conditions, Ken? (10/16/2007)

However, Ken didn't know the answer, either. Ken was made to stand up by Bert until he figured out the answer. Bert kept asking the same question to Kevin, Ivy, Stacy and Susan. Unfortunately, they all turned out to stand up like Ken for not knowing the answers. At this time, Bert was so upset that there were too many students standing up in class that he guessed it might be due to unknown words in the sentences like *conditions* or *form*. He started to teach the words to the class and asked the question again. However, it took Bert nearly ten minutes to induce the correct answer from the class. The following example illustrated how frustrated Bert was when no one could comprehend these sentences and gave him the correct answer.

Bert: Oh-oh! Everybody's gonna be standing up for two hours. Ok! Do you know the word, condition, means? Perhaps you don't know the word condition means. I remember teaching this to you.

Angel: *zhuang kuang* [狀況]!

Bert: It says "therefore, it's likely that diamonds were formed." Diamonds are made... "formed" means "made." "Far below the Earth surface where these conditions exist." What conditions? What situations are we talking about? [almost hysterically] WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE DIAMONDS?

Angel: I know! I know! "By which diamonds are naturally..."

Bert: NO~~~~[with great pain] I remember teaching this to you. I remember asking this question. "WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE DIAMONDS?" [extremely excited but hopeless] What do you need? [to Ivy] SAY IT!!

Ivy: It is....

Bert: [nearly went crazy] Ian! Stand up! Say it!

Ian: E...Enormous pressure!

Bert: [Shouted] Enormous pressure and....

Ian: Heat!

Bert: [to girls who stand up] you need what? What do you need to make diamonds?

Stacy: Enormous pressure and heat!

Bert: Enormous pressure and heat! These are CONDITIONS you need! You need enormous pressure and what? Heat! You need enormous pressure

and heat to make what?

Ss: Diamonds!

Bert: to make diamonds. [with a relief] (10/16/2007)

Observing that students might gradually understand what these two sentences mean from students' faces, Bert turned to ask one girl student the original question he raised for a final confirmation. After spending ten minutes asking students questions, Bert finally helped his students to comprehend two sentences in the article. Bert's not being able to explain complex grammar sentences to his students revealed one of Bert's disadvantages—not having formal training of teaching grammar.

Teaching Writing

In Bert's writing class, the only activity which was observed is paragraph translation. Bert gave students a Chinese paragraph which consisted of five sentences or so. Then, he started to teach students the English keywords so that they could translate it into English. After learning the keywords, students started to translate the paragraph. As usual, Bert would walk around the class, read students' translation, answer the questions they proposed, and teach them how to write the grammatically-correct sentence in English. Students who finished the translation first should take their translation to Bert for correction. If there was any error appearing in the translation, Bert would patiently teach the student how to revise it. After that, the student would be sent back to his/her seat to revise the translation independently again. Noteworthy, students would not be allowed to go home until Bert accepted their revision. Many students were observed to revise three or four times before going home. After a while, when almost every student had left the classroom, there would one or two student left behind. Bert would still patiently sat by their side, teaching those students how to revise their translation until they completed the task satisfactorily. Such responsible attitude toward teaching

impressed the researcher greatly. It was expressed by Bert that he learned how to be a real teacher who cares for children's education when he was in K-School. (Please see 4.1.1).

Classroom Management

Foreign teachers have often been accused of their clumsy classroom management skills (Chuang, 2006; Chou, 2004; Lin, 2002). In order to compensate for this weakness, one Chinese teacher is often assigned to assist one foreign teacher's teaching in class. However, no Chinese teacher could be seen in Bert's class. He always taught English independently and managed his classroom quite successfully. Unlike other foreign teachers, Bert highly valued the importance of classroom management. It was because Bert realized that unlike teachers in public schools, cram school teachers did not have the power to control students with grades. Students are more likely to obey teachers in public schools because they fear their grades would be lowered by their teachers. On the contrary, cram school teachers have to EARN the respect from their students. The only way to achieve this goal is to have good classroom management skills. He said,

...you have to earn that respect and you have to show them that you do have that kind of power... How? Good classroom management! (11/07/2007).

Besides, from observing the interaction between Chinese teachers and students, Bert found that students tend to respect Chinese teachers because they always discipline the students and provide support like a surrogate parent. "Kids get attached to the teachers," Bert said (09/06/2007). However, without giving students any disciplines, foreign teachers were only recognized by students as someone to play games with.

Hence, an awful consequence occurred. Bert stated,

...foreigners end up having a lot of discipline problems because children don't see him as a teacher. They only see him as someone who comes in and does

these things and he plays games and then he goes away (09/06/2007).

In order to be viewed as a real teacher like his Chinese counterparts, Bert expected himself to teach English on his own and be able to discipline his students in class. Bert tried hard to learn classroom management skills. Bert started with reading books. Bert recalled and elaborated on how he learned to keep students quiet in class from the book called “*Classroom Management.*”

It’s a great book. It teaches you how to deal with kids. And one of the issues is “Don’t yell at the kids.” It doesn’t help. Being angry and yelling, it doesn’t help...but if you just stand there, and look at them...not say a word, the kids shut up (02/08/2007).

However, Bert declared that most of his classroom management skills were actually acquired when he was teaching at K-School (See 4.4.1) and even until now, he is still learning classroom management skills at I-School, the cram school where he is currently teaching. Bert’s classroom management skills manifested in class at I-School are described as follow.

First, Bert created an environment for students to learn English with fun. The classroom atmosphere in Bert’s class was always entertaining but educational. Students can learn English and have fun at the same time. Bert called this “a serious fun.” He believed that “learning should be fun and it should be serious.” (02/26/2007). For Bert, teachers do not have to be fierce to make students learn. The most important thing for teachers is to create an environment where students want to stay and learn something from the teachers. Thus, Bert used interesting stories, jokes and exaggerated gesture and intonations to raise students’ spirits in learning. But if there was someone whose spirit got too high and behaved badly, Bert would immediately pull the whole class back in the normal track. The class

dynamics would just swing high and low constantly during the class.

Second, in order not to let students “cross the line,” Bert set rules for his classroom and enforced them with a firm attitude. He said, “you set limits and then you don’t waiver in your limits. You have to be consistent.” (08/23/2007) For example, one of the rules he set was “No Chinese.” As long as Bert heard any student spoke out Chinese, he would make him/her stand up and translate the Chinese sentence(s) that he/she just said into English. Otherwise, he/she would not be allowed to sit down until he figured out how to say it in English. The following was an example.

(Ken was trying to tell Bert something about a transport plane. But he didn’t know how to say it.)

Ken: Bert, I see...one three zero....

[Kevin, the student who sits next to Ken, asked him what he wanted to say.]

Ken: *Yun shu ji*. [carrier, 運輸機]

Kevin: [laughed loudly] *Xian shu ji*? [salty crispy chicken nuggets, 鹹酥雞]

Ken: [to Kevin loudly] *Yun shu ji!* [carrier, 運輸機]

Bert: [to Ken, annoyed] Ken, are you talking to me or are you talking to Kevin? Stand up! What do you wanna say?

Ken: Oh, no.

Bert: Oh, no what? So you just stay there, don’t move! (10/09/2007)

Bert made Ken stand up in class and he kept teaching vocabulary to the class. After a while, Bert asked Ken if he figured out the English or not. Ken shook his head but he took out a picture to Bert. Bert looked at the picture and taught Ken to say the English sentence which he wanted to express at first—“I saw an airplane called the C-130.” According to Bert, this kind of punishment could not only warn students against speaking Chinese in class but also enable Bert to teach English based on the Chinese they wanted to say.

Third, Bert disciplined students with a firm but not fierce attitude. Influenced by his past learning experience (See 4.1.1), Bert strictly requested his students to

concentrate on him, or on other students' presentation. One day, Kevin, one of the rowdiest students in class, broke the rule. At first, Bert tried to warn Kevin not to be distracted and talked to his classmates but in vain. He did not shout at Kevin because he did not want to spoil the atmosphere while every other student was concentrating on finding out the answers to the mock exam. Instead, Bert suggested Kevin behave well immediately; otherwise, his scores of the mock exam would be used to decide the load of the homework for the whole class. Bert intended to impose peer pressure on Kevin to force him to behave. Unfortunately, it did not work. When Kevin's behavior got worse and worse, Bert insisted on talking to him in private after class, trying to convince him not to make the same mistake again. The way Bert talked to Kevin after class was not very angry, but very serious. Bert explained that in this way, Kevin would therefore really understand and not be overly defensive. With this serious but not so fierce approach, it saved Kevin's dignity, reduced the confrontation between Bert and Kevin and enabled Bert to clearly convey the message to Kevin. Eventually, "he's not going to do it again just trying to make me angry. He's gonna learn from it," Bert said. The following long transcription was the conversation between Bert and Kevin after class.

(When everyone was about to leave the classroom, Bert stopped Kevin.)

Bert: [to Kevin] You, stay! Boy, I wanna know...I wanna know what the problem is!

Kevin: [head's down and silence]

Bert: What's the problem? What's the problem?

Kevin: [shrug his shoulders]

Bert: What's the problem? I wanna know. You can't focus! You have to learn to focus! You have to learn to control your mouth! Okay?! Remember what I've told you about being a bully?

Kevin: [nod his head]

Bert: Yeah! Control your mouth! You will say things that hurt people.

Kevin: I don't hurt people.

Bert: Okay! You will say things that make people "Yuck!" Okay?

Kevin: O~[a sound which means “I see” in Chinese.]
Bert: Think about what you want to say before you say it!
Kevin: I know. [grab his bookbag and want to leave]
Bert: [stop Kevin] Ah-ah! Don’t say I know, I know. Tell me. Say “Bert, I will think about what I say.”
Kevin: Bert, I will think about what I say.
Bert: Before I say.
Kevin: Before I say.
Bert: Good. You promise?
Kevin: Okay!(10/16/2007)

Fourth, Bert used “individual punishment” and “group punishment” for different purposes. In terms of individual punishment, it was used to encourage students to ask questions. Usually, an individual student would be punished by having double homework when he or she failed to answer Bert’s questions. It was because before Bert asked students questions about the teaching content, students were always provided with time to ask Bert everything that they did not know in the textbook. After that, Bert would randomly pick students to answer his questions. If the student did not know the answers, he/she got more homework. To avoid being punished, students consequently learned to ask questions.

Individual punishment was also placed to encourage students to answer questions voluntarily. Bert mentioned that the biggest challenge for him to overcome was students’ inability to volunteer. He said,

Their inability to want to try answer the question. Even if they know the answer. Even if they think they know. They won’t raise their hand. They won’t try to communicate. So I have to punish them for not trying. (11/07/2007).

In order to increase students’ participation in the class activities, Bert often threatened students by giving them more homework or some punishments if they did not raise their hand to answer the question. Take the reciting activity for example. Bert asked

students to stand up and read the sentence with feelings. When he asked who wanted to be the first to read, each student in class quickly raised their hand and eagerly hoped to be chosen to read the sentence first. Even if they could not be the first, they were still keen to be the second or the third. No one wanted to be the last one. When the researcher was puzzled by this interesting phenomenon, Bert explained that in this activity, the last person would be required to read the whole article from the first sentence to the last one. Thus, every student would strive not to be the last one.

As for group punishment, it was often used when Bert wanted to employ peer-pressure to reach some goals, like to get one student behaved in class or to force someone to answer the question. The former goal has been well-exemplified by how Bert disciplined Kevin in the previous pages. The latter was often observed in Bert's class and presented by the following excerpt.

(Bert was asking students a post-reading question.)

Bert: [to Ian] Okay, where did the idea of giving women diamonds from?

Ian: [silence but trying to find the answer in the book]

Bert: If you don't know, then I'm going to ask Stacy. If Stacy says "I don't know." Everybody gets more homework! (10/09/2007)

Bert threatened to employ group punishment to force Stacy to answer his question. Even though Stacy was not sure of her answer, Bert successfully compelled her to give him the answer eventually. In addition, even if Stacy gave the wrong answer, other students would also hurry to provide the correct answer because they worried to have more homework. By alternatively using the two kinds of punishment at will, Bert successfully developed students' habit of asking and answering questions voluntarily.

Last, Bert built a good relationship with his students. Bert described two elements in his ideal relationship with students was "authority" but "equality." As for authority, Bert believed that he, as a teacher, should have the power over students'

behaviors in class. Once students misbehaved, Bert was entitled to correct their wrong deeds, such as being distracted in class, unable to hand in homework on time, bullying other classmates. Meanwhile, Bert and his students shared an equal relationship in terms of teaching. He explained,

You[students] are equal because you are a person and I'm a person. I know more and I have the experience...but you can teach me, too...I am always learning from my students and my students are always learning from me. (02/15/2007).

Based on this belief, Bert encouraged students to teach him things in class, especially what certain Chinese words mean in English.

Bert would also treat his students as his friends. Bert often shared his personal life with his students in class. By sharing his life, Bert strengthened the connection between students and himself. In addition, Bert cared about students' lives, too. Because of the heavy study load, some of his students who studied in junior high schools would take their textbook or workbook to the I-School either for preparing the test or doing their homework during the recess. Interestingly, Bert was always curious about what they learned in junior high school and discussed it with them. One day, the researcher was surprised to see that Bert was explaining the distribution of ocean currents in the geography textbook to a girl student. This showed that Bert's attention was not limited to students' English learning only. He cared about all of their learning!

4.4. The Formal Education Teaching Experience in Taiwan

This section presented Bert's formal education teaching experience in Taiwan. It consisted of two parts. The K-School was described in the first part. Such teaching experience in K-School has benefited Bert a lot. He learned to care about

students' education and to be a real teacher. For Bert, the experience he obtained in K-School was so precious that he highly praised it with the following statement. "Foreign teachers who actually experience that type of thing would have that spark of teaching possibilities; they actually become good teachers." (11/07/2007) The second part comprised with Bert's teaching in Li-Li Junior high school. In Taiwanese public school system, Bert had to deal with teaching thirty-six multi-leveled students in one large classroom. Thus, Bert's strategies toward such a teaching environment were described in terms of the teaching practice and classroom management skills. Moreover, to teach in public schools, Bert also had to face the doubt toward his teaching from the Chinese teachers who possessed different concepts of teaching from his own.

4.4.1. K-School

When teaching in Green Village and Doris' English Center, Bert was also known for being good at computer among foreign teachers. Almost every foreign teacher would ask for Bert's help when there were problems in their computers. "I always like to help people. It gives me a sense of achievement," Bert said. (02/08/2007) Because of his wider knowledge of computer, Bert was recommended to the academic administrators of K-School. One of them reached Bert and requested him to work in K-School as an IT technician and a computer teacher as well. Though being surprised, Bert accepted their offer. Bert described how he was recruited into K-School.

The funny thing about them is they called me! I had no idea. "We understand that you know a lot about computers, can you come and see and work for us?" "Sure!" So I went in. Wow, this is really cool...So I started working for them. (02/08/2007)

K-School is a private, non-profit Pre-K12 institute, providing college

preparatory program leading to a U.S. high school diploma. It was established in 1989 and accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in California, USA. (K-School official website, 2008/8/5). Only students who possess foreign passports can be allowed to enroll in this school. In fact, Bert was very appreciated to have such an opportunity to work in K-School. The experience there has advanced Bert's professional expertise to a higher level. Namely, Bert's vision of education had broadened his knowledge of the roles a teacher played which was no longer limited to the cram school environment only.

Compared with the cram schools where Bert used to work at, K-School is by far a more formal teaching environment where teachers dedicate themselves to educating the students, carefully planning their courses and paying extreme attention to their students' learning. From his personal interaction with his colleagues and observing the teachers' interaction with students, Bert gained plenty of valuable experience. As for the operation of the school, Bert learned "what a structured system is like." (08/23/2007) He also learned the way in which the curriculum should be set up. In regard to teacher-student relationship, Bert realized that teachers are supposed to be respected by students. He explained

When I was in K-School, we always called all of the teachers, Mr. Something or Mrs. Something. And that all maintain an air of respect. (11/07/2007)

Meanwhile, teachers should also maintain a respect for their students in return. Bert continued to explain, "You respect the students and their ideas and opinions. And you guide them." (08/23/2007) Thus, Bert had developed his own belief of teacher-student relationship—authority and equality. As for students' learning, Bert obtained a clearer picture of how students studied in a formal educational environment. Bert also learned a lot of classroom management skills and verified

his teaching belief which was derived from observing his two unforgettable teachers as a student in high school (See 4.1.2). He stated,

As a teacher, we are not supposed to tell them [the students] what to do, and we are supposed to help them find for themselves. So, if students have question, I try to help them think about the question and a specific direction, so they can make the conclusion themselves. (11/07/2007)

However, among the various benefits Bert received from working for K-School, the most important one was that it had turned Bert into a real teacher. “I learned how to be a real teacher in K-School,” Bert claimed. (11/07/2007) As for what Bert learned to be a real teacher, the findings are presented as follows.

First, teachers should set a good model for students. Bert believed that “every teacher is an example” who affects students’ personalities and changed them as a person (02/08/2007). Students may imitate their teacher’s behaviors either consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, Bert was highly cautious of his own behaviors in class and kept asking himself questions such as “How am I affecting kids?”, “How are kids going to learn from me?”, and “What is it that I don’t see about myself and they’re going to see in me and imitate me because they like me?” These questioned worked as the reminders for Bert in order not to pass as a harmful model to students. Bert stated, “Because it’s not just about you teaching a subject. It’s about you teaching everything who you are.” (02/15/2007) In addition, Bert never drank alcohol and he stayed away from going to pubs. For Bert, it was extremely inappropriate for the students to have a drunken teacher in class. He cared about whether he was setting a good model for his students and his reputation as well. “Kids are smart. Even if you are not saying it, the kids see it,” Bert said. Besides, in Bert’s opinion, the common behaviors of foreigners’ going to pubs and drinking all night long was actually an escape from the Taiwanese culture. Bert explained,

“Because the cultures are so different, you have to have a way of escaping that culture and finding a way to break out.” (02/08/2007) However, it was an awful way for foreigners to deal with a culture other than their own. Instead of escaping themselves from the Taiwanese culture in pubs and getting drunk, “the best way to deal with a culture is to learn how they [local people] are doing it and why they are doing it,” Bert suggested. Therefore, Bert was often seen to ask his students or friends to explain the reason to him every time when there was anything related to Chinese cultures that Bert did not understand.

Second, “tell stories with morals.” As mentioned in the previous section, Bert loved to use stories to reach many teaching goals in class, such as arousing students interest, training their listening ability, or teaching vocabulary from it. However, while in K-School, Bert started to ponder the rightfulness of the content of his stories and the connection between the stories themselves and their educational purposes. Bert no longer randomly picked up any story he could think of and shared it with students in class. He learned to sieve out the inappropriate content in advance, avoiding the plots that were related to sex, violence, controversial political issues or anything which may damage students’ minds. Moreover, he tried to tell the stories with morals to their students. The following excerpt at I-School was an example to show how Bert used a story to teach students a moral. It was his personal experience of being annoyed by the noise of plastic bags when he watched movies in Taiwan.

(Bert took the plastic bag which one of his students used for her drink.)

Bert: Wait! [to the class] Do you see this? What’s this? It’s a plastic bag. I hate plastic bags.

Ss: Why?

Bert: Because when I go, in Taiwan, to see a movie. And everybody would get the food in the plastic bags and then sit down. And when you’re watching movies, you read the Chinese words. When I watch movie, I have to listen what they say!

- Joan: You can say to them, “Hey, be quiet!”
- Bert: [Bert ignores her] Anyway, so right at the important part of the movie, in the movie, they’re gonna tell you who killed who, and why they did this. And when and how and where and whatever. And the person [in the movie] said, “and I...” [Bert began to squeeze the plastic bag in his hands and made noises.]
- Ss: [laughed]
- Bert: And it’s not just one bag! It’s the whole movie theater. And I can’t hear them [the conversation in the movie]. The whole theater’s noisy with plastic bags. So DO NOT TAKE PLASTIC BAG FOR FOOD, WITH FOOD INSIDE, INTO THE MOVIE THEATER, OKAY?
(09/11/2007)

From the excerpt above, Bert tried to tell his students how difficult it was for a foreigner to see a movie in Taiwan and how easily their understanding of the movie could be destroyed by the noise from Taiwanese people’s one small random act. The students not only learned to be considerable toward the inconvenience of foreigners in Taiwan but also learned to respect other people’s right to enjoy their movie in a quiet movie theater. “So in their [students’] head, they’re thinking that story, so they’re learning not just English. They are learning morals of life,” Bert stated.

Third, Bert held a serious attitude toward students’ learning. Influenced by the teachers in K-School, Bert learned to be responsible for his teaching and to care about students’ learning. Bert said, “You have to be serious about their education...if the students see that you don’t care, then they don’t care. [But] if they see that you care, then they care.” (10/11/2007) In spite of revealing his care by respecting students’ opinion in class, Bert also displayed his responsible attitude even after class. As mentioned earlier in Bert’s teaching at I-School, Bert always checked students’ translation assignment one by one and asked them to revise it several times before they go home. Bert was also observed so many times to have students who failed in the test stay after class and Bert would teach them until they passed the exam at

I-School. Moreover, Bert welcomed all questions which students asked him after class and patiently explained to them. One day, when the researcher was about to interview Bert, he was found to answer one of his students' question about the meaning of the word "imply" and the difference between "shy" and "introverted." Bert asserted, "if they [students] wanna know, you shouldn't ignore them...And then I'll spend time after class to help them" (09/11/2007). Again, such serious attitude toward students' learning was another trait which differentiated Bert from many foreign teachers. Bert explained, "A lot of foreign teachers will [ignore students' questions after class]! Why? Money! My time's up. Gotta go! Bye!" Thus, it revealed that one of the spirits Bert learned from Kaohsiung American School was to seriously take students' education into account regardless of his private time or money.

Fourth, another technique which Bert learned to be a real teacher from K-School was how to give homework and to hold a responsible attitude toward homework. Before K-School, Bert seldom gave homework to his young students at Jolly School or his adult students both in Green Village and Doris' English Center. It was when Bert worked in K-School that he learned different ways of giving homework so as not to bore his students. He was also conscious of the important purpose of homework which propelled him to hold a serious attitude toward students' homework. Bert delineated the important purpose, "Homework is supposed to help them [students] learn." (10/09/2007). Firmly followed this purpose he realized in K-School, Bert always explained to his students the reason why he gave the kind of homework to students and specified the consequence of not doing it. Furthermore, Bert checked all of students' homework all by himself. Bert attributed his hard work of seriously checking students' homework to the following reason:

If you show them [the students] that, then they'll work much harder for you. If

you are just lazy, then they'll be lazy. Kids only work as hard as you make them work. (10/09/2007)

Last, Bert recognized the most essential quality of a successful teacher—passion! “If you want to be a real teacher in Taiwan, you have to have a passion for teaching,” Bert said (09/06/2007). Just as the requirements which were set for the applicants who wanted to teach in K-School on their official website, each teacher Bert encountered at this school had already had at least two years of teaching experience and a passion for teaching. When observing their teaching in class, Bert realized that a real teacher did not play games with students. Instead, almost all of the teachers in K-School were enthusiastic about their teaching and “they actually impart ideas and language to these younger people,” Bert said. (09/06/2007) Besides, Bert believed that even a novice teacher with fewer teaching techniques would become a better teacher if he/she had a passion for teaching. He explained, “Because in the beginning, even if you are a bad teacher, but you enjoy teaching, you will try and you will learn and you will do your best. And you will become a better teacher than somebody who is very good at teaching but eventually it [the teaching method] is always the same.” (11/07/2007). Therefore, a teacher's passion would also trigger his or her desire to become a better teacher. Gradually, this kind of belief had also governed Bert's daily reflection for being a better teacher. He said,

“I really want to be a better teacher. Every time I go to the class, I'm always thinking “How can I be a better teacher? What can I learn that makes this class a little more interesting?” (02/08/2007)

Undoubtedly, what Bert had learned from K-School was not merely how to be a real teacher; it made him be a better teacher!

Despite of those good experiences in K-School, Bert also experienced the dark side of the school operation in Kaohsiung American School. Bert witnessed how

parents and the principal literally interfered with the teachers' teaching and altered the school policy. When Bert first worked for K-School, the principal endeavored to promote the integration of technology in the curriculum. Teachers were encouraged to use the technology as a tool for their teaching. Accordingly, each classroom had one computer. Teachers began to design project-like assignments for students to apply the knowledge they learned in the classroom. Students were also encouraged to use computer in the classroom or at home to search for the information they need on the Internet to complete their projects. Unfortunately, this kind of innovative instruction did not earn the support from the parents, especially the Chinese parents. Parents were very worried to see their children not reading textbooks at home but to "play on the computer" instead. As a matter of fact, it increased the anxiety among parents. Some of them even showed up in school and questioned the teachers, "Why isn't my son reading those science books? Why isn't my son memorizing the science books? What's on the test?" In order to ease their anxiety, the new principal who just assumed his office ordered to change the whole curriculum model of the school and undo the four years of work of the previous principal. He abandoned the notion of integration of technology and separated the computer class from all the other subjects. "This is our computer class. And this is the only time we touch computers in the whole school," Bert recalled. (02/15/2007). The new principal also prohibited the teachers from giving students too many projects to do in one semester. Only one term project was allowed in one semester. Worst of all, the new principal laid off most of the teachers with a PhD or master degree because they charged higher salary from the school. In order to reduce the cost of operation, he chose to hire much younger teachers who helped the school to save money but possessed less experience. Bert could not agree with this awful policy. In his opinion, although the policy of recruiting new teachers could bring in the new ideas, the old teachers and the

experience and the knowledge from them should also be kept to guide the new teachers at school. Bert said, “You know you have to have the balance. You have your teachers that know how to teach and then you bring in new teachers. They learned from each other...but all of those were gone! Really frustrating!” (02/15/2007) Because of the disagreement with the new principal’s policies and feeling frustrated by the deteriorating environment, Bert left K-School where he had dedicated his four years to teach computer courses and learned the precious knowledge of teaching.

All in all, Bert highly appreciated his teaching experience in K-School. He strongly recommended that if any foreigners who wanted to teach in formal schools in Taiwan, they should acquire the teaching experience like he had with K-School. It was because he/she would be more likely to “know what a real teaching is about and what is expected from him/her” (09/06/2007).

4.4.2. Li-Li Junior High School

One year after leaving K-School, Bert moved to Taoyuan to teach at I-School. Meanwhile, he was also engaged in teaching English in several public schools in the Taoyuan County. One of them was Li-Li Junior High School. In September, 2006, Bert was recommended to the researcher to observe his class.

When teaching in Li-Li Junior High School where the school administrator only gave him one class period to teach English in one week, Bert viewed himself as a support role, focusing on teaching students’ listening and speaking. From Bert’s observation, the Taiwanese public educational systems usually emphasizes much on reading and writing. Therefore, Bert expected himself to “come in and bring that level up, which are listening and speaking” (02/08/2007). However, Bert asserted that if he was in charge of all the English teaching hours of this class, meaning this class was totally his and there would be no Chinese teacher involved, he would definitely integrate four skills’ training in his teaching.

In addition to being a support role, Bert also had to locate the level of the majority in this class first in order to decide what to teach and how to teach the students. Usually, Bert's approach to understanding students' level was to spend about ten to fifteen minutes asking students some basic questions like "When's your birthday?" or "What's your hobby?" From students' reply, Bert quickly realized that the level of this class was varied; some of them were in inter-mediate level but some were still in "A-B-C level." Fortunately, students' listening ability was better than their speaking because Bert noticed that students could "understand [his questions] right away, but they have no idea how to say [answer] it." (02/15/2007)

4.4.2.1 Strategies on multi-level students in one large classroom

As is widely known, English teachers in public schools in Taiwan are well-known to having to teach multi-leveled students in large classrooms. For this difficult teaching condition, Bert's strategies were as follows. First, "meet somewhere in the middle," Bert said. Bert would try to keep his English teaching at the middle level of the class so that higher level students would have a sense of achievement whereas the lower-level students would also improve to the upper level easily after their making effort in learning English. However, although Bert had such an ideal thinking of including the whole class, he expressed his sense of helplessness with the lower-level students whose English level was near to none in this class. He said,

I can see one kid over there. I know they don't know any English. I feel really bad when I am teaching the class like that, because all these other students understand [me] and I don't want to leave that student out. I don't want to ignore that student. But sometimes, I have no choice. (02/26/2007)

Bert confessed that sometimes he had no choice but to aim at teaching the majority of the students and ignored the less competent ones. Bert knew that as a teacher, he

had to be clearly aware of how much time he was given to teach the material. If he spent too much time on bringing up one lower level student, the other students would feel bored. Bert said, “you are sacrificing the majority of student for teaching one. You can’t always do that.” (02/26/2007). Moreover, even if Bert wanted to help those lower level students after class, he still encountered certain problems. Those students were often unwilling to stay after class, and they would make various excuses for leaving the school. If Bert threatened them to lower their grades, things would get even worse. It was because those students were already failing. “So it doesn’t matter for them,” Bert explained with a slight frustration. (02/26/2007) In spite of feeling frustrated to some extent, Bert was still found to try to help lower level students to write down the answer to the post-reading questions in class when all the other students were writing their own. It showed that although Bert realized his teaching weakness in such conditions when students’ levels were so different in one class, he still tried his best to be a responsible teacher and try hard to make learning actually happening to those low-achievers.

The second strategy which Bert employed was to “focus on the teaching quality, not quantity” (02/28/2007). Bert believed that with so different levels in one class, one of the feasible solutions was to maintain the quality of his teaching in class; that is, Bert would lower the speed of his teaching in order to make sure that most of the students in class had comprehended his teaching. Otherwise, with such limited time for teaching English, if the teacher insisted on teaching too many materials, he/she would “make everybody miserable.” (02/28/2007). It might be difficult for higher-level students to digest so much knowledge in a short time, let alone the average students or the lower-level ones.

Third, when it comes to motivating the learning interests of students with different levels, Bert discovered a universal strategy which was suitable for

motivating every level of students—making the class full of fun. Bert described, “every student has a different way of motivation. But one general thing that I discover that motivates almost all students is fun. If they can have fun, they’re interested. If they’re interested, they’ll study.” (02/26/2007)

As what Bert did in cram schools, the two typical techniques that Bert adopted to create an interesting English learning atmosphere in class were subtle jokes and stories. Regarding making jokes, the following excerpt was an example of how Bert deliberately mistook one student’s name, Peter, as another disgraceful meaning in Chinese, *pi tui* [劈腿⁵], and to create an amusing effect in class.

Bert: Yes! Let’s see. Number Thirty-six!
[No. 36 stood up.]
Bert: Then, what’s your name?
No. 36: Peter!
Bert: Pi tui? [the whole class laughed out loud.] Good name! I like it! Pi-tui?
No. 36: Peter!
Bert: OK! Pi-tui! The first question.... [The class laughed again.]
(11/01/2006)

In addition to making subtle jokes, Bert also drew students’ attention in class by saying stories about his personal experience in Taiwan or in the United States. Bert’s story-telling technique for making the class fun was highly praised by his students in Li-Li Junior High School. Among the six students interviewed by the researcher, all of them considered Bert’s teaching very interesting. One of the students explained that “[it was] because sometimes he would tell us things he encountered in Taiwan and his opinion about it.” (05/30/2007). Besides, two of these students also reported that when hearing Bert’s stories, their listening ability improved and their vocabulary enlarged. (05/30/2007). Therefore, from the result of students’ interviews, it

⁵ It was a Chinese expression, which used to describe an unfaithful affection which one man or woman may have more than one lover.

indicated that Bert's story-telling in Li-Li junior high school not only made the class interesting but also benefited students in terms of improving their listening ability and the acquisition of the vocabulary. In addition, from the researcher's observation, the class was often more energetic when Bert finished telling them interesting stories. Because the spirit of the class was aroused, the students were all happier to recite the reading article happily louder than they used to be. Their excitement toward learning English could be clearly heard from the volume of their voice. It also saved time for Bert to keep reminding the whole class to open their mouths when asking them to recite the reading article as usual.

Noteworthy, Bert was observed to be careful about his wording when telling stories to students in Li-Li junior high school. Unlike using more colloquial expression at I-School, Bert used a more formal expression in English. For example, Bert would choose to say "going to" instead of "gonna" in front of the class. Besides, Bert was cautious about the verb tense he spoke when telling stories to the students in Li-Li Junior High School. One obvious example was that Bert's description of his Halloween car accident when he was twelve in the United States. Originally, when hearing Bert's story, the researcher was confused that the verbs Bert used in his story were all present tense instead of past tense. When the researcher read the articles which this class had just learned in the past few weeks, the truth was unveiled. Those articles were all written in present tense! Bert used present tense to describe the events because it was in accordance with the students' current learning. One week later, the new article Bert taught was written in past tense and he was, therefore, starting to use past tense to describe his events in Taiwan to students.

The last strategy Bert employed in this class was to keep walking around the whole classroom. Bert realized that in such a large class, students would easily become absent-minded or distracted from the teaching. Thus, in order to keep

students alert in class, the most common scene observed in this class was Bert's frequently moving around the class. He would move to the left side of the classroom and shortly to the right side. Few minutes before, Bert was just in the front of the classroom, but soon, he would be in the back. Keeping walking around the class allowed Bert to ensure students' paying attention in class and increased the opportunities for Bert to interact with the students. The researcher was surprised to see that even though Bert had a car accident the day before the class and had his knee and legs injured, Bert still insisted on walking around the class.

4.4.2.2 Bert's Classroom Practice in Li-Li Junior High School

As a matter of fact, Bert's teaching practice in Li-Li Junior High School was similar to that at I-School. (See 4.3.2) "I tried to teach pretty much the same between the public school and the cram school. Because it [the teaching method] works both well," Bert stated. (08/23/2007). Owing to its similarity, Bert's teaching practice in Li-Li Junior High School would not be described in detail in this section. However, only the significant or different approaches which Bert employed in Li-Li Junior High School such as teaching speaking, vocabulary and reading would be specified. Besides, the different classroom management skills which Bert used in this class would also be described.

Teaching Speaking

Although Bert set his own role as a supporter to teach students' speaking in Li-Li Junior High School, not many opportunities were provided by Bert to train students' speaking ability. In this class, Bert's main job was to teach reading comprehension. After Bert finished teaching vocabulary and reading, only little time was left for Bert to train students' speaking ability. The only technique Bert could employ to train students' speaking ability was to randomly pick up one student and

asked him/her to orally answer the post-reading questions listed behind the reading article. Besides, no news-telling activities was adopted in this class because the large student number. As for students' willingness to speak in English, it was not surprised to observed that the students in Li-Li Junior High School were less willing to interact with Bert when he told something interesting, like news or jokes. What they did in class was only sit still in their chairs and laugh when hearing Bert's funny stories or jokes. Only a few of them dared to express their feelings to Bert in English. As a consequence, these brave students would draw most of Bert's attention and consequently become the only students who conversed with Bert during class. One girl student sharply pointed out one of Bert's problems in teaching, "Only those who dare to speak English will answer [Bert]. Those who were afraid of speaking English would never have chances to present [to express their feelings to Bert in English]." (05/30/2007)

Vocabulary Teaching

When it comes to vocabulary teaching, Bert always chose the most important words to teach like what he did at I-School. However, the difference between I-School and Li-Li Junior High was that Bert did not teach as many words in Li-Li Junior High School as at I-School. Bert explained, "there is no way in the world that students can remember every single vocabulary in the lesson. You're supposed to teach by molding the material around the students...Material goes around the students, not students goes around the material." (02/28/2007).

Although Bert taught smaller vocabulary to students in Li-Li Junior High School, he still explained the vocabulary in English. Most students replied that such teaching method helped them to think in English and know the correct pronunciation of the English words. However, some of Bert's English explanations could not be completely comprehended by the students. Take Bert's explanation of the verb

phrase “let out” for example.

Bert: [to students] What time is the school over?

S1: Five-forty.

Bert: Okay. [to students] At five-forty, this class lets out. You can go home!
You can open the door and go outside and let out! What does it mean?

Ss: [silence]

Bert: “Let out.” To let outside. Understand? Yes or No? (11/08/2006)

Since the students still found it difficult to understand Bert’s explanation after Bert provided them with this example, Bert eventually chose to speak out the Chinese meaning of “let out” to students.

When Bert finished teaching each vocabulary, a commonly observed routine was to ask students to repeat each vocabulary word loudly with him. Interestingly, Bert was found to walk around the classroom, carefully listening to whether they were repeating those vocabulary words after him. Bert also constantly reminded students in this class to speak out the vocabulary words and strictly forbade any student who was lazy to pronounce English words in class.

Teaching Reading

The major material for Bert to teach in Li-Li Junior High was a book called *Can You Believe It?* The book contained stories and idioms from real life for students to train their reading comprehension. However, the level of this book was by far lower than that of the textbook Bert used in the class observed at I-School. Even teaching two different levels of reading materials, Bert adopted the same teaching method and procedure in both classes.

When Bert was about to teach a new article in Li-Li Junior High School, the first step was still to write down the vocabulary words on the blackboard and demanded the students to find them in the article and underline them at the same time. The purpose of such teaching practice was reported by Bert to train students’ scanning

skill in the article. Second, he would teach the vocabulary items he listed on the blackboard. Then, he would teach the reading article, which was to read the article again and then require the whole class to repeat after him. As for demanding students to practice reciting the article, Bert adopted the same activities he used at I-School, such as “Give me the FU” or to split the whole class into two groups to read the articles. However, Bert would not explain any grammatical structures of the sentences in the article to the students in Li-Li Junior High School. Bert explained that it was because in this class, there had already been a Chinese English teacher teaching the students grammar. Since the students had already understood the grammar, it was not necessary for Bert to waste his time doing this. Besides, Bert viewed his teaching procedure an integrated one. Sparing time for grammar-teaching might ruin the unity of his instruction for reading.

In spite of adopting almost the same teaching method and procedure in these two different classes, Bert was once observed to slightly alter his teaching when teaching reading in the class with Li-Li Junior High School. When Bert finished teaching the vocabulary and was about to teach the reading article itself, Bert asked the whole class to put down their pens and pencils and to listen to the story he was going to tell. In this pre-reading activity, Bert revised the article which he was going to teach and told it in a story-telling way. With his exaggerated gesture and intonation during telling the story, Bert successfully grabbed students’ attention and helped the students gain the gist of the article. This was the only different technique observed in the class in Li-Li Junior High School, which served as an evidence of Bert’s adjustment of his teaching practice according to the students’ multi English competence.

Classroom Management

“Students in public schools don’t immediately give respect to foreign teachers until they realize foreign teachers have power over their grades” said Bert.

(02/28/2007) It was true that students in public schools easily treated foreign teachers' class as less formal and stressful in which they did not even bother to devote their effort. However, as long as foreign teachers have the right to influence their grades or to control their "life or death" at school, students would tend to show a certain amount of respect for foreign teachers. This was Bert's first impression on public school students. Thus, in order to gain students' respect, "foreign teachers in public school still need to have classroom management skills," Bert asserted.

(02/28/2007)

As for the classroom atmosphere, Bert created an environment for students in Junior High School to have "serious fun" in class, meaning having fun in class but actually learn English at the same time. In regard to the rules of the classroom, Bert prohibited students from not paying attention or speaking Chinese. Once Bert caught someone speaking Chinese, Bert's punishment was to order the students to stand up and spoke its English translation. However, as for the punishment and the homework, Bert held different attitude toward students in Li-Li Junior High School.

Bert seldom adopted group punishments to create the "peer pressure" in Li-Li Junior High School. If there was a student who did not know the answer to the question Bert raised, he would not threaten the whole class to have more homework so as to squeeze out the correct answer for Bert. However, once Bert proposed the group punishment in front of the class in Li-Li Junior High School, he would execute it severely in order to earn the respect from the students. The following excerpt was one of the rare scenes of how Bert adopted a group punishment in Li-Li Junior High School. This event began when Bert was asking a post-reading question to Tim, whose English speaking competence was better than most other students in this class. Bert thought that Tim would tell the answer immediately. To Bert's surprise, Tim did not want to answer the question.

Bert: All right! Question! Tell me about the time when you made a mistake.
Tim: I never made a mistake.
Bert: You're lying! Tell me about a time when you made a mistake.
Tim: Always.
Bert: Nope. Give me an answer.
Time: [silence for 3 seconds.]
Bert: [to the class] Everybody, you can have a choice. He [Tim] can tell me the answer now or all of you can go home and write me a paragraph about a time when you made a big mistake. Do you want him to tell me now?
Ss: Yes!!
Bert: Or do you want to go home and do this homework?
S1: [to Bert] Tell you!
Tim: Homework! Homework! Homework!
Bert: [to Tim] You want the homework? You want everybody to do this homework? OK! Homework! (11/15/2006)

Apparently, Bert did not force Tim to give his answer but to respect Tim's choice. By announcing giving homework to the whole class, Bert not only skillfully terminated the potential confrontation between Tim and him but also directly gave the whole class a lesson that they should seriously take his words and punishments into account. Although Bert ended up jokingly saying that Tim would be killed by his classmates in order to reduce other students' hostility toward Tim, this event practically revealed that Bert held a firm attitude toward his proposal of punishment in class which students had better not to ignore.

As for the individual punishment, Bert's intention of using it to encourage students to voluntarily ask or answer question at I-School was not observed in the Li-Li junior high school. Bert seldom punished an individual student in Li-Li Junior High School because he/she was unable to answer the question. Even when this situation happened in class, Bert would either invite other classmates' answer or just tell the answer to the student and ask him/her to repeat his answer once or twice.

Although the functions of group and individual punishments for withdrawing students' answers to the questions were failed to be prevalently adopted in Bert's class in Li-Li Junior High School, Bert was still observed to punish students who did not bring their textbooks to class or those who did not focus in class. Bert explained his attitude toward punishing the students in Li-Li Junior High School who forgot their textbooks,

“People forget to do things. It's normal. I forget to do things, [and] everybody forgets to do things. But we're trying to teach students a little bit of responsibilities. Sometimes, they'll forget on purpose [be]cause they're testing [the teachers]. So you forget your book and you get extra homework.”
(02/26/2007)

In this class, some boy students indeed deliberately lied to Bert not bringing their textbook to class because they wanted to share the textbook with their best friends and chatted with each other in class when Bert was not noticing. However, their plot was failed when Bert mentioned to punish them by giving them more homework. One of the boy students even immediately took out his textbook from his drawer.

In addition to students who did not bring their textbook, Bert also punished students who did not pay attention in class. The most severe punishment was to send him/her to stand in the back of the classroom. The following transcription showed that when Bert was walking around the classroom, checking whether each student was taking their notes in the textbook, Bert was angry at seeing one girl student who neither brought her textbook nor took notes in class. Bert asked her to stand in the back of the classroom immediately. However, Bert was rarely seen to be so furious in class.

Bert: [to the girl] Did you write it down? You stand up and go to back of the room! Stand up and go back!
(The girl went to the back of the classroom.)

Bert: [to the girl, angrily] You cannot sit down until I see everything's written! I want to see it [the vocabulary] written down! Write it down! English and Chinese, too! (11/08/2006)

It was obvious that Bert was indeed furious about the girl's irresponsible learning attitude in class. Unlike the normal foreign teachers who were more likely to choose to ignore such kind of students, Bert harshly demanded the girl to stand in back of the classroom and resume her concentration on Bert's teaching as soon as possible.

Noisy or talkative students would also be sent to the back of the classroom by Bert.

However, in spite of Bert's effort of controlling the order of the classroom, one of the six students interviewed still complained that "although Bert would sometimes send those rowdy students to the back and control the order in an appropriate time, he was not strict! His teaching style was very active but he could not control those students' behaviors very well." (05/20/2007).

Concerning Bert's attitude toward homework in Li-Li Junior High School, he was very pleased by Chinese students' attitude toward their homework. Bert said, "Taiwan students always want to do their homework and make their teacher happy. That's one of the good culture things about Taiwan." (02/08/2007). Thus, Bert rarely had any difficulty in giving homework in Li-Li Junior High School. Besides, Bert was observed to always remember to collect students' homework immediately after his energetic greeting to the whole class. After having the students' homework at hand, Bert would spend five to ten minutes quickly browsing each piece of students' work in front of the class and then either praised the students' beautiful sentences or corrected their ungrammatical sentence structures right away. However, when being inquired about Bert's punishment for those who failed to hand in their homework on time, some of the students complained that "one of the drawbacks of Bert's teaching was he did not have any practical punishment to those who did not hand in their

homework.” One of the students proposed the possible reason for Bert’s not being able to punish such kind of student, “it might be because Bert was only here once a week.” Thus, Bert was blamed on neglecting his duty to penalizing students who failed to do their homework in Li-Li Junior High School. In addition, because of the insufficient teaching hours in Li-Li Junior High School, the effect of Bert’s punishment, such as to give students more homework, would likely be decreased for Bert’s inconvenience of staying at school all day long and constantly chasing the delayed homework from his students in person.

4.4.2.3 Difficulties in Li-Li Junior High School

When it comes to Bert’s teaching difficulties in Li-Li Junior High School, the first one was the limited teaching hours. Practically, Bert only taught forty-five minutes to this class every week. “That’s not enough for a language,” Bert said. Such short amount of time not only caused the problems in classroom management mentioned earlier but also made it less possible to sustain the teaching effect on students. Not to mention the complicated constitutional problems of the students’ level in this class. Bert complained,

“You’re teaching one hour a week to the class. You are not doing anything useful for them. Really not! It’s a kind of a waste!” (11/07/2007)

At the beginning of each class, it could take Bert a few minutes just to remind students what was taught last week. It was observed that even when asking students some of the post-reading questions whose answer had already be given in the previous week, Bert still found his students unable to answer this week. For Bert, seeing the improvement of this class might be nearly impossible. Without sufficient hours for Bert to build a strong foundation for students in Li-Li Junior High School, they might learn some English this week but soon forgot everything. As a teacher, it really frustrated Bert to some extent. Bert described such embarrassing situation in Li-Li

Junior High School, “You just [have] one hour a week. It’s not gonna do anything. Because whatever you teach today, next week you’re gonna teach the same thing again because it’s already forgotten. So it takes about ten weeks just to teach one word.” (11/07/2007).

Second, students’ behavior problems were another difficulty for Bert in this class. Students in Li-Li Junior High School were all at their puberty. Accordingly, it was not surprising that students loved to talk about sex in class. In Bert’s opinion, there were two reasons for students to talk about sex in class—“hormone” and “testing the teachers!” Because of the change for adolescent students’ hormone, they were curious about sex and tended to be rebellious to their teachers or parents for no reasons. In order to deal with the students’ preference of telling sex jokes in class, the best policy for Bert was to pretend that he did not understand their jokes and ask the students to stand up and explain what they just said in private to him in English in front of the class! In that way, students might feel so embarrassed to explain in front of the whole class that they would eventually give up talking about sex in class. Bert explained,

“I just like to pretend I’m stupid. “I’m sorry what? Please stand up and explain it to me”...and they get really shy...and all the other kids they learned “If I am gonna say something, the teacher’s gonna call me to explain it. Unless I am prepared to get up and be really embarrassed, then I’m not going to say it.” (03/05/2007)

Furthermore, Bert believed that if he got angry about the students, they would not learn anything and Bert would risk forming the tension in class because of the adolescent’s inclination of testing their teachers. Thus, if Bert wanted to prevent this situation from happening in class again, he would have to use this indirect way.

The third but the biggest difficulty for Bert to teach in Li-Li Junior High School was the Chinese teachers’ doubtful attitude toward his teaching. “Their idea of

learning and my idea of learning are two different things,” Bert grumbled, “They don’t like to see students laugh in class and give too much pressure on students.”

Bert mentioned that the Chinese teachers had a misunderstanding about his teaching style simply because they found their students were having fun in Bert’s class. Bert defended for himself,

“All they see is from a third party of view...they see the teacher’s smiling, the students’ smiling, the students’ laughing and the teacher’s laughing. They must be playing. Teacher must not be teaching. But no, no, no! I’ll promise you. Those kids are learning a lot... They’re learning it subtly.” (03/05/2007)

In fact, when the researcher had a short conversation with the Chinese English teacher of this class, she indeed expressed the same opinion that Bert spent too much time on telling stories to students and less time on teaching. However, Bert asserted that Chinese teachers should not underestimate his way of teaching; he was creating a “serious fun” in class, which students would learn English subtly but more happily. Besides, just because Bert did everything in class with a purpose for education, he was also annoyed that if there was a doubt on the Chinese teachers’ mind, “Why didn’t they come and ask me?” Bert puzzled. The avoidance of direct communication would only increase the misunderstanding between Bert and the Chinese teachers.

When it comes to the avoidance of direct communication, Bert was greatly irritated by this typical trait of Chinese people despite his long-term acculturation in the Chinese society. Take the administrator in Li-Li Junior High School for example. One day, Bert was shocked by a phone call from Li-Li Junior High School when Bert was about to teach the class on the first day of the new semester. The administrator on the phone informed him not to come to Li-Li Junior High School anymore because his class had been cancelled since this semester. However, such information was not

expressed directly until Bert further inquired the administrator to clarify his real intention. Bert described their conversation on the phone,

The administrator told me in Chinese, “我們可能沒有辦法繼續上課。 [We might not be able to continue the class anymore.]” And I said, “可能還是已經確定好了？ [Is it ‘might be’ or you have already decided?]” and he said, “喔，我們已經確定好了。 [Oh, we have already decided.]” (03/05/2007)

Bert was quite angry at hearing the ambiguity in the administrator’s talking. “I want people to be direct to me”, Bert appealed. (03/05/2007) Bert did not think that he received the direct information just because the administrator intended to be polite and avoid the potential conflicts. However, this was the last kind of treatment which Bert asked for from Chinese people. Instead, he wanted direct communication and truth instead. He explained,

“Don’t be polite, just tell me. I need to know. If I don’t know, how can I fix it [my teaching]? That’s very important, that communication. The Chinese people, the culture, often is we’re not gonna communicate. We wanna just tell you, “We don’t want you.” Okay, then why?...I don’t want excuses, I want...TRUTH. So I can fix myself or fix the class or fix the teaching style or do whatever is necessary to keep the students and keep the class open.” (03/05/2007)

Thus, because of the lack of direct communication, Bert lost his opportunities to improve or to adjust his teaching style in order to be more conformed to the students and the environment in Li-Li Junior High School or any formal education teaching environment. It also indicated that without direct communication, Bert would never have any chances to explain his philosophy of teaching, such as “serious fun”, to his Chinese counterparts in public schools and to diminish their doubt of Bert’s teaching. To win over the trust and support from Chinese teachers may seem like a dream, let alone their cooperation in the same classroom.

4.5. Other Difficulties Bert Encountered in Taiwan

Bert had encountered many difficulties when he managed to make a living in Taiwan as an English teacher. With an open-minded attitude, Bert expected those difficulties to happen in advance and regarded them as “challenges.” Bert said,

“Actually nothing really is a difficulty [be]cause they are all challenges and I like to deal with challenges. And that’s what teachers are supposed to do. Teachers are supposed to like challenges.” (03/05/2007).

However, in spite of the optimistic attitude Bert held to deal with “challenges” in his life in Taiwan, Bert still revealed certain challenges which were difficult for him to overcome when he taught English in Taiwan. As for the difficulties which Bert encountered in Taiwan, several of them had already been mentioned in the previous parts respectively. For instance, at Jolly School, Bert was disappointed with not being viewed as a teacher but a puppet. While at I-School, Bert had to deal with the parents who demanded highly on the education and those who mainly took I-School as a day-care center. Bert encountered the distrust from the local English teachers toward his “serious fun” teaching style while he was teaching in Li-Li junior high school and complained about those Chinese teachers not being direct to him. Regarding to other difficulties Bert encountered in Taiwan, three other difficulties were described as follows—lacking of the professional training, the incompatibility with the local educational model, and unstable working environment.

In terms of lacking of the professional training, Bert mentioned, “In Taiwan, nobody really ever gives you any kind of instruction or teaching workshop.” (08/28/2007) Different from students they taught in Taiwan, foreign teachers acquired English as their first language. In order to be a competent English teacher who taught their mother tongue in an EFL environment, every foreign teacher would be supposed to possess the professional EFL knowledge. Furthermore, as a native speaker, Bert said, “the disadvantage is sometimes you don’t know why you say

certain things.” (02/08/2007). Failing to explain English not only embarrassed Bert as an English teacher but also emerged the urgent need for professional training. Unfortunately, few professional training was provided for foreign teachers in Taiwan. Bert described how he was embarrassed about his inability to explain grammar to students when he worked in a cram school for Joint Colleges Entrance Exam in Kaohsiung. Bert remembered that in that cram school, there was a very famous teacher who taught about over one hundred students in one class. Bert observed that this teacher taught English grammar like a math teacher. When Bert checked the very teacher’s self-compiled grammar handouts which he used in class, Bert found that thirty percent of English written in the handouts were wrong. Bert said, “thirty percent of it you cannot say it in English. This doesn’t make any sense.” (02/15/2007). Pathetically, when Bert was trying to convince the students that the famous teacher was wrong about some of the English sentences he provided in the material, no student believed Bert and chose to trust the famous teacher. Bert recalled the situation,

“I am a native speaker and I’m telling them[the students], “Look, you can’t say that [sentence].” But the students go, “But teacher, our Chinese teacher said you can do that. Then, please tell me why.”...But I don’t have good grammar understanding, I can’t explain.” (03/05/2007)

At that time, Bert lacked the good English grammar knowledge to explain to students the reason why; therefore, the students would inevitably believe their Chinese teacher because he was the teacher who was able to make the grammar logical for students to understand.

Overwhelmed by the sense of helplessness, Bert, who aimed to be a responsible teacher and cared about students’ education, started to learn about English grammar all by himself since then. He observed other teachers’ teaching and read books about

grammar. Today, Bert was able to explain basic grammar to his students in class either in Chinese or in English. His self-learned grammatical knowledge even enabled him to instruct students to translate Chinese sentences into English. However, without receiving professional training officially, Bert was still observed to fail to explain complicated grammars to his students.

As for the incompatibility with the local educational model, Bert complained “Chinese education system really frustrated me!” (02/26/2007) American education emphasizes application whereas the Chinese education stresses too much on memorization. Schools only focus on students’ test scores. As long as a student can memorize as much as possible, he/she can score higher in the test. Students’ performance and the efficacy of teachers’ teaching were only judged from how high the scores the students get; higher scores mean better learning and teaching. However, Bert disagreed with such exam-oriented education. He said, “They [Chinese students] take the test. After the test, they forget everything. What’s the point? That’s what makes me angry about the Chinese education.” (02/26/2007) Bert continued to complain that the schools only teach students “how to get higher score, not to teach them English.” (02/26/2007). As a consequence, every time when Bert tried to impose the spirit of the American education—application—into his teaching, he always encountered the obstacles from the parents, the school administrators or the local teachers.

In addition, Bert did not favor the curriculum design of the educational model in Taiwanese public schools and claimed that such standard curriculum for every school was totally wrong. Bert asserted,

“The public school, [what] you have to worry about is standard. Everybody has standard. All of the students have to study this book. All of the students have to learn this much at this amount of time. But the problem is that each and every class is different.” (11/07/2007)

Because of the different trait of each class, Bert appealed that every school should abandon their standard curriculum. He also suggested that “every teacher should cater his/her curriculum to students and show students a better way to learn things.”

(11/07/2007) Otherwise, under such standard curriculum, teachers have to undergo the pressure of meeting the syllabus which would not only interfere with the quality of teachers’ teaching but also reduce the students’ ability to absorb the learning materials in such a short time. Consequently, students’ less desirable performance propelled teachers to impose more pressure on students in order to maintain their good performance on tests. Thus, Bert claimed, “It’s not how fast they learn. What matters is they WANT to learn. Show them something useful.”(11/07/2007). Besides, putting too much pressure on students would have bad influence on students. “It changes kids’ personalities,” Bert worried. (09/11/2007) Considering the unhealthy learning environment where Taiwanese students stayed, Bert wanted to create a more pleasant learning environment with less pressure for students. Meanwhile, Bert controlled the speed of the syllabus’ completion based on students’ learning situations. He would teach less material if the whole class’ condition was not suitable for learning too much English that day. Instead, Bert would tell the class some interesting stories or jokes to cheer them up. However, such intention would still be misunderstood as not teaching much meaningful materials for students. This incompatibility with Bert’s concept of teaching and the reality of current teaching situation had bothered Bert frequently.

The last difficulty Bert mentioned was the unstable working environment in Taiwan. First, Bert’s income was hourly-based, not salary-based. “If I don’t work, I don’t get paid,” Bert said. (09/07/2007) Take Chinese New Year for example. Chinese people take almost a week to celebrate this festival. This means Bert will not get paid for seven days. “Or the typhoon comes, you don’t get paid,” Bert added.

What is worse, the classes which Bert had taught for a period of time could easily be cancelled for any reasons. The most usual excuse was the insufficient student numbers for the cram schools to afford running the class. Bert said, “Sometimes, classes open and classes don’t open. You plan on teaching them [the students] next week but they [the owners] say “Sorry, we don’t have enough students yet.” So...your salary goes up and down.” (02/28/2007) Such unsteady income had frequently forced Bert to change his financial plan for the future. In order to make ends meet every month, “you really have to know how to manage your money well,” Bert said. (02/28/2007).

However, the advantage of the hourly-based job was that it enables foreign teachers to take vacation more easily. Compared with the Taiwanese people who basically take one-week vacation per year, it takes at least one or two month for foreign teachers to go back to their country and visit their parents and relatives. If their job is salary-based, such a long vacation will almost be impossible. Besides, “As a bushiban [cram school] teacher, you burn out really easily. This is why most foreigners teach English for six or seven months and then they take a two-month vacation,” Bert said. If the owner of the cram school is reluctant to approve their request to take a long vacation, foreign teachers could just quit the job. After coming back from their vacation, foreign teachers still can easily find another teaching job in other cram schools. Unfortunately, such “privilege” could hardly happen to Bert. Because of working in such a small-scale cram school, Bert, who was partly responsible for the success of the operation, had nearly no time to take a break. “Finding no substitute teachers” and “worrying that students’ not paying tuition fee” would be the two major reasons which kept Bert from taking a break regularly. Otherwise, “Every seven months, I need at least one week...Like one full week I don’t have to teach anything,” Bert expressed. (11/07/2007)

The second reason for Bert to regard his working environment unstable was the dishonorable and unprofessional management of the owners in the cram schools in Taiwan. “Boss cares about image only,” Bert complained. (08/30/2007) Few cram school owners would place the students’ learning as their first priority. What really counts for the cram school owners was making profits. For this reason, “If they [the owners] project the correct image and the kids are happy, they don’t care about the education part,” Bert explained. (08/30/2007) The best way to project a good image for the cram schools was to hire white-face foreign teachers in order to meet parents’ need and possess the competitive ability in the market. Worst of all, the myth of white-face foreign teachers has dominated the business so greatly that the owners hired any white-face foreigners regardless of their nationalities. Bert described the golden rule of their recruiting policy—“If you can speak English, and you are white, you can work here!” (08/23/2007). Meanwhile, when it comes to this distorted phenomenon among cram schools in Taiwan, Teacher D, another foreign teacher who was Bert’s colleague at I-School, overheard Bert’s talking and joined the conversation. He confirmed such phenomenon and was also angry at it. The following was their conversation about this phenomenon.

Teacher D: There are some people who are from Poland and teaching English. He can barely speak English.

Bert: I know there’s one guy from Siberia.

Teacher D: I know a girl from Czechoslovakia, or Czech Republic, whatever you call it.

Bert: There you go! (08/23/2007)

From the conversation above, it clearly revealed that some of the cram school owners had adopted the dishonorable strategy to deceive their customers which made Bert realize that their job could easily be replaced by someone who was not a native English speaker but whose skin was as white as his.

Moreover, the supply of foreign teachers was too much in the market at present time. Bert explained, “You know a lot of foreign teachers, they will take everything now because they come over here with the big student loan.” (08/23/2007). As a consequence, the cram school owners could always lay off any foreign teachers at will because there were still plenty of foreigners in the market who would be willing to take the job at any cost. Since the cram school owners did not value the English education highly, they would not bother to provide higher wages to hire experienced foreign teachers like Bert.

In spite of the over-supplied foreign teachers, Bert still worried that the harmful consequence the owners’ unprofessional management strategy may bring to the education. To Bert’s knowledge, most foreigners did not take their job seriously simply because their owners’ unprofessional attitude toward managing the schools. “It’s like a double-edged sword,” Bert described. Foreigner teachers became “cookie-cutter teachers” who lost their enthusiasm but followed every teaching procedure the cram school provided. Each foreign teacher would perform just the same teaching. Bert disagreed such teaching styles and said,

“We call those cookie cutter teachers. You cut your cookie and every cookie is exactly the same. They are not really educating the students. They are just following a basic plan....they don’t cater to students’ need. They are just puppets.” (02/26/2007).

Obviously, foreign teachers were totally used as a tool for the owners to promote the image of the cram school and make money. The owners encouraged the cookie cutter teachers with a simple goal of making the students happy in class. Without caring any reputation or consequences, some of the foreign teachers were also happy about being a puppet. “It’s not my country,” Bert expressed their mentality.

Eventually, the students’ learning was sacrificed by such double-edged sword.

Lastly, Bert's disagreement with the cram school owners' heavy-handed approaches to control foreign teachers was another reason which caused Bert felt unstable in this working environment. Realizing that money was the only reason for most foreign teachers to work in Taiwan, some owners would use this weakness and set up the unreasonable rules in the contracts. For example, some cram school would ask, "If you work for us, you cannot work anywhere else in the city for three years," Bert said. Other cram schools would change the way of payment in order to prevent foreign teachers from leaving the cram school soon after the beginning of the semester. In the contract, it was described that the payment for one semester would be divided into two parts and paid in two different periods. Half of the payment would be paid at first while the other half would be given to foreign teachers at the end of the semester. If foreign teachers leave before the due date, they would lose the second half of the payment. Another approach for cram schools to control foreign teachers was to charge them the so-called "training fee." As long as foreign teachers started teaching, the cram school would take a little amount of money from their salary every month. When the contract was due, the money would be returned to the foreign teachers. Similarly with the approach mentioned previously, foreign teachers would not receive the "training fee" back if they quit before then. "They [cram schools] are trying to play with their money and that's what most foreigners start to get worried," Bert explained. Under such unreasonable approaches which cram schools used to exploit the welfare of foreign teachers, some of the foreign teachers would have no choice but to accept the job if they wanted to survive in this environment. However, the welfare of foreign teachers was not entirely protected. Thus, Bert suggested the foreigners who plan to teach English in Taiwan, "Read your contract carefully, and don't be naïve." (08/30/2007).