Sheffield Hallam University

A Sheffield Hallam University thesis

26294

26294
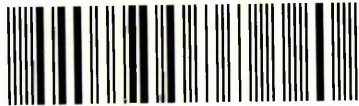
ProQuest Number: 10694519

ProQuest 10694519

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Teaching the New English Curriculum in a Chinese School: An Ethnographic Study

Xi Fang

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2009

Abstract

In 2004, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of China disseminated a new English curriculum (NEC) for high schools. The NEC promotes communicative language teaching (CLT), particularly task based language teaching (TBLT). This thesis reports an ethnographic study exploring the experience of five Chinese teachers of English in their implementation of the NEC. The researcher worked as a temporary English teacher in a high school in Southeast China between September 2007 and July 2008 gathering data through participant observation. Research data include interviews, classroom observations, documentations and fieldnotes. Grounded theory was used for data analysis.

The study highlights the complexity of teachers' work. Four main 'push' factors are identified as pushing the teachers to implement the NEC and five factors are considered to be the main obstacles for NEC implementation. Some forces act both as constraint and possibility for all teachers, and some forces may act as constraint for one teacher, but may serve as possibility for another teacher. Many issues discussed by earlier studies of TBLT implementation in China and other Asian countries are also referenced in this study, although some issues are experienced in different ways by the research participants. The role of teacher agency is confirmed by the findings and the influence of social and institutional context is recognised. The importance of teacher cognition in their implementation of the NEC is also supported by findings. A construct of teacher beliefs is proposed and an interwoven relationship between teacher cognition, social context and practices is identified.

Practical recommendations are suggested for curriculum developers, teacher educators and researchers. The study has extended knowledge in some important areas that are identified as being needed for further research: situated policy enactment and teacher agency; provided empirical data for policy planning and teacher education; extended understanding of teacher cognition in a global context and offered insights for applying multiple methods and theories in research projects.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisors for their professional supervision and for the tremendous support they have given me. Without their support I would not be able to complete this research and make so much progress in my study. During these three years' journey, they have become my friends and family.

I also want to thank the five research participants, other teachers and students in the school, where this ethnographic study took place, for helping me to complete my research.

Finally, I want to thank my family and my friends for supporting me.

Statement

This PhD thesis is all original work. The objectives and purposes of the research are outlined in chapter 1- 3. The assistance received from supervisors and other colleagues has been according to accepted standards of academic research and ethics. References are outlined in the bibliography and the nature of the input from these academic writings is outlined throughout the thesis.

Published work using material from this thesis research is contained in the following book:

Fang, X. (forthcoming). Teaching the New English Curriculum in a Chinese High School: An Ethnography Study, in T. Muller and S. Herden (eds.) *Innovating ELT in Context: Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Abbreviations and Conventions

1. Abbreviations

TBLT: Task-based Language Teaching
CLT: Communicative Language Teaching
L2: Second Language
ELT: English Language Teaching
HSECS: High School English Curriculum Standard
NEC: New English Curriculum
MOE: Ministry of Education of China
DOE: Department of Education.
NUEE: National University Entrance Examination
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
PPP: Presentation, practice, production

2. Conventions

2.1. Conventions for referring to places involved in the study

People/places involved in the study:	Referred to as:
The school for this ethnographic study	CHS (Chuangxin High School)
The city where the school for this ethnographic study locates	LQ (Linqiao City)
The province where the school for this ethnographic study locates	JZ province

2.2. Conventions for transcribing classroom observations

T=Teacher
R=Researcher
Ss: Group of students choral
S1, S2 etc.=identified student
[In italics]=texts translated from Chinese
C-A-P-I-T-A-L-I-Z-A-T-I-O-N: word spelled out letter by letter
PPT: Powerpoint presentation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a general outline of this thesis, including a summary of the research, the rationale for this research, the research basis, intended stakeholders for this research, the organisation of the thesis, and a glossary to assist reading. The presentation structure of this chapter is outlined in Table 1.1:

Table 1.1: Scope of chapter 1

1.1 General outline of the research

1.2 Development of the research interest

1.3 Research basis for this thesis

1.4 Stakeholders

1.5 Organisation of the thesis

1.6 Glossary

---

1. 1 General outline of the research

This thesis reports an ethnographic study exploring the experience of five English teachers in a Chinese high school (pre-university stage) in their implementation of a national new English curriculum (NEC). The purpose is to reveal the ways in which the NEC is experienced by teachers in their contexts, for example, the possibilities and constraints of implementing the NEC, and the role of agency in teachers' practices. This study draws on what Holliday (1994: 14) calls a sociology-anthropology methodology for investigation in an effort to "connect an understanding of the wider social picture with a deep exploration of what happens between people". In addition to the recognition of teacher cognition in their curriculum implementation, this study also explores the institutional and social context in which the teachers' work takes place and investigates possible connections with teachers' curriculum implementation. Grounded theory is used in analysing the rich data collected from 10-month ethnographic fieldwork. The purpose is to generate theories grounded in the data produced by listening to the voices of teachers and observing their everyday practices. The analysis also draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu in order to provide a critical thinking tool in

understanding and explaining teacher cognition and practices in the teachers' implementation of the NEC.

1. 2 Development of the research interest

A personal interest in the Chinese educational reform of English teaching led me to engage in this research. In 2004, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of China disseminated the new English curriculum (NEC), as a part of the 8th educational reform in China. At the core of the NEC is the promotion of communicative language teaching (CLT), and particularly a method linked with the CLT approach called task based language teaching (TBLT). The NEC is believed to be very different from the previous teaching styles in China and from the Chinese culture of learning (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999; Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996). It is also promoted by the official discourse as a "radical" change, and the NEC principles were advertised as being "advanced" and "modern" in comparison with the previous curriculum.

I was both excited and concerned about the change: in the literature (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996:65), stories are told about the "four-centredness" of English language teaching (ELT) in China with a focus on the teacher, the textbook, grammar and vocabulary. This teaching is claimed to limit students' learning. In terms of my own experience, I remembered how frustrated I was in my first spoken English class at university when the American teacher tried to get students to talk: I had almost never talked in English prior to that class. I was excited to see this government initiative in curriculum innovation and I was eager to see how the NEC might bring changes to the classroom, to teachers and to students. On the other hand, I was also concerned about teachers. Given the large classes, examination-oriented education system and the existing teaching and learning styles, would there be difficulties and challenges for teachers' implementation of the NEC? How would they perceive the change? How would they experience it? Because of my interest and curiosity, I decided to choose to investigate NEC implementation in China at PhD level after I graduated from my MA Education programme. The reason why I chose to study teachers was simple: for my MA thesis, I investigated teachers' support of children's language development and I was interested in doing research with teachers. Also, I have taught English in a college in China, and I was interested to see how other teachers teach English, and how their strategies might be similar to or different from mine.

With this in mind, the investigation began by examining areas in relation to ELT and curriculum implementation. I was drawn to the 'post-method' discussion and I became particularly interested in two areas of research: teacher cognition (e.g. Borg, 2006; Elbaz, 1983; Woods, 1996) and social context (e.g. Bax, 2003; Bruce and Rubin, 1992; Holliday, 1994). I was also influenced by Ball's (1994) conceptual model for the analysis of policy implementation, for example, the dichotomy of agency/structure, policy as text/policy as discourse and macro/micro context. Thus, the research sets out to investigate teachers' situated experiences of teaching the NEC while addressing the wider institutional and social context. Three research questions are addressed:

- What are teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC?
- What is the role of teacher cognition in teachers' practices?
- What is the role of social context in teachers' practices?

It is suggested in the literature that the research on situated policy implementation and practitioner agency is scarce (Clarke et al., 2007; Ramanthan and Morgan, 2007; Canagarajah, 2005) and the understanding of teacher cognition lacks data about state education, prescribed curriculum and non-native teachers (Borg, 2006; Woods, 1996). My interest corresponded to a perceived need in the field for in-depth situated studies of this type.

1. 3 Research basis for this thesis

The aim of the research is to explore and uncover the meanings behind teachers' decisions in their implementation of the NEC and understand how they make sense of the world in their practical situations. The enquiry is constructive and interpretative, using different theories and data collection techniques in order to construct an understanding of teachers that is most truthful to their work.

The research draws on an ethnographic study carried out between September 2007 and July 2008. During this period of time, I worked as a temporary English teacher in a high school in Southeast China gathering data through participant observation. My multiple identities, for example, as a Chinese national having been educated in China to first degree level and having taught in China, and as a postgraduate student at a UK university have developed my intercultural competence which has enabled me to see from within and to understand from without, and enriched my

3

research. The prolonged engagement in the setting and the participant observer role enabled me to develop a good rapport with teachers, offered in-depth understanding and an insider perspective of teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC: I was able to observe teachers performing in a wide range of settings (e.g. teaching in classrooms, teaching for demonstration, preparing lessons and discussing with each other in the office). The main research participants are five English teachers of the grade 2 age group, who differ from each other with regard to their gender, teaching experience and types of class taught. Additionally, I also interviewed 15 other English teachers in the school and observed 38 demonstration lessons of teachers inside and outside the school. In total, data include 69 semi-structured and focused interviews, 107 classroom observations, documentation and about 250,000 words' fieldnotes.

1. 4 Stakeholders

This research is potentially interesting to a wide range of stakeholders. Examples are:

- Curriculum developers: through participant observation and detailed description, this thesis provides an in-depth understanding of the NEC experience from teachers' perspectives. It investigates how teachers make their decisions about the use of the NEC and examines the possibilities and constraints associated with teaching the NEC. The thesis also suggests some practical recommendations for curriculum developers.

- Teacher educators: this thesis also discusses the developmental history of teachers and areas in relation to the evolvement of teacher cognition and practices, and suggests an alternative framework for teacher education programmes.

- Ethnographers in training: this thesis gives a detailed account of my experience of doing ethnographic fieldwork, highlights the complexity of the research process, and discusses my strategies and dilemmas in the field. Training ethnographers may find it interesting to read my experience to enhance their awareness about fieldwork.

- Researchers who are interested in teacher cognition, culture of teaching and policy implementation, particularly those who have an interest in the Chinese context.

1. 5 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis consists of 9 chapters. After a general outline of the thesis in chapter 1, chapter 2 reviews the literature in relation to the enquiry, for example, TBLT, curriculum implementation and current debates and perspectives in ELT. It also discusses my perspectives with regard to ELT, my interest in teacher cognition and social context. Chapter 2 also explains the framework for this investigation, and the rationale for my framework.

Chapter 3 introduces the methodological issues I considered and the procedures that I followed in this study. It discusses my theoretical stance and its implications for this enquiry and illustrates the process of my research: negotiation of access, my consideration of self presentation and the detailed procedures that I followed for data collection and analysis. This chapter also includes my reflection on the research design and research process.

Bearing in mind the influence of context in teachers' practices, chapters 4 and 5 discuss the institutional and social context in which teachers' work is embedded. Chapter 4 examines the NEC and the wider social context in which the curriculum is initiated, developed and implemented. Some salient features of the Chinese education system and their implications for teachers' implementation of the NEC are discussed. In chapter 5, the emphasis is on the institutional context of teachers' work. Apart from a detailed introduction of the school for this ethnographic study, the capital that may be at stake in the field is also discussed, along with the five research participants' positions in relation to their possession of capital.

Chapter 6 and chapter 7 focus on the five research participants. Chapter 6 explores the experience of the NEC implementation from teachers' perspectives. It discusses teachers' orientation towards the NEC, their engagement with the NEC, their emotions associated with teaching the NEC, the goal conflicts they voiced in relation to teaching the NEC and the positions they take in response to the goal conflicts. It also explores teachers' cultural orientations and their development of teacher cognition and practices. In an attempt to demonstrate the complex nature of teachers' work, the writing is deliberately descriptive and relies on the teachers' voices to illuminate their thinking and situation. Chapter 7 focuses on the observational data gained from teachers' classroom practices and out-of-classroom

practices. It analyses the patterns and differences in teachers' practices. The observational data is also compared with the interview data discussed in the previous chapter.

Chapter 8 concludes the discussion of chapters 4-7 by answering the three research questions addressed in chapter 1: it summarises teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC and discusses the role of teacher cognition and social context in teachers' practices. In Chapter 9, a reflection on the research is made. It also discusses how this research may have contributed to knowledge and suggests some practical recommendations for researchers, curriculum developers and teacher educators.

1. 6 Glossary

Since this study is carried out in China, some terms may be China-specific and some terms used in China may be used differently in other countries. Therefore, this section gives a list of terms that may be needed in reading.

Academic Affairs Division [教务处]: The Academic Affairs division is the authority for academic management in the school. Its responsibilities include developing academic policies and coordinating lesson planning and evaluation.

Arts class [文科班]: In Chinese high schools, classes are divided into arts classes and science classes. In addition to the common areas (Chinese language, mathematics and foreign language), students in arts classes also study history, geography and politics.

City[市]: In the context of Chinese government, a city is the second level of administrative division in China, the first being province. There are 11 cities in JZ province and the population for LQ city, where the school for this ethnographic study locates, is about 6 million.

Class teacher[班主任]: In Chinese schools and universities, it is common to have a class teacher, who takes the main responsibility for monitoring and supporting students' social development and disciplinary management in class and out of class. For example, class teachers write developmental records for their students and discuss learning progress with them and their parents.

County [县]: In the context of Chinese government, a county is the third level of administrative division in China, the first being province and the second being city. There are 9 counties in LQ City.

Department of Discipline [行政处]: An administrative department in the school responsible for students' disciplinary management, for example, to ensure students comply with school regulations.

Demonstration lessons[公开课]: Demonstration lessons are lessons in which teachers demonstrate their teaching to other teachers. There are two types: experienced teachers demonstrating teaching to less experienced teachers from the same school or other schools; peers in the teachers' team within a school for mutual exchange and development.

English corner [英语角]: This is a weekly occasion in CHS organized by the American teachers for students to talk with each other in English.

Experienced teachers [教龄长的老师]: I have used the term experienced teachers to describe teachers who have taught for longer times. It does not denote the meaning of expertise.

Expert teachers [特级教师]: It is the highest professional title for secondary school teachers. Teachers in Chinese high schools are graded into four professional levels (expert, senior, level 1 and level 2) according to their teaching experience, their publications, their (students') achievements and, for expert and senior teachers, an anonymous vote in the school and in the city. It does not denote my evaluation of one teacher being more "expert" than the other.

Grade[年级]: Grade refers to age group. There are three grades in high schools in China.

High school[高中]: High school is a pre-university stage in China, providing education for students aged 15-18.

Key school[重点学校]: Schools in China are graded into at least two levels: key schools and non-key schools. The criteria for grading include teaching facilities, previous students' academic performances, and staff members' qualifications and achievements. Key school is higher on the hierarchy than non-key school. For admission into key schools, students need to have higher scores in the entrance examination. In LQ, the city where the school for this ethnographic study is located, the 82 high schools are graded into four levels: grade 1 key schools, grade 2 key schools, grade 3 key schools and non-key schools. CHS, the school for this ethnographic study, is a grade 1 key school.

NUEE[高考]: The National University Entrance Examination, which selects high school students for university entrance.

Non-key school [普通学校]: Schools in China are graded into at least two levels: key schools and non-key schools (see glossary 'key schools' for criteria for classification). Non-key school is lower in the hierarchy than key school. Students with lower scores in the entrance examination will be accepted to study in non-key schools.

Normal University [师范大学]: It refers to university for training teachers, chiefly for training secondary school teachers.

'Ordinary class' [普通班]: In many Chinese high schools, students are allocated to 'top classes' and 'ordinary classes' on the basis of their scores in the high school entrance examination. 'Ordinary classes' are for students without the highest performance in the examination.

Province[省]: In the context of Chinese government, a province is the first level of administrative division in China. There are 22 provinces in China. The population for JZ province, the province where the school for this ethnographic study locates, is about 50 million.

Quality education [素质教育]: It is promoted in the policy *Decisions on Deepening Education Reform and Fully Promoting Quality Education* [中共中央国务院关于深化教育改革全面推进素质教育的决定]" by the Central Government of China in 1999.

8

The term is used in China to denote all-round development of students (e.g. physical development, creativity, imagination, thinking and independent study skills) rather than the evaluation of quality provision of education institutions.

Round[届]: In Chinese high schools, teachers of a subject usually teach the same group of students for three years, from students' admission in grade one to their graduation in grade three. This is called a 'round'.

Science class [理科班]: In Chinese high schools, classes are divided into arts classes and science classes. In addition to the common areas (Chinese language, mathematics and foreign language), students in science classes also study chemistry, physics and biology.

Senior teacher[高级教师]: It is the second highest professional title for secondary school teachers. Teachers in Chinese high schools are graded into four professional levels (expert, senior, level 1 and level 2) according to their teaching experience, their publications, their (students') achievements and, for expert and senior teachers, an anonymous vote in the school and in the city.

Teaching competition [教学比赛/大比武]: This is an event, normally organised by the local education authority, for teachers to demonstrate their teaching skills in a competition in front of an audience of other teachers and judges. On these occasions, teachers give a lesson to a group of students (often randomly assigned by the local education authority) and judges (normally prestigious teachers and managers of the local education authority) give scores according to teachers' performance in the lesson.

Teaching plan competition [课件评比]: This is an event organised by LQ Education Bureau for teachers to demonstrate the 'quality' of their lesson plans. On these occasions, teachers from each school work in a team to produce Powerpoint presentations illustrating their plans for teaching and judges (normally prestigious teachers and managers of the local education authority) give scores according to their presentations. The powerpoint presentations are also made public via the website of LQ Education Bureau.

'Top class' [尖子班]: In many Chinese high schools, students are allocated to 'top classes' and 'ordinary classes' on the basis of their scores in the high school entrance examination. 'Top classes' are for students with the highest performance in the examination.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As introduced in chapter 1, a nationwide new English curriculum (NEC) for high schools was disseminated in China in 2004. At the core of the NEC is the promotion of communicative language teaching (CLT), particularly a method linked with the CLT approach called task based language teaching (TBLT). In this chapter, my purpose is to present to readers some key concepts in relation to the investigation (e.g. TBLT and curriculum), explore the current debates and perspectives in ELT and discuss my perspectives with regard to ELT. My purpose is also to explain the framework for this investigation, along with the rationale for my framework. The presentation structure of this chapter is outlined in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1: Scope of chapter 2

2.1. TBLT and current debates in ELT

    2.1.1 TBLT

    2.1.2 The implementation of TBLT

    2.1.3 Is TBLT a 'good' method?

    2.1.4 Is there any 'best' method?

2.2 Studies which have stimulated my research

    2.2.1 Social context and language teaching

    2.2.2 Teacher cognition and language teaching

2.3 Seeking a framework for the investigation of curriculum implementation

    2.3.1 Possible models for the investigation of curriculum implementation

    2.3.2 Models which have influenced my investigation of curriculum implementation

2.4 Implementing the NEC or teaching the NEC?

2.5 Conclusion

2. 1 TBLT and current debates in ELT

2.1.1 TBLT

This section investigates the concept of TBLT in order to enable readers to better understand the analysis in later chapters in which teachers' use of TBLT is investigated.

Richards and Rogers (2001:223) define TBLT as "an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching". In the literature, there is some debate on the classification of TBLT, for example, whether it is an approach or a method (Nunan, 2004) and whether it is linked to any particular method at all (Kumaravivelu, 1993). However, most writers tend to perceive TBLT as a method linked to the CLT approach, with the labels 'modification' (Klapper, 2003), 'latest realization' (Nunan, 2004) or 'offshoot' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

TBLT is a relatively new term in ELT literature, first appearing in 1979 in Southern Indian's Bangalore Project (Prabhu, 1987). This experimental language programme emerged because the approach used in India at the time, the structural-oral-situational approach, was not particularly well received by practitioners. First of all, Structural-Oral-Situational approach was considered less effective in bringing about grammatically correct spoken English as it promised. Secondly, some activities encouraged by the structural-oral-situational approach were less successful in encouraging learner involvement, for example, some learners were reluctant to participate in affective activities encouraged by the structural-oral-situational approach (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004). The Bangalore project team believed that intellectually biased activities were more applicable in the Indian ELT context and meaning focused tasks would be more effective in promoting successful language acquisition. The assumption was that comprehension sharpened by the possibility of having to respond later is more effective in engaging learners than comprehension for its own sake. Therefore, task-based activities engendered by the need to respond and communicate were seen as more successful in promoting language acquisition by activating learners' cognitive processes (Prabhu, 1987). A series of graded reasoning tasks (e.g. puzzles detection and mental arithmetic) were therefore designed and implemented in the Bangalore project. This approach was later known as task based learning (Fotos and Ellis, 1991; Willis, 1996), task based instruction (Skehan, 1998, 2003),

task based learning and pedagogy (Foster, 1999), task based approach (Littlewood, 2004) and task based language teaching (Nunan, 2004). To ensure consistency, task based language teaching (TBLT) is used throughout this thesis.

Along with the various labels attached to it, TBLT is also defined and emphasized differently by different writers (Ellis, 2003; Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). However, most writers seem to agree that the key feature of TBLT is its focus on the communication of meaning through related activities or procedures. There is also a general consensus with regard to the following characteristics:

- The target language should be used by the learners for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome. Therefore, the emphasis is on meaning rather than on form and task completion is prioritized (e.g. Bygate et al., 2001; Ellis, 2003; Lee, 2001; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). However, learners are able to notice linguistic features through meaning-focused activities (e.g. Nunan, 2004; Willis, 1996).

- The instruction should be learner-centred rather than teacher controlled (e.g. Bygate et al., 2001; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998). However, appropriate teacher intervention is necessary in smoothing the activity and facilitating the acquisition of formal linguistic elements (e.g. Willis, 1996).

- The task objective should be attainable and clearly specified (e.g. Nunan, 2004). The instructional sequence should be carefully graded to maximize comprehension and learning (e.g. Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Willis, 1996), for example, pre-task language study may contribute to the 'noticing' of formal features during communication in the task cycle (e.g. Willis, 1996).

- The task activities should be designed in a way that resembles real world activities and promotes natural language use (e.g. Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998).

- A range of task work should be arranged in order to provide maximum exposure to comprehensible input and improve various skills (e.g. Ellis, 2003; Long, 1983; Nunan, 1991).

As summarized in the reviews of Ellis (2000) and Skehan (2003), recent research on TBLT has been motivated by two main second language (L2) acquisition theories: the psycholinguistic approach and the sociocultural approach. Researchers with the psycholinguistic perspective have explored how task characteristics and conditions affect learners' allocation of attentional resources during task performance (Robinson, 2001; Skehan and Foster, 2001) and claim that TBLT facilitates L2

development by bringing together input features, learner-internal capacities, and language production (Long, 1996; Gass, 2003). Whereas researchers in the psycholinguistic tradition have emphasised the role of the inherent task properties on performance and acquisition, socio-cultural researchers have focused on how tasks are accomplished by learners and teachers and how the process of accomplishing them might contribute to language acquisition. They tend to believe that learning arises in, rather than through, interaction. The interest in a task is to allow participants to shape it to their own ends and to build meanings collaboratively that are unpredictable and personal (Lantolf, 2000), for example, improvement may be achieved through the scaffolding between learners.

Now thirty years since TBLT was initialized, tasks have become a familiar resource in language classrooms. The concept, though originating in India, has been developed and promoted by quite a number of Western writers. In fact, Ellis (2003:331) claims that ELT is an "Anglo-American creation". A review of literature suggests that TBLT has increasingly appeared in ELT publications. Let us take the British based ELT journal as an example, there were only 2 articles titled 'task' in the 1980s, the number rose to 8 in the 1990s, and becomes 19 in the 2000s. Advocators of TBLT include such authority figures as Ellis (2000, 2003); Littlewood (2004, 2007); Long (1985, 2005) and Nunan (1989, 2004). Proponents of TBLT often promote it as a most effective teaching approach, superior to 'traditional' methods, and soundly based in theory and research. Willis (1996) advocates TBLT as a perfect middle path of focus on form and focus on meaning. Ellis (2003:28) argues that "tasks are both necessary and sufficient for learning". Nunan (2004) and Long (2005) claim that TBLT is a learner-centred approach and is therefore able to address the growing need for relevance and accountability in L2 teaching, particularly for learners with specific academic, occupational or vocational purposes. Howatt and Widdowson (2004:366) conclude that TBLT "has become a new orthodoxy". For Nunan (2004:13) also, TBLT is "the new orthodoxy" with major publications and government policies.

2.1.2 The implementation of TBLT

Currently, the impact of TBLT largely resides in the field of ELT (Klapper, 2003). Although it is considered mainly an Anglo-American creation (Ellis, 2003), TBLT seems most influential in the Asia-Pacific region. In his survey of the educational

policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region, Nunan (2003) finds that TBLT is claimed to be one of the central principles of ELT curricula in all the countries he studies: Japan, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, Korea and Malaysia. However, despite the enthusiasm for introducing TBLT in ELT, resistance to and challenges for implementing a TBLT framework are reported in most of the countries Nunan (2003) has studied (e.g. Butler & Lino 2005;Carless 2004; Lee, 2005; Littlewood, 2007).

The first stated problem resides in the design of TBLT. Some authors argue that certain procedures and outcomes of TBLT seem too idealized to be achieved. According to Willis (1996) and Nunan (2004), the idealized outcome of TBLT is the 'noticing' of linguistic elements during task completion and between learners. However, it is argued that learners may become too pre-occupied with completing tasks to notice linguistic elements (Carless, 2004) and learners with a higher level of linguistic and cognitive proficiency may dominate the interaction (Lee, 2005) and even question the value of peer interaction (McDonough, 2004). Another procedure promoted by Willis (1996) is that teachers may 'notice' the linguistic elements arising out of the task cycle and explain these elements during the post-task cycle. However, Li (2003) argues that with the demand of class management, it seems too difficult for teachers to attend to all the interaction in different groups.

The second stated problem is the contextual constraints within the educational system. First of all, most of the South East Asian countries have large class sizes and implementing a TBLT method makes disciplinary management a challenge. Students may engage in off-task activities (Li, 2003). They may communicate in their first languages rather than the target language (Carless, 2004). They may also become noisy while carrying out tasks and this may annoy administrators and teachers from other classes (Li, 1998). Secondly, researchers from nearly all the countries Nunan (2003) studies report that an examination-oriented evaluation system is a major obstacle to the implementation of TBLT (Chow & Mok-Cheung 2004; Li, 1998; Shim & Baik, 2004). Thirdly, the limitation of resources may also affect TBLT implementation (Hu, 2005). Additionally, most of the teachers do not have experience of living and studying in an English-speaking country, and they report a lack of confidence in using English to carry out communicative activities (Butler, 2004; Carless, 2003, 2004; Li, 2003).

The third stated problem is the influence of the social and cultural environment. Hu (2002) claims that TBLT may not fit in with China's 'culture of learning'. He argues that education is conceived in China more as a process of knowledge accumulation than as a process of using knowledge for immediate purposes. Therefore, teachers and students may doubt the value of doing task-based activities in which teachers do not 'transmit' knowledge. Similar findings of cultural mismatches are also reported in Hong Kong (Chow and Mok-Cheung, 2004), Japan (Samimy and Kobayashi, 2004) and South Korea (Shim and Baik, 2004).

2.1.3 Is TBLT a 'good' method?

As seen from the above discussion, context is the main obstacle for TBLT to be well received in Asia-Pacific regions. The stated problems include large classes, examination-oriented education systems and different learning and teaching culture. Given Ellis' claim (2003) that TBLT is mainly an Anglo-American creation, these problems may seem less obvious. Actually, some researchers (e.g. Carless, 2007) have anticipated resistance to the implementation of a TBLT method in Confucian-heritage countries where the teaching conditions and educational ethos in these countries are very different from the west.

In addition to the potential influence of educational and social context, the diverse perspectives among TBLT writers themselves may have also created tension and confusion for the successful implementation of TBLT. In fact, the definition of task is itself a debate. According to Long (1985), task may not involve educational purpose and language use at all. A piece of work such as painting a fence is also a task. On the other hand, Nunan (2004) classifies tasks into pedagogic task and target task, and claims that pedagogic task should involve language use and reflect real world experience. However, debate still persists as to whether tasks should reflect native speaker's experience (authenticity) or foresee the learners' experience (genuineness) in the real world context (Guariento and Morley, 2001). Additionally, there is also debate as to whether form-focused activity constitutes a task. Estaire and Zanon (1994) consider it an enabling task while Ellis (2000) argues it is just an exercise. In addition to the diverse perspectives on task definitions, there are still debates in terms of task procedures. According to Wells (1985), tasks should be the core of language teaching. However, Bruton (2002) argues that tasks should be used only as adjuncts to facilitate structure-based teaching. Furthermore, there are

also various opinions with regard to the selection and sequence of tasks (Skehan, 2003). Since TBLT writing is far from showing a consensus, teachers may rely on their intuitions to make decisions about which tasks to include in a syllabus and the order in which the tasks should be presented. This may also lead to the perceived failure of TBLT if different criteria are used for judging implementation.

The challenge of TBLT implementation leads some writers to argue that TBLT is not a 'good' method. Sheen (1994) argues that the theoretical base of TBLT is not critically analyzed. In Swan's opinion (2005:376), TBLT lacks theoretical foundation, as well as empirical evidence. He even asserts that TBLT innovations are just "legislation by hypothesis".

However, reviewing ELT history suggests that the 'failure' of TBLT implementation is not a single scenario. The ELT profession has a long history of seeking the 'best' way of teaching. There has been no lack of teaching approaches and methods in ELT literature, from what we called "panaceas" (e.g. the Direct Method), "new wonder cures" (e.g. Suggestopedia) to some major and lasting paradigm shifts (e.g. from audiolingualism to communicative language teaching) (Klapper, 2003:33). All these approaches and methods have generated a variety of innovations in ELT, either on a large scale or in a relatively smaller context, usually as a result of the dissatisfaction with the previous approach (Richards and Rogers, 2001). For example, the rise of CLT is a response to the perceived failure of the structural approach and the advent of TBLT is an evolution of CLT. It is in this context that some researchers start to question whether there is an alternative to method, rather than an alternative method (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

2.1.4 Is there any 'best method'?

Earlier debates in ELT were perhaps based on the conviction that it was possible to find a 'best method'. Once it was found, it was thought that it could lead to widespread acceptance and success in the profession. This stance, which is ultimately based on a positivist view, may see the ELT professional endeavour as a form of progress towards finding idealized universal teaching methods (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004). However, the frequent 'failures' of new approaches along with the influence of the postmodernist climate in mainstream research make some researchers question: is there any 'best method'?

Kumaravadivelu (2006) sees Pennycook (1989) and Prabhu (1990) as early advocates of the advent of the 'post method era' (Richards and Rogers, 2001) or 'post method condition' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Pennycook's (1989) paper leads ELT professionals to question the neutrality of method because he claims that the concept of method "reflects a particular view of the world and is articulated in the interests of unequal power relationships" (p. 589-590) and that it "has diminished rather than enhanced our understanding of language teaching" (p. 597). Prabhu (1990) also seeks to put an end to the obsession with the search for the 'best method'. He argues that no method can be objectified and simplified to be good or bad. The validity lies in its power to influence teachers' subjective understanding of teaching. The debates between different methods are important, only in the sense that they help teachers better understand the method and modify the method for their own use. Prabhu (ibid) also argues that the challenge facing the ELT profession is not how to design a new method but how to devise a new way to help activate and develop teachers' varied senses of plausibility to "operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning" (p.172). This perception is echoed by Kumaravadivelu (1992) who argues that the duty of the ELT profession is only to help teachers to develop a capacity to generate varied and situation-specific ideas within a general framework that makes sense in terms of current pedagogical and theoretical knowledge. Widdowson (2003) also expresses the view that ELT professionals and curriculum designers should not prescribe the way teachers should follow, but suggest directions for teachers to explore. Similar concerns are also expressed by a number of other prominent ELT figures, for example, Brown (2002), Howatt and Widdowson (2004) and Richards (1990).

In addition to the postmethod discussion, another change in the ELT profession is the shift from systemic discovery to critical discourse, which is described by Kumaravadivelu (2006:70) as "connecting the word with the world". In this climate, much thought has been given to the complexity of language teaching and learning. For example, language learning is believed to be related to wider social, cultural and political domains. Locality and the lived experiences of teachers and students are very much highlighted. The critical turn has given rise to a range of discussions and new horizons of exploration. Examples are language and identity (Parmenter, 1997), discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), classroom interaction (Kumaravadivelu, 1999), pedagogical cultures and local realities (Canagarajah, 2005), and teacher cognition (Borg, 1998; Woods, 1996). My thinking is very much influenced by the

postmethod discussion and critical discourse investigation. Therefore, in this investigation of teachers' curriculum implementation, I do not aim to evaluate teachers' practices or to look for a 'best' method that would work for all. Rather, I am more interested in understanding the practices from their perspectives, for example, the thinking behind their classroom practices, and the contextual influences on their decision making. The focus has been influenced by two areas of research: social context and teacher cognition. These two areas are discussed in the following section.

2.2 Studies which have stimulated my research

Although ethnography is exploratory in nature and ethnographers should guard against preconceived assumptions which may prejudice the data collection and analysis, it is the case that foreshadowed problems, informed by previous experience or literature, may serve as a useful starting point for research and make the researcher better equipped for the work (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). For example, such considerations allow areas of investigation to be identified more precisely, efficiently and systematically. This section introduces two areas of studies that have stimulated my research: social context and teacher cognition.

2.2.1 Social context and language teaching

Learning and teaching do not take place in a vacuum but are the products of the society and culture in which they belong (Bruce and Rubin, 1992). In response to the methodological debate, Bax (2003:281) argues that "methodology is not the magic solution" and "the context is a crucial determiner of the success or failure of learners". In his paper, he criticizes questioning by a young inexperienced teacher of a relatively experienced teacher who does not use CLT. In her study of Vietnamese teachers, Ha (2004) argues that qualities of teaching and learning may vary from culture to culture. Even if the same view is shared between cultures, the practice may still be diverse. Similar concerns are also expressed by many other researchers, for example, Breen (1986), Holliday (1994), Howatt and Widdowson (2004) and Javis and Atsilarat (2004). The discussion in 2.1.2 also supports such a view with empirical evidence of TBLT implementation.

In addition to ELT, the importance of context for curriculum implementation is also supported by mainstream literature in education, for example, Fullan (2007) and Hargreaves (1994). In his research investigating schools involved in the Improve Quality of Education for All (IQEA) programme in the UK, Hopkins (2001:67) concludes that, "Without a clear focus on internal conditions of schools, the improvement effort will quickly become marginalized".

Social context has attracted much interest in ELT research and in literature, but the term context is used in rather diverse ways (Holliday, 1994). In this thesis, Boyd's definition of school context will be used. As defined by Boyd (1992), school context is comprised of two fundamental components: school ecology and school culture (see Table 2.2). School ecology factors include: (1) the availability of resources; (2) physical aspects of the school; (3) student and teacher demographics; and (4) local, state, and federal policies. School culture includes the system of relationships and shared norms, attitudes, and beliefs within the school. Such a definition seems to be accepted by many other researchers, for example, Hall and Hord (2001) and Holliday (1994).

Table 2.2: Components of school context (Boyd, 1992)

School Context	
School Ecology: - Resources - Physical conditions - Demographics - Politics - Hierarchical structures	School culture: - Relationship - Interactions - Communication characteristics - Norms of practices - Shared values and beliefs

Within context, Holliday (1994) distinguishes between two kinds of context: macro context and micro context. The macro context includes the wider societal and institutional influences on what happens in the classroom and the micro context consists of the socio-psychological aspects of group dynamics within the classroom. Citing Bowers (1987:8-9, in Holliday, 1994:15), Holliday argues that, "the classroom is a microcosm which, for all its universal magisterial conventions, reflects in fundamental social terms the world that lies outside the window". Therefore, much of the classroom interaction is very likely to be derived from influences from outside

the classroom, for example, relationships of status, resources and market forces. Classroom interactions can not be fully understood without knowledge of the wider macro picture. In this investigation, I will adopt what Holliday (1994:14) calls a sociology-anthropology methodology for investigation in an effort to "connect an understanding of the wider social picture with a deep exploration of what happens between people". I will try to explore the macro context in which teachers live and investigate possible connections with teachers' curriculum implementation.

An important element of context is culture. As defined earlier, culture is seen as a system of relationships, shared norms, attitudes and beliefs (Boyd, 1992). Breen (1986) argues that it is only through looking at the classroom as culture that we can begin to understand what is going on in the classroom. Culture of teaching has generated much discussion in ELT literature, a popular area of which is national culture, for example, Shamim (1996) and Khuwaileh and Shoumali's (2000) study of Arab culture. Chinese culture is also frequently studied (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Ho, 1991; Watkins and Biggs, 1996). As shown in 2.1.2, some researchers attribute the failure of TBLT implementation to the culture of learning (e.g. Samimy and Kobayashi, 2004). Hu (2002) claims in his study that the CLT approach is in conflict with the Chinese culture of learning in at least the following ways: philosophical assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning; perceptions of the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, learning strategies encouraged and qualities valued in teachers and students. Such a view is contested by Littlewood's (2000) report. His comparative study of 2,307 students from eight Asian countries and three European countries shows that the view of Asian students as 'obedient listeners' does not reflect the roles they would like to adopt in class, and there is less difference in attitudes to learning between Asian and European countries than between individuals within each country. Such a finding leads him to argue that while there may be cultural implications, the nature and extent of such influences on learning needs to be questioned and explored in greater depth. Such a view is also shared by Canagarajah (1999) and Kumaravadivelu (2003). Using Ballard's (1994, in Holliday, 1994:49) theory, Holliday tries to explain why there exist diverse interpretations of the same culture. He argues that "all societies incorporate a full spectrum of ways of doing things, and that what some people over-generalise as cultural differences are in fact dominant tendencies in one direction or another within individual societies". Therefore, "an anthropology is important because it can

21

determine how these influences are different within specific societies - social features of specific classroom situations" (p. 14).

Holliday (1999) goes on to suggest that there are two notions of culture: 'large culture' and 'small culture'. 'Large culture' is the prescribed ethic, national and international culture and 'small culture' refers to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour. He argues that globalisation and imperialism diminish the 'large culture' concept and therefore, 'small culture' is most appropriate for avoiding stereotypes and illuminating full inter-cultural complexity in any world.

In Holliday's (1994, 1999) view, 'small cultures' run between as well as within related 'large cultures'. This is exemplified in his model of classroom culture, which is regarded as part of a complex of interrelated and overlapping cultures of different dimensions (e.g. professional culture, national culture and host institution culture) within the host educational environment (see Figure 2.1). Holliday (1994) argues that these cultures can be of different sizes and types; they can be related hierarchically or in other ways, sometimes overlapping. These cultures are fluid, dynamic and evolving. He believes it is the interplay of these cultures that have shaped classroom interactions. These different dimensions of culture will be explored in this thesis, for example, national culture (see 6.7) and classroom culture (see 7.4.2). Their relationships with each other will also be investigated (see 8.3).
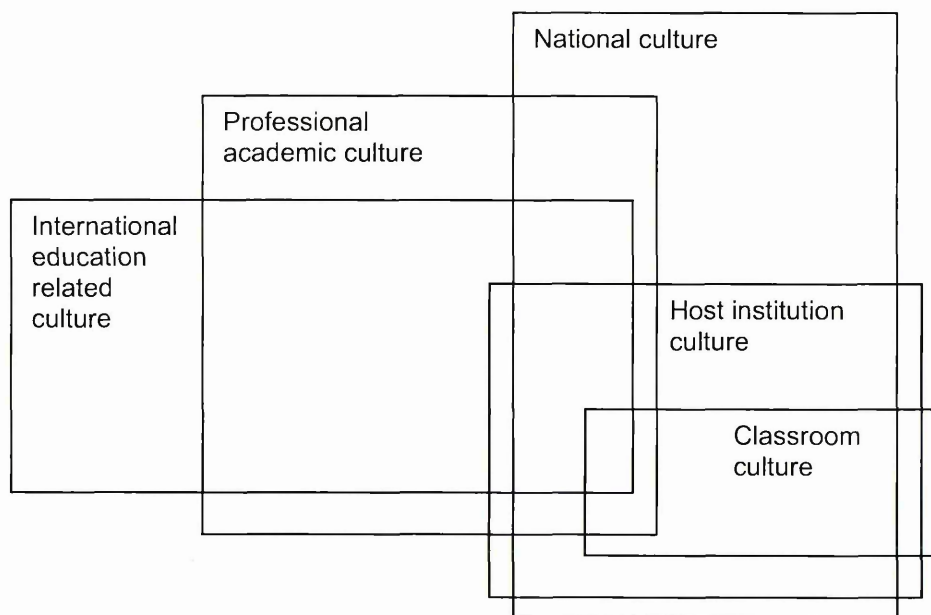
Figure 2.1.: Host culture complex (Holliday, 1994:29)

22

2.2.2 Teacher cognition and language teaching

Another area of research that has stimulated my investigation is teacher cognition and language teaching.

The last thirty years have witnessed a change of perspectives in the study of teaching. In the 1970s, the dominant perspective was to regard teaching as behaviours performed by teachers in class and research was largely centred on finding strategies that can make teachers do better (Borg, 2006). Since the mid 1970s, teachers have been viewed as "active, thinking decision makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs" (Borg, 2003:81). It is in this context that research on teacher cognition started and developed.

The importance of teacher cognition in their classroom practices is well documented in the literature. Borg (2005) argues that although a wide range of interacting and often conflicting factors may come into play in teachers' classroom practices, teacher cognition is a powerful and consistent influence on their practices. Such a view is also supported by a number of other researchers, for example, Bailey (1996), Breen (1991), Foss and Kleinsasser (1996), Richards (1996) and Woods (1996). Richards (2001) claims that teachers are the centre of any innovation in classroom practice and the opportunity for teachers to reflect upon the evolving relationship between their own beliefs and their practices lies at the heart of the curriculum change. Therefore, teacher cognition is considered an important area of investigation in their curriculum implementation.

Woods (1996:298) states that there is a need to investigate teacher cognition of non-native teachers, who "may have very different planning and interpretation of the classroom decisions". Borg (2006:273) also points out that despite the volume of work available, research on language teacher cognition is still "vastly unrepresentative" and he sees a need to expand research in the global context and areas such as secondary schools in state sector education. My study is carried out in a Chinese secondary school and it may extend existing understandings of teacher cognition.

Teacher cognition research espouses a wide range of dimensions and the terminologies used to define these dimensions are far from consensus. Examples are teacher beliefs (Pajares, 1992), knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1983), practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983), images (Johnston, 1994), maxims (Richards, 1996), BAK (beliefs, assumptions and knowledge) (Woods, 1996) and teacher orientation (Brousseau et al., 1988). These different dimensions are termed by Borg (2003:81) as teacher cognition to mean "what teachers know, believe and think". In this thesis, a number of terms (e.g. teacher knowledge, teacher assumptions, teacher beliefs and teacher orientation) are used to refer to different dimensions of teacher cognition. As previously argued, there is a lack of consensus with regard to the definitions of these terms in the literature. Therefore, I will explain how these terms are defined and used in this thesis. Woods (1996) proposes that knowledge, assumptions and belief are different points on a spectrum of meaning ranging from knowledge to belief. Knowledge refers to things we 'know' and facts that are conventionally accepted. Assumption refers to the temporary acceptance of a fact which we cannot say we know, but which we are taking as true for the time being. Beliefs refer to an acceptance of a proposition for which there may be no conventional knowledge, but it is felt to be true (Woods, ibid). It is argued that belief is more influential than knowledge in driving a teacher's actions and support decisions and judgments (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Further to the discussion, Brousseau et al. (1988) propose the concept of teacher orientation, which is used to mean a teacher's opinions and beliefs about teaching and it is argued that teacher orientation influences teacher decisions and actions in the classroom. The definitions outlined above are used to guide the use of these terms in this thesis.

Borg (2005) identifies two distinctive perspectives in the research of teacher cognition. The first one derives from education literature on decision making and focuses on identifying the antecedents for teachers' interactive decisions and describing effective decision-making procedures (e.g. Shavelson and Stern, 1981). The second one originates from studies on teacher's personal practical knowledge and examines teaching in a more holistic way. For example, the role of affective, moral and emotional factors in shaping teachers' classroom practices is taken into account (e.g. Elbaz, 1983). My position is largely influenced by the second perspective. Rather than perceiving knowledge as standardized or firmly bounded (Polanyi, 1966, in Tsui, 2003:44), it is regarded as personal (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995), practical (Elbaz, 1983), situational (Leinhardt, 1988), intuitive, tacit and

24

embedded in practice (Schön, 1983). Therefore, I would like to investigate teachers in their context, explore how their cognition is related to the situation around them, and further my understanding of their cognition from seeing teachers performing in actions. Additionally, Borg's (2003) review seems to suggest that most of the studies in teacher cognition are largely psychological in nature and sufficient theorisation of the social contexts in which teachers learn is lacking. Therefore, investigating the sociological aspects of teachers' work and its role in teachers' cognition and practices may also contribute to the knowledge in this field.

Borg's (2006) framework of teacher cognition (see Figure 2.2.) suggests that teachers have cognitions about all aspects of their work and there is an interwoven relationship between teacher cognition, classroom practices, contextual factors and the education they received. In acknowledging the mutually informing relationship between teacher cognition and their class practices, Borg (2006) also suggests that there may be a certain lack of congruence between teacher cognition and their practices, for example, teachers' beliefs about instruction are not always fully realized in their work because there are external forces (e.g. social factors and environment factors) beyond teachers' control. Another area of debate being raised is the role of teacher education on teachers' cognition development (ibid). These areas are addressed in this thesis (e.g. 6.7.3 and 8.2).

Extensive experience of classrooms which defines early cognitions and shapes teaching perceptions of initial training.

May affect existing cognitions although especially when unacknowledged, these may limit its impact.

```
┌──────────────┐         ┌──────────────────────┐
│  Schooling   │────────▶│ Professional coursework │
└──────────────┘         └──────────────────────┘
```

Beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions, perspectives.

Teacher Cognition

About teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject matter, curricula, materials, instructional activities, self.

```
┌────────────────────┐     ┌────────────────────────────┐
│ Contextual Factors │────▶│ Classroom practice          │
│                    │     │ including practice teaching  │
└────────────────────┘     └────────────────────────────┘
```

Influence practice either by modifying cognitions or else directly, in which case incongruence between cognition and practice may result.

Defined by the interaction of cognitions and contextual factors. In turn, classroom experience influences cognitions unconsciously and/or through conscious reflection.

Figure 2.2: teacher cognition, schooling, professional education, and classroom practice (Borg, 2006:41)

This section has discussed my interest in teacher cognition and social context. However, my purpose was not to test hypotheses (e.g. causal relationships between teacher cognition and practices), but to describe and explain the relationship between social context, teacher cognition and new curriculum implementation. My investigation was also not confined to these areas, but to allow a much broader range of issues to emerge from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2005, also see 3.7.1). Most importantly, each stage of the research is operated as a reflexive constant shuttling back and forth process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995): theory is continuously revised according to data collected in the field.

2.3 Seeking a framework for the investigation of curriculum implementation

The previous section has explained that my research interest is in teacher cognition and in the context in which teachers work. In this section, I will firstly explore some possible models for the investigation of curriculum implementation and then discuss models that have influenced my research framework, notably Ball's (1994) concept of policy.

2.3.1 Possible models for the investigation of curriculum implementation

The term curriculum was traditionally used to describe a combination of syllabus (goals and objectives), methodology (listening, organizing and grading learning experience), and assessment (means for determining whether the goals and objectives have been achieved). It may be embodied in a course of study, a textbook series, a guide, a set of teacher plans or an innovative programme. It is something fixed, which teachers can implement and which can be evaluated to see whether goals are achieved (Snyder et al., 1992). However, the term curriculum has now taken on more meanings and the approaches to investigate curriculum implementation are rather diverse (Nunan, 2004; Snyder et al., 1992). For example, Stenhouse (1975) perceives curriculum more in action rather than in prescription.

The various perspectives used to define curriculum and investigate its implementation seem to represent a continuum of shifting meanings, ranging from the fidelity perspective, practical mutual adaptation, critical mutual adaptation to curriculum enactment (Snyder et al., 1992). On one side of the continuum are the fidelity perspective and practical mutual adaptation which are linked to the traditional definition for curriculum. Curriculum is regarded as 'one and for all' guidance. Curriculum knowledge is seen as primarily created outside the classroom by curriculum experts for teachers to implement in the way the experts have decided is the best. Therefore, the focus of investigation is often to measure the degree to which teachers have implemented the curriculum according to developers' intentions or to investigate factors that have facilitated or hindered implementation as planned (Snyder et al., 1992).

The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) developed at the University of Texas (Hall and Hord, 1987) is considered a popularly used approach of the fidelity

perspective (Snyder et al., 1992). This approach used seven stages of concern (awareness, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration, and refocusing) and eight levels of use (non-use, orientation, preparation, mechanical use, routine, refinement, integration and renewal) to measure teachers' orientation towards and implementation of innovations (Hall and Hord, 1987). At an early stage of analysis, an attempt was made to use CBAM as a supporting method for analysis. However, this approach was considered inappropriate for my analysis. At the technical level, for example, Hall and Hord (1987, 1998) use seven categories (e.g. knowledge, acquiring information and sharing) to define teachers' different levels of use. However, the ratings for these categories for each teacher do not always fall straight across a particular level. Although Hall and Hord (1987:93) argue that "for a given teacher, the categories typically line up fairly close to a particular level of use", this was not the case in my analysis. For instance, one of the teachers had a very low level of 'knowledge', but a very high level of 'performance'. Another teacher had a fairly high level of 'knowledge', but a very low level of 'performance'. Additionally, teachers' orientation and implementation of innovations may not be always as linear as classified in their framework. It is often difficult to classify the levels of use for teachers because their practices are more fluid than categorised in the framework.

The unsuccessful attempt in using the CBAM model, along with my reading in the ELT field (e.g. Borg, 2006; Holliday, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Woods, 1996) confirmed my view that implementation of a teaching approach is complex, dynamic and fluid. An alternative approach rather than the conventional linear or staged model is needed in order to understand and explain the complexity of the teachers' practices (Walford, 2003). This assumption pushed me towards the other side of the continuum for the study of curriculum, represented by critical mutual adaptation and curriculum enactment, in order to explore potential models for my investigation. These perspectives see curriculum as more in action rather than in prescription, as Ball (1994:15) put it, policies are "things", processes and outcomes. Curriculum knowledge is not viewed as a product but rather as an ongoing process that is jointly created and experienced by curriculum developers, teachers and students (Ball, 1994; Nunan, 2004). In this investigation, curriculum is seen on different levels. On one level, the externally designed curriculum (e.g. curriculum guidance developed by the Ministry of Education is seen to serve as stimulation for teachers; on the other level,

teachers and students are perceived as creating the enacted curriculum and giving meaning to it. In this sense, teachers are also curriculum makers (Snyder et al., 1992; Walford, 2003). Therefore, in this investigation of teachers' NEC implementation, my purpose is not to evaluate or judge whether teachers have implemented the 'prescribed' NEC, but to understand the localized complexity and teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC. Representatives of these perspectives are Ball (1994), Stenhouse (1975) and Walford (2003). Among them, Ball's (1994) model has predominantly influenced my analysis for this thesis, along with a special issue of TESOL Quarterly published in September 2007 (Clarke et al., 2007; Moore, 2007; Ramanathan and Morgan, 2007) which calls for situated policy enquiry and practitioner agency.

2.3.2 Models which have influenced my investigation of curriculum implementation

Among all the models for the investigation of curriculum implementation, Ball's (1994) model has a particular influence on my enquiry. His model was developed from his work on the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act within schools in England. First of all, his model makes close links between macro-level analysis of education systems and education policies with micro-level investigation of "contexts of practice" and "distributional outcomes of policy". He calls for the need to investigate "localized complexity" and "people's perceptions and experiences" (Ball, 1994:14). His work is very much concerned with areas such as local management of schools, changes in teachers' work and competition between schools. Much of his emphasis is placed on understanding the concerns and decision making of school governors, head teachers, teachers, parents and students. Such a perception echoes my interest as discussed in 2.2.

Another notion that has inspired my investigation is the strong dichotomy of structure/agency identified in Ball's (1994) model. Agency and structure are perceived as implicit in each other: agency acts in a constrained world with possibilities created by the structure. Therefore, teachers are seen as operating with constraints, but they find the space to make their decisions. Such a theme is also central to Bourdieu's (1992, 1998) sociology, and consistent with my thinking. As is shown in later discussion, I have extensively used Bourdieu's concepts in understanding teachers' practices.

29

Ball (1994) has used two concepts to convey his model: 'policy as text' and 'policy as discourse'. He argues that policy is not one of them, but both, because they are "implicit in each other" (p. 15). The understanding of policy must include both concepts.

By 'policy as text', Ball (1994) sees policies as textual representations that are encoded and decoded in complex ways as a result of constraints, struggles, compromises and negotiations. He argues that policy texts contain divergent meanings, contradictions and intentional omissions. Therefore, "a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings" (Codd, 1988:239, in Ball, 1994:16). Although Ball (1994) acknowledges that policy writers can try to maximize their control of the meaning, he argues that a complete control is difficult to achieve. This creates the opportunity for the policy text to be reinterpreted in different ways. Although only a limited range of readings may be possible, that range allows a diversity of forms of interpretations and implementations to be emerged (ibid). To illustrate the point, Ball (1994:19) has used Riseborough's (1992) example to show how teachers can use strategies such as 'secondary adjustments' (of policy to context) to relate to policy in different ways. Talking from another perspective, Ball (1994) claims that actors are often placed in situations where decisions have to be made, for example, the need to balance different policies that are at place. He thus argues that:

> "Action may be constrained differently (even tightly) but it is not determined by policy. Solutions to the problems posed by policy texts will be localized and should be expected to display ad hocery and messiness. Responses must be 'creative'..."

(Ball, 1994:18-19)

Viewing policy as text, Ball (1994) has highlighted the agency part of decision making and allows us to consider how meanings of policy can emerge from different levels of engagements with them. However, he goes on to argue that this misses what Ozga (1990, in Ball, 1994:21) calls 'the bigger picture':

> "Perhaps it concentrates too much on what those who inhabit policy think about and misses and fails to attend to what they do not think about" (Ball, 1994:21).

He then suggests the notion of 'policy as discourse' to refer to the limitations on what can be said and thought, and also who can speak, when, where and with what authority (Foucault, 1977). Since policy as discourse builds over time, some interpretations and some patterns are more apparent than others. Since actors are embedded in a range of discordant and contradictory discourses, it is possible that

some discourses are more dominant than others. Therefore, policy as discourse sets boundaries for what actors are allowed (able) to think and do.

> "We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do. In these terms we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies" (Ball, 1994:22).

Therefore, Ball (1994:15) suggests that policy analysis requires an understanding that is based on the changing relationships between constraint and agency and their inter-penetration, on "ad hocery of the macro with the ad hocery of the micro without losing sight of the systematic bases and effects of ad hoc social actions: to look for the iterations embedded within chaos".

Using Ball's (1994:16) concept of policy, my investigation will look at the relationships between policy texts at the government level and how these policy texts are read within schools, using Ball's term, how policy texts are "encoded" and "decoded". I will firstly investigate the social context in which the NEC was initiated, developed and promoted in chapter 4 and examine the institutional context in chapter 5. Afterwards, I will move to the centre of my enquiry to examine how teachers experience the NEC, how they perceive the opportunities and constraints brought by the NEC and their context, how they make their decisions about engaging with the NEC out of possibilities, conflicts and constraints (chapter 6) and how their engagements with the NEC are reflected in practices (chapter 7).

Looking back at the literature, a number of other prominent researchers are found to share similar views with Ball (1994). As previously discussed, Ball's concept of structure/agency is central to Bourdieu's (1992, 1998) sociology. Additionally, Ball's framework is very much developed from Foucault (1977), who is interested in the relationship between power and knowledge and how discourse functions in practice. For example, much of Foucault's work is concerned about social locations or institutional sites (e.g. the asylum and the hospital) that specify the practical operation of discourses, relating the discourse of particular subjectivities with the construction of lived experiences. In another way, Ball's model also relates to "discursive practice" as suggested by ethnomethodology which perceives social worlds and their subjectivities as always embedded in their discursive conventions (Holstein and Gubrium, 2005). Similar views are also shared by the ELT profession, in which the call for the investigation of locality and agency is becoming more

recurrent in the literature (Canagarajah, 2005; Holliday, 1994; Pennycook, 2006). TESOL Quarterly even published a special edition in September 2007 to call for studies on situated policy and practitioner agency in policy enactment (Clarke et al., 2007; Moore, 2007; Ramanathan and Morgan, 2007). This direction was well summarized in the introductory article written by Ramanathan and Morgan (2007:459):

> "Our focus on the local is deliberate, because single cases afford glimpse into complex interplays between policies, pedagogic practices, institutional constraints and migrations. As the various pieces show, our individual and collective existences do not occur in pristine spaces within which we place individuals, institutions, and policies, but inside a fluid set of social relations with emergent possibilities for change. In other words, locality is not just the end point of top-down directives but also the genesis of bottom-up initiatives, which cumulatively and over time transform traditional flows and frameworks of decision-making...Viewing policies this way, as texts that are wrought by their cultural codes and conventions and that are imbued with particular ideologies and perspectives, permits us to consider how meanings around them emerge from our engagements with them."

2.4 Implementing the NEC or teaching the NEC?

In searching for my research framework, I carefully considered my choice of terminology. In the literature, the term 'curriculum implementation' seems to be dominant in the investigation of curriculum. However, does 'implementing the NEC' tell the whole story? Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Rundell, 2001:713) defines 'implement' as: "to take action or make changes that you have officially decided should happen". According to Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Sinclair, 2001:784), the meaning of 'implement' is: "if you implement something such as a plan, you ensure that what has been planned is done." Both definitions imply a concept that 'something planned needs to be done'. Such a notion seems to contradict my assumptions about teachers as active decision makers, and about the fluid and dynamic and sometimes unexpected aspects of practice. Coincidentally, such concern is also expressed by Fullan (1992:113):

> "Ten years ago we 'studied innovations', today we are 'doing reform'. There has been a shift from passivity to action, and from narrowness to comprehensiveness of solutions. We may know more, but we are also taking on more...In the course of this development, the concept implementation has revealed its limitations. The very term connotes 'something to be put in practice'. It focuses on the object of change thereby detaching it in artificial ways from people and their ongoing circumstances. It has a bias implying that innovations are externally introduced. Beyond implementation alters the lens from

32

innovations per se to the day-to-day actions of individuals in organizational settings".

To acknowledge teachers' role as active decision makers, and to recognise the complexity of local situations and the fluid and dynamic aspects of teachers' practices, the title 'teaching the NEC' is thus used.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the debates and perspectives about curriculum and implementation in ELT. It has shown that the ELT field is rather 'messy' with diverse perspectives. There are many innovations being promoted in the hope of generating better practices. However, most of them seem to have met considerable difficulties in implementation or have resulted in 'failures' (Butler and Lino 2005; Carless, 2003; Lee, 2005; Littlewood, 2004). These lead ELT professionals to debate whether there is any 'best method' or whether method is needed at all (Pennycook, 1989; Prabhu, 1990; Widdowson, 2003). In the current climate, increasing attention is being given to situated enactment, local complexity and lived experience of teachers and students (Clarke et al., 2007; Canagarajah, 2005; Ramanthan and Morgan, 2007). Two particular areas of research have stimulated my investigation: social context and teacher cognition. Research has shown that teachers' practices are closely related to their cognition (Borg, 2006; Elbaz, 1983; Woods, 1996) and the context in which they are in (Bax, 2003; Canagarajah, 2005; Holliday, 1994).

I have also explored some perspectives for the study of curriculum implementation, for example, the fidelity perspective and mutual adaptation. However, my unsuccessful attempt to use the CBAM model (Hall and Hord, 1987, 1998) along with my reading in the ELT field confirms my view that implementation of a teaching approach is complex, dynamic and fluid. An alternative approach rather than the conventional linear or staged model is needed in order to understand and explain the complexity of the teachers' practices (Walford, 2003). Ball's (1994) concept of policy is believed to be appropriate for guiding my investigation. Such a model recognises situated experience, local complexity while acknowledging the influence of macro context. Such a model highlights the notions of agency and structure and sees teachers as active decision makers that operate with conflicts and constraints and find space to make their decisions. Such a model is also recognised or echoed by many other researchers in mainstream education research and in the ELT

profession, for example, Bourdieu (1998), Holstein and Gubrium (2005) and Ramanathan and Morgan (2007).

Having introduced concepts that may be needed for understanding the investigation and presentation, and explained the rationale for my research agenda in this chapter, I will discuss the methodology for this research in chapter three, before moving on to report findings in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the methodological issues I considered and the procedures that I followed in this ethnographic study of Chinese English language teachers' implementation of the new English curriculum (NEC). I firstly outline my theoretical stance and how it has informed my research design; I then illustrate the detailed procedures that I followed for data collection and analysis, including my rationale for doing so; finally, I reflect on the methodological issues. Through reading the 'process' of my research, I hope readers can get a better understanding of the 'product' of my research and judge the quality of my research. The presentation structure of this chapter is outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Scope of chapter 3

3.1 Theoretical considerations

3.2 The pilot study

  3.2.1 The setting, research participants and research process

  3.2.2 Findings and discussion

  3.2.3 Reflection on the pilot study

3.3 Ethnography

  3.3.1 Ethnography

  3.3.2 Rationale for using ethnography

3.4 Negotiating access

  3.4.1 Negotiating access to the field

  3.4.2 Negotiating access with the research participants

3.5 My Presentation in the Field

  3.5.1 The creation of my role

  3.5.2 Overt or covert research?

  3.5.3 The presentation of self

3.6 Data Collection: Process, Techniques and Rationale

3.7 Data organisation and analysis

  3.7.1 Grounded theory

  3.7.2 The conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu

3.8 Ethics

3.9 Reflection

3.1 Theoretical considerations

Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest five major paradigms in informing and guiding enquiry: positivism, postpositivism, critical theories, constructivism and participatory enquiry. Positivism and postpositivism are considered the "received view" of science, focusing on verifying or falsifying a prior statement, and stating that researchers can be value free. Critical theory acknowledges that research is value-determined. Constructivism and participatory enquiry aim to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. My theoretical position with regard to this study is largely influenced by constructivism and participatory enquiry.

For constructivists, the social world is intrinsically meaning-making and realities are "mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:110). Therefore, "constructions are more or less true". It is possible to have multiple conceptions of realities and the same social phenomena may be perceived in different but equally valid ways by different people (ibid). The aim of enquiry is *Verstehen* (understanding), particularly the way how people make sense of their lives (Schwandt, 1994). Therefore, in this investigation of a NEC implementation in China, my purpose is not to evaluate teachers' practices, but to understand their experiences of teaching the NEC in their specific context and the way in which they make sense of their teaching in general, and teaching the NEC in particular.

Within constructivism, phenomenology regards human beings as skilled social actors who act consciously based on their understandings of the meanings of the situations. Human behaviours are motivated and purposive, rather than mechanically reacting to stimuli (Maso, 2001). Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that social scientists should try to understand the mental construction, rather than to discover the 'universal truth'. Schutz (1972:6) also defines the aim of social sciences as "…to interpret the actions of individuals in the social world and the ways in which

36

individuals give meaning to social phenomena". This is why this study sets out to investigate teacher cognition in relation to the teachers' curriculum implementation. I hope to uncover the 'meaningful actions' of the teachers, understand why they work in the way that they do, and the way they make sense of the world (Waters, 1994).

However, this is not to say subjectivity accounts for everything. Habermas (1984) explains that there are three worlds: a hard 'physical' world, a 'soft' mental world, and an intersubjective world in between. His view finds an echo in participatory ontology, which acknowledges subjectivity but argues that there is an objective 'given cosmos' and knowing the objective 'given cosmos' is based on the interplay of subjectivity and intersubjectivity (Heron and Reason, 1997). Although it may be impossible in linguistic, conceptual terms to give any final or absolute account of the reality, a propositional knowing can be suggested through the mediation of subjectivity and intersubjectivity (Heron and Reason, 1997). The relationship between objectivity, intersubjectivity and subjectivity is illustrated by Heron and Reason (1997:280) as "knowers can only be knowers when known by other knowers". Therefore, there is a "Janus-faced notion of truth" (Habermas, 1996:363, in Garland, 2007:7) which encompasses the behavioural certainties of action in the lifeworld as well as the possibility of a non-contextualised, discursively validated truth to be attained. Intersubjectivity, in this sense, acts as the bridge between subjectivity and objectivity (Heron and Reason, 1997). Such a view is also expressed by Schutz (1973:55):

> "The social world is from the outset an intersubjective world...because our knowledge of it is in various ways socialized. Moreover, the social world is experienced from the outset as a meaningful one...We normally know what the other 'in his biographically determined situation' does, for what reason he does it, why he does it at this particular time and in these particular circumstances."

In making sense of the shared 'physical world', human beings are using different pieces of the intersubjective 'shared knowledge' and their specific experiences to form their subjective consciousness of it. The study of social reality is:

> "...the sum total of objects and occurrences within the social cultural world as experienced by the common-sense thinking of men living their daily lives among their fellow-men, connected with them in manifold relations of interaction." (Schutz, 1973:53)

Symbolic interactionism is a school of thought that offers special insight in understanding the intersubjective world. According to Mead (1934) and Goffman (1959), human beings' conception of selfhood is the product of social interaction and is bound up with membership of society. There are often a set of frameworks in a

group that people draw on to make sense of the world and these frameworks have led group members to experience social lives or perform particular roles in a certain way. These frameworks are interpreted by the actors whose actions are shaped by and also re-shape the frameworks (Waters, 1994). Therefore, people in a group may have collective and negotiated perspectives and patterns of behaviour developed by their shared experiences. This is why this study sets out to examine a group of teachers in a particular school because I wanted to find out how teachers perceive and interpret their own, and others' actions and reactions in everyday life and discover the intersubjective patterns in their community. I wanted to explore how meanings are "created, negotiated, sustained and modified" in their specific context of actions (Schwandt, 1994:120).

Goffman's (1959) self presentation theory suggests that human beings present themselves in a relatively consistent way in order to sustain impression management. However, the performer is not always consistent with the self that is performed. There are many constraints, such as social arrangements, or the fear of losing face, that may lead 'self' to construct a 'performer' in interactions. Therefore, although it is possible to investigate the 'norms' and 'patterns' of teachers' subjective and intersubjective world, nothing can be taken for granted. Actions and comments need to be understood inferentially and probabilistically and the definitions need to be continually tested and revised as actions unfold (Rock, 2001). My procedure was to take their actual conduct as examples to interpret their 'attached meanings', use different interrelated typical course-of-action patterns executed by teachers and construct an understanding of teachers from these different segments (Maso, 2001). Therefore, in this study, I will observe teachers performing in different settings and use a triangulation of methods to construct an understanding of the teachers.

Heron and Reason (1997) claim that social reality is defined by participants themselves and understanding of their interpretations of the world must come from the inside, not the outside. Therefore, I will act as a participant observer to learn the culture of this group of teachers so that I can interpret the world as they do through living their lives and performing their duties. Additionally, much of the discussion in the findings chapters in this thesis is presented in teachers' voices, and I will try to describe a picture that is faithful to teachers' everyday life, that represents their understanding, not my understanding.

38

Schutz (1967) identifies two levels of *Verstehen* (understanding): how human beings understand the world and how social scientists understand human beings. Therefore, every person is involved in the process of understanding. In the process of our understanding as social scientists, the 'natural attitude', or common sense knowledge, we developed as social actors serves as the fundamental truth. This level of understanding makes it possible for me to understand teacher thinking and practices. In addition, the second level of understanding allows me to problematise, typify and theorise aspects of the lifeworld to achieve higher validity. Therefore, in acting as a participant observer in the setting, although I am within the lifeworld, it is possible for me to adopt a theorising stance by standing outside, unblocking and re-examining my taken-for-granted knowledge in order to allow thematising to take place (Garland, 2007). The intersubjective world that I share with teachers enables me to understand teachers and makes it possible for me to present a picture that is similar to that of the teachers (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, I am also aware of my experiences, opinions and values, and their implications for the study. Instead of denying this, I try to take these into account and try to be self-critical and reflexive to minimize the influence of these on my study. Through continuous validation between participants and settings, through my triangulation of methods and my reflection, my construction can be as faithful to teachers' everyday life as possible. I can also develop a 'more informed' understanding and contribute my understanding to the development of even 'more informed' understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Having discussed my theoretical considerations, their implications for this study can be summarised as:

- The aim of this enquiry is to understand teacher thinking and practices, to explore the way how they make sense of their teaching in general, and teaching the NEC in particular. It is not to evaluate their teaching.

- My enquiry is constructivist-interpretive. My purpose is to interpret teachers' cognition and practices by constructing different pieces of information gained from a triangulation of methods. Teachers' actions and comments are understood inferentially and probabilistically and the definitions are continually tested and revised as actions unfold.

- Although it may be impossible for me to represent teachers exactly as who they are, it is possible for me to construct an understanding that is as close to them as possible.

- Although teachers have subjective thinking, their understanding is shaped by the intersubjective and objective world which they share with others. Therefore, despite all their differences and the complexities of their work, there should be certain levels of patterns and norms that they share with other teachers in the school and outside the school. This allows me to make certain claims for the validity and generalisablility of this study.

3.2 The pilot study

The pilot study was conducted from April 2006 to May 2006 aiming at identifying the possibility of doing the main study, and if possible, informing the design of the main study. This section introduces the process and findings of the pilot study, and how it has informed the design of the main study. The two research questions for the pilot study were:
- What are teachers' views about the NEC and the CLT approach?
- Have they incorporated CLT in their classroom practices?

3.2.1 The setting, research participants and research process

Selection of the setting was largely opportunistic because the school was close to my hometown and I had access to the setting due to a family connection. I was introduced to the head teacher by Head of the County's Education Committee, so there was no problem accessing the school. I decided to observe grade 1 and grade 2 teachers because grade 3 teachers were very busy at the time. The National University Entrance Examination (NUEE)[1] was around the corner. The head teacher insisted on choosing research participants for me, although he considered my request for representation across genders, experiences of teaching and grades of teaching. Qualifications were not considered because all English teachers in the school have BA degrees in English teaching. Details of the three research participants are listed in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2: The three research participants for the pilot study

Participants	Sex	Grades of Teaching	Teaching Experience
A	Female	1	Over 20 years

---

[1] See glossary.

B	Male	2	About 10 years
C	Female	2	Less than 2 years

I was introduced to the research participants by the head teacher as a friend's child and a PhD student from a UK university. I observed two lessons (each lasts 45 minutes) for each teacher and arranged one semi-structured interview with each teacher to ask them to compare the differences between the two curricula and their experiences of implementing the NEC. Table 3.3 illustrates the schedule of the pilot study fieldwork.

Table 3.3: Schedule of the pilot study fieldwork

Visit 1 (19/04/2006):   Meet the head teacher, select and meet the research participants

Visit 2 (20/04/2006):   Observe Participant A's teaching

Visit 3 (21/04/2006):   Observe Participant B's teaching and Participant C's teaching

Visit 4 (25/04/2006):   Observe Participant A's teaching

Visit 5 (28/04/2006):   Observe Participant C's teaching, interview Participant A

Visit 6 (08/052006):   Observe Participant B's teaching, interview Participant B

Visit 7 (09/05/2006):   Interview Participant C

3.2.2 Findings and discussion

Participant A was a female teacher with over 20 years' experience of teaching. She was one of the most experienced English teachers in the school. She taught grade one at the time of study. Her class involved much student participation, for example, she organized a debate between students and she used much group work. Her instruction language was English. However, she seemed less confident in using English. For example, she kept correcting herself when speaking English. She said that she had always been aware of the importance of CLT because the purpose of learning English was to talk. She also said she had never worried about teaching strategies because she had been teaching in this way all the time. However, she mentioned that she was less confident in explaining some topics. The NEC had

incorporated a broad range of topics, for example, irrigation and robots, and she was not familiar with many topics. She felt less confident in learning these topics "at such an old age" and she worried the unfamiliarity might have affected her teaching in some ways.

Participant B was a male teacher with about 10 years' experience of teaching. He taught grade two. His class was also very active with a lot of student participation. He had planned a lot of activities for students to explain their views and talk with each other. In the second class, he got some students to teach some of the paragraphs of the text. Similar to participant A, he also mentioned that the purpose of learning English was to "use the language" and he thought "involving students" should always be the focus of teaching. When being asked about the differences between the two curricula, he also complained about the broad range of topics, but said he was spending a lot of time in familiarizing himself with these new topics.

Participant C was a newly qualified female teacher with less than two years' experience of teaching. She started both classes with teaching the translated version of some ancient Chinese proverbs. She stated that students were interested in learning proverbs. It was a good technique to relax the learning environment and students needed to have this kind of knowledge. Her class also involved a lot of student participation, for example, role play and student competitions in memorizing new words. Her Powerpoint presentation files were very interesting with a lot of cartoon pictures and flashes. The NEC was the first curriculum she had used and she thought the NEC was not very well organised because it had incorporated too many things and the topics were too broad, but she was confident with the CLT approach.

The pilot study suggests some interesting findings:

- There was a discrepancy between what the literature says, what I believed and what the teachers actually did and said in this study: most literature seems to suggest that the implementation of CLT approaches in EFL has met considerable difficulties (see 2.1.2). Additionally, in my experience of being a student in a Chinese high school, a student and a teacher in a Chinese college, most teachers used grammar-translation method of teaching and most activities were teacher-led. In contrast, the research participants in the pilot study school

stated that they were confident in implementing the NEC and using the CLT approach. It would be interesting to further investigate why this discrepancy happened.

- Teachers had some complaints about the topics of the textbook: although all the teachers stated that they were very confident in implementing the CLT approach, they complained about the new textbook for having included too many topics and acknowledged that they were not confident in teaching some topics. In fact, they stated everything positively apart from the topics of the NEC.

- There was contradiction in the data: the head teacher and the other two research participants all mentioned that experienced teachers might have experienced more difficulties in implementing the NEC. However, the observational data suggested that the most experienced teacher's classes had involved the most learner talk. This teacher also stated that she was very confident in implementing the CLT approach. It would be interesting to further investigate in order to find out why this contradiction happened.

3.2.3 Reflection on the pilot study

The pilot study was largely successful because most of my research aims were achieved. It generated some interesting findings, confirmed that it was possible to carry out my main study in China, and some of the research techniques used in the pilot study can be replicated in the main study. Both the head teacher and English teachers were very supportive and the head teacher said he was happy for me to carry out a study at any time. The English teachers also expressed their willingness to spend time for my research in the future. However, a few problems were also identified:

- Lack of time: This study only lasted for twenty days and the data collection was limited to two observations and one interview per teacher. This prevented the researcher from getting a more comprehensive view about teachers and their practices, for example, how they taught different elements (e.g. grammar instead of texts), and what their out of classroom practices were. Woods' study (1996) finds that in studying teachers' beliefs many teachers tend to state what they would like to believe rather than what they really believe. Although I avoided asking abstract questions such as "do you think CLT is important?" there was still a chance teachers might state an ideal version of their practices. It would be important to spend a longer time and collect data from multiple

perspectives or sources in order to construct an understanding of teachers and their classroom practices.

■ Lack of rapport: Although teachers were used to being observed as there were often demonstration lessons[2] in the school, all of the three participants were not used to being interviewed for research purposes. They seemed nervous about being interviewed and refused my request to use the digital recorder. The lack of rapport also made it difficult to generate data on some sensitive questions, for example, the implementation support from the school.

Based on the pilot study, it was advisable to choose a research approach that involved longer-term participation of the researcher in order to establish rapport and collect data from different sources so that better understanding of the research participants might be constructed. In this sense, ethnography seemed to be a good choice.

3.3 Ethnography

In this section, I will firstly define ethnography and secondly explain the rationale for my choice of ethnography as an enquiry approach for this research.

3.3.1 Ethnography

Although the definitions of ethnography vary, the essence is to discover and understand the patterns of thoughts and behaviour of a particular cultural group through the long-term direct involvement of the researcher (Burgess, 1982; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, 2007; Walford, 2003). Brewer (2000) argues that ethnography is neither methodology nor method. It is a style of doing research, which embraces both theoretical perspectives and data collection techniques. He defines ethnography as:

> "The study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods that capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, to collect data in a systematic manner." (Brewer, 2000:10)

Some key features of ethnography are:

---

[2] See glossary.

- Ethnographers study people in their everyday contexts, rather than in artificially created settings (e.g. laboratories). This is often characterised by the researcher taking a participant observer role in the setting (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

- The purpose of ethnography is to make sense of the world of the participants by understanding norms and patterns of people's thoughts and behaviour (Crang and Cook, 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The ethnographic enquiry is largely interpretive in nature and the purpose is to understand the situation from the participants' points of view (Holliday, 1994).

- Ethnographic studies are also explorative in nature. The enquiry is largely guided by what is happening in the setting and what emerges from data, rather than prescribed categories (Spradley, 1980). The investigation is progressively focused over its course. "Over time the research problem needs to be developed or transformed, and eventually its scope is clarified and delimited, and its internal structure explored. In this sense, it is frequently well into the process of inquiry that one discovers what the research is really about…" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:206).

- Ethnographic studies aim at 'depth' of understanding. Therefore, the scale of ethnographic studies is normally small (e.g. a single setting) in order to facilitate in-depth understanding (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Having introduced ethnography, the following section discusses my rationale for choosing ethnography as an enquiry approach.

3.3.2 Rationale for using ethnography

Originating from anthropology (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), there is a growing acceptance of ethnography in educational research (Cohen et al., 2007): in understanding teachers' work, for example, Acker (1999) has used ethnography in two schools in England; in policy implementation, Ball (1994) has used ethnography to explore the implementation of the 1988 Education Act in England; and in ELT, Holliday (1991) has used ethnography to investigate the reactions of teachers to a curriculum innovation in Egypt. Ethnography is considered the most appropriate approach to study the behaviour of groups of people (Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Holliday, 1994). My rationale for using ethnography as an enquiry approach for this research is:

First of all, it is difficult to study the social world without being a part of it (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Taking an ethnographer role in the setting enabled me to be better equipped to see and understand the on-goings. It enabled me to capture the dynamics of the situations, people and events and map a fuller picture of the setting by participation (Brewer, 2000). It allowed me to produce an account that is strong on reality. It also enabled me to discover many phenomena that are otherwise unobtainable, for example, discovering 'taken for granted' knowledge that is less likely to surface in other research traditions, and observe 'hidden activities' or sensitive events that may be inaccessible to outsiders (Cohen et al., 2007).

In the investigation of policy implementation, Walford (2003) argues that ethnography allows the researcher to investigate not only planned policy but also the unintended consequences, along with the constraints and tensions in the wider context. Therefore, it can provide important empirical data for curriculum developers. On the other hand, Ball (1994) argues that, because ethnography emphasizes the participants' accounts and interpretations of their own actions, it offers a way of bringing into play the concerns and interests and diverse voices of marginalized or oppressed social groups and gives voice to the unheard.

Additionally, through long term direct involvement in the setting, ethnography makes it easier for me to build rapport with the participants, which was not well achieved in the pilot study due to the time constraints. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argues that as the researcher becomes a more familiar presence to the setting through prolonged engagement, the participants are less likely to perform and more likely to reveal more details of their lives. This enables me to collect data about not only 'surface action phenomena' but also 'deep action phenomena' (Holliday, 1991).

However, there are also a number of limitations and difficulties in using ethnography. Firstly, ethnography, together with other qualitative approaches such as case study, is often criticised for lacking representativeness and generalisability, due to its small scope (Brewer, 2000). Secondly, the interpretation of qualitative data relies heavily on the researcher's insights and judgment, described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the problem of the 'human as instrument'. Therefore, the validity of ethnographic studies is sometimes suspected (Bryman, 2001). The third critique is in terms of the role of the researcher. Since the researcher works as a participant observer in the

setting for a long period of time, there is the possibility that he or she, being so close to the situation, may take certain things for granted. The researcher may also develop empathy towards participants, thus affecting judgement and representation. It is also possible that the presence of the researcher may alter the behaviour of the participants (Cohen et al., 2007).

Despite its limitations, ethnography is still considered the most appropriate approach for this investigation. In addition, it is believed that certain issues in using ethnography can be solved through a range of research techniques.

To address the first critique, although qualitative studies do not permit generalisation to populations, they may be in a better position in relation to generalising theories (Mitchell, 1983): although large-scale studies may have a higher level of generalisability, they may lose the 'depth' of understanding in their pursuit of 'width' of information (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Qualitative studies such as ethnography enable us to know not only the result but also the process, which is crucial in understanding educational processes such as teaching (Punch, 1998). Learning and teaching are socio-culturally specific activities (Bruce and Robin, 1992) and a culturally-sensitive approach is more appropriate in gaining a deeper understanding (Holliday, 1994) (also see 2.2.1). From another viewpoint, qualitative studies are still in a position to produce 'moderatum generalisation' because of the shared features between different social phenomena (Williams, 2000:215).

In response to the second critique, it is impossible to produce 'uncontaminated data' and the researcher is inevitably implicated in the research in all forms of enquiry. For example, in quantitative studies, the formation of research questions and the selection of participants are also influenced by the choice of the researcher (Brewer, 2000). There may be higher challenges for interpretation and representation in qualitative studies. However, the difficulty can be addressed by using a variety of research techniques. Examples are the triangulation of data collection methods (see 3.6), a careful sampling of participants (see 3.4.2), setting and timing (see 3.6) and participant validation (see 3.6) (Cohen et al., 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

The difficulty of being a participant observer, as raised in the third critique, can be reduced by the researcher taking a marginal position in the setting (see 3.5.1), which enables the researcher both to see from within and to understand from without (Holliday, 1994). It can also be reduced by the researcher deliberately distancing themselves from the situation, addressing reflexivity and making the familiar strange (see e.g. 3.9.1) (Delamont, 1981; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The potential of research reactivity, although believed to be less challenging in ethnographic studies than other forms of research, can be reduced by a careful presentation of the researcher's self (see 3.5) (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Having defined ethnography and introduced the rationale for my choice of ethnography as an enquiry approach, the next section introduces the process of gaining access, before moving on to introduce the ethnographic fieldwork.

3.4 Negotiating access

The difficulty of gaining access in ethnographic studies is well documented (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). I chose to use 'negotiating access' in stead of 'gaining access' because it involved a lot of 'negotiation' along the process and I decided to include a detailed description of 'negotiating access' in the thesis because it is believed this process can provide illuminating insights about the people in the field (Crang and Cook, 2007).

3.4.1 Negotiating access to the field

Social connection is a common strategy for gaining access (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). However, in fear of its potential effect on data collection, I did not use my family connections for accessing the field and looked for a setting where my parents were not influential. I decided to choose a place close to my hometown. This was partly for a practical consideration to spend some more time with my parents. The primary consideration however was language. In China, most people speak dialects in everyday life although Mandarin is the official language. I needed to find a place close to my hometown to make sure I could understand their everyday speech, which is an important prerequisite in data collection (Crang and Cook, 2007).

I decided to contact more than one school in order to ensure access if some gatekeepers proved uncooperative or uninformative, and obtain insights from responses in order to facilitate contact with future gatekeepers (Cassell, 1988). I also started the work early (February 2007) in order to avoid unexpected delays. In fact, it often took me a few weeks to get hold of head teachers because they were often away from their offices due to meeting or teaching. I contacted the head teacher of each school directly because I knew they were the decision makers in Chinese high schools. I telephoned them, instead of sending emails or posting letters, because it was more difficult to ignore a voice on the telephone than emails or posts (Crang and Cook, 2007).

The process revealed that head teachers were not the only gatekeepers in my efforts to gain access. In Table 3.4, I have identified three layers of gatekeepers according to their functions in the process. In the negotiation of access to the setting, only the surface-layer and deep-layer gatekeepers were involved. The deep-layer gatekeepers were difficult to handle, and so were the surface-layer gatekeepers. The latter often refused to reveal the head teachers' telephone numbers and prohibited my access to them (I realized at a later stage that they acted as filters for the head teachers because the latter were often too busy to answer phones).

Table 3.4: Different layers of gate keepers

Layers of Gatekeepers	Functions	Examples
Surface-layer gatekeepers	Whether contact can be made with deep-layer gatekeepers	Switchboard Operators
Deep-layer gatekeepers	Whether entrance can be permitted to the setting	Head teachers
Essential-layer gatekeepers	Whether, how and what kind of data can be collected	Research participants

Appendix 1 shows four extracts of the telephone conversations. As illustrated by the conversations, I had experiences of various gatekeepers, for example: indifferent gatekeepers, impatient gatekeepers, conservative gatekeepers, suspicious gatekeepers, welcoming gatekeepers and enthusiastic gatekeepers. In extract 1, the head teacher withheld his real identity from me in the beginning. In extract 2, the head teacher rejected me because it was strange for a PhD student to work in a

high school. In extract 3, the teacher said: "Everything is so common. What is there to see?" In extract 4, I was perceived as an expert because I was a PhD student and the head teacher requested me to do teacher training.

I had a number of identities, for example, a PhD student in a UK university, a researcher interested in ELT, a previous teacher in a Chinese college, or a graduate of a Chinese teacher's university. In these communications, I stressed different aspects of my identity when different gatekeepers were encountered (Marcus, 1998). Nevertheless, my overall presentation was as a competent English language teacher so that it was worth having me in the setting; and a research student which explained why I needed to be in the setting.

The research opportunity was obtained in Chuangxin High School (CHS) perhaps due to one major reason: the head teacher was doing a part-time PhD in a university in Beijing. With some previous knowledge of research, he had shown more interest in my project than others and therefore approved my application. Additionally, I also chose CHS out of the three offers I received because I believed that with knowledge of research, the head teacher might be more supportive and understanding towards my research.

3.4.2 Negotiating access with the research participants

I identified the research participants as essential-layer gate-keepers (see Table 3.4) because they decided whether, how and what kind of data could be collected.

When I started my research in early September 2007, I had the impression that I was perceived as an alien person in the school. For example, it was the first time that many teachers had met a female PhD student, who came from a UK institution. Some teachers expressed their curiosity as to why a PhD student was teaching in a high school. Even after being told I was there for an ethnographic study, many of them were suspicious because none of them had previous knowledge of ethnography. It also seemed that some of them perceived me as an expert because of my identity as a PhD student. I might have also been perceived as a spy (if not, a message deliverer) for the head teacher because the latter had shown particular attention to me many times in public. There was a rumour that I was the child of the head teacher's close friend. There was also a rumour that we were classmates in a

professional development programme.

I withheld my obvious research agenda (e.g. classroom observations) in the first week. In the second week, I was tempted to make some classroom observations out of my curiosity about what was going on in the classrooms. However, my request to observe her class was refused by Head of the Grade Three English Team, although my reason was: "I did not have any experience of high school English teaching and I wanted to observe some lessons in order to know how to teach high school students". She appeared nervous in the first instance, and subsequently mentioned two other teachers' names saying they were "better at teaching". One of the two teachers she suggested also refused my request, saying it was only a reviewing session and she would invite me when the new unit was taught. Due to such experience, in the rest of the first month, I did not make any further attempt to seek teachers' permissions for observations in consideration of 'face' for them and myself. With a carefully constructed self presentation, rapport was gradually built (see 3.5.3). In mid October 2007, I felt my presence had become more familiar to teachers and many of them seemed to have accepted me as one of them, I started an overt research agenda.

Anya, Head of the English Department, was selected as the first research participant, largely because she was the first person I became acquainted with. Oral informed consent was obtained from Anya (3.5.2). The study with Anya started in October 2007, but stopped for more than three months and restarted in February 2008 (see Appendix 2 for research agenda with Anya). The reason was that in October 2007, I felt my study had placed too much pressure on Anya. She had told me that she taught differently when I was present and she spent longer planning lessons. Additionally, I had the feeling that she was very wary and she tended only to talk about positive aspects, which might be caused by a number of reasons: first of all, she might be nervous as this was the first time she participated in a research project; secondly, although we seemed to have established friendly relationship at that time, I was still new to her and she might be suspicious about how I was going to portray her and her team, and therefore she might have higher pressure to sustain her "impression management" (also see 6.1.1). The study restarted in February 2008, when I felt the research rapport was further developed and Anya appeared to be more open and relaxed with better understanding of my research and myself (e.g. she could even discuss with me the negative aspects of teaching

and school management). This process clearly shows how access is an ongoing process. It means not only getting there, but negotiating all the time in order to get further and achieve more (Bryman, 2001).

Although generalisability was not the main consideration in this study, sampling was still necessary because it would be difficult to understand the complexity of a situation without studying the perspectives of differently positioned people (Bryman, 2001; Crang and Cook, 2007). The sampling strategy was both strategic and theoretical (Bryman, 2001). Participants differ according to classes taught, gender and teaching experience. The selection of participants was also informed by data collection and analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Table 3.5 lists information about the five participants in this study. In order to ensure anonymity, the research participants are referred to as Anya, Baijuan, Caili, Denghua and Enchu. They are described in alphabetical order to assist reading. As shown in the table, there are four female participants and one male participant in this study, which corresponds to the female – male ratio in the English department. Two 'top class' teachers, two 'ordinary class' teachers and one arts class teacher were selected[3]. Teachers' teaching experience ranges from 5 years to 27 years. The participants included the least experienced teacher and the most experienced teacher in the whole team and the whole Department. In terms of professional titles, level 2 is the lowest and senior[4] is the highest in the Grade Two English Team.

Table 3.5: Background of the five research participants

Participants		Gender	Classes taught	Teaching experience	Professional title
1	Anya	Female	'Top class'	27 years	Senior
2	Baijuan	Female	Science class	9 years	Level 2
3	Caili	Female	'Top class'	8 years	Level 1
4	Denghua	Male	Science class	5 years	Level 2
5	Enchu	Female	Arts class	18 years	Senior

The second participant Baijuan joined the study in December 2007. Baijuan was chosen because she seemed to be an interesting case. She won the first prize in the city's teaching competition, but the average scores of her students were often

---

[3] See glossary for 'top class', 'ordinary class', science class and arts class.
[4] See glossary for senior teacher and the criteria for professional titles.

among the lowest in the grade two ranking table. I was interested in investigating the reasons behind the discrepancy. Secondly, Baijuan's background as the only non-local teacher in her office also seemed interesting. Most local teachers were graduates of CHS (e.g. participant three and participant four) and they went to the same normal university[5] in the province. I wanted to find out how Baijuan's practices might relate to her different learning experience.

The third participant Caili joined this study in November 2007. She was the only teacher among the five research participants who voluntarily requested to take part in my study. She said that she regarded this as an opportunity to communicate her ideas to me. I was also happy to have Caili as my participant: although the first participant Anya taught 'top classes', I was interested to investigate how 'top classes' were taught by less experienced teachers.

The fourth participant Denghua was chosen mainly because of his gender and teaching experience: he was the youngest teacher and one of the only three male teachers in Grade Two English Team. Denghua joined this study in April 2008. The scale was relatively smaller because during the period of study, one of his close family members became ill and he devoted considerable time and concern to this relative's care. I decided not to take too much of his time in addition to his teaching and family duties. However, as with other research participants, Denghua and I still had contact after the fieldwork was over and he provided further data during my writing-up stage.

The previous four participants taught either 'top classes' or science classes. Participant five Enchu was chosen as a participant because she was one of the only two arts class teachers in the Grade Two English Team. Enchu joined this study in March 2008.

3.5 My Presentation in the Field

Another important consideration in ethnographic studies is the presentation of the researcher, which is highly important in data collection (Acker, 1999; Hammersley

---

[5] See glossary for normal university.

and Atkinson, 1995). This section introduces my role in the field, along with my considerations in relation to my self presentation.

3.5.1 The creation of my role

Holliday (1994) suggests a marginal position between insider and outsider in order for ethnographers to perceive the researched from within and understand them from outside. I did not want to take the same role as other teachers because doing exactly the same job as theirs might prevent me from seeing their practices from outside. There was also the head teacher's practical consideration that I would be in CHS only for one year, and this would affect the continuity of teaching, as there would be another transition for students after my leaving. Another option was to work in the Academic Affairs Division[6] of the school. However, I was concerned it might widen the distance between the English teachers and me. For example, they might perceive me as an inspector. Additionally, working in a different office might make it more difficult to observe and perceive teachers than from within. Out of these considerations, a role of vocabulary teacher for grade two and grade three students was created for me (also see 5.3 for discussion on my teaching duties). However, in relating to different people, my role could be defined in various ways, for instance:

- I saw myself primarily as a researcher;
- I was a PhD student from a UK university;
- I was a teacher for the students;
- I was a colleague for teachers;
- I was a staff member for the head teacher;
- I could also be perceived as a friend by teachers.

From another point of view, I was both a native and a stranger, an insider and an outsider in the ethnographic field. The ethnographic field is familiar and also strange to me (see Table 3.6). The familiarity allowed me to better understand the setting and its on-goings and the strangeness enabled me to discover phenomena that might be 'taken for granted' by the insiders.

---

[6] See glossary.

Table 3.6: My different levels of familiarity and strangeness in the setting

Familiarity	Strangeness
I am Chinese.	I have been living in the UK in the past three years (at the start of the study).
I am from the same city.	I have not lived in South China since 1998.
I studied in a Chinese high school.	I left high school in 1998 and have not been studying or working in a high school since.
I was an English teacher in China.	I taught in a college (for students aged 18-21) and had never taught in a high school.
I have been studying and researching in the field of ELT.	I learnt most theories in the UK, not China.
I had close contact with many people from the educational field in China.	This school is new to me and I did not know the people or practices in the school prior to the study (apart from the contact with the head teacher for gaining access).

3.5.2 Overt or covert research?

I decided to make my research overt. First of all, covert research seemed unethical to me. Research Ethics Framework of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (2005:1) states that "research staff and subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research…". I took covert research as deception and thought it morally and ethically uncomfortable. Second, although covert research may facilitate data collection at times, particularly in sensitive settings, overt research also has advantages over covert research on data collection. For example, it makes it possible to ask questions about taken-for-granted knowledge, which would seem strange if asked by a covert researcher. Thirdly, in covert studies, the research can be greatly affected and the researcher could be in danger if the covert role is discovered (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

The head teacher introduced me to teachers as a PhD student collecting data for my PhD thesis on teacher cognition and classroom practices. I did not reveal my interest in NEC implementation at this stage. My concern was, as my project had the support of the head teacher, that stating my interest in NEC implementation might give teachers the impression that I was an evaluator, particularly in a context where teachers had no previous experience of being involved in research projects.

At the stage of seeking teachers' permission to participate in this study (see 3.4.2), however, they were told about my interest in NEC implementation, teacher cognition and social context, although my words were carefully constructed (e.g. "I am very interested in teachers' thinking and practices, particularly in the context of the NEC implementation" rather than "I want to know your perceptions and practices of the NEC). Their potential involvement in the research was also explained. They were aware that my research activities might include observing classroom teaching, conducting interviews and making participant observational notes of their activities at all times. They were also aware that data would be used for my PhD thesis and in other potential publications. However, I was not able to give teachers more detailed information about the research. Firstly, ethnographic studies are evolving and progressive: it was difficult for me to state my exact agenda at the beginning of the research because it might be changed during the research process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Secondly, telling teachers my specific research purpose might alter the data, for example, they might respond according to their perceptions of what I wanted for my study (Richards, 2003).

However, teachers were progressively informed of the research, as the investigation became more focused and teachers more accustomed to their roles as research participants. Most importantly, before the data were disseminated through thesis, conferences and publications (e.g. Fang, 2009a; Fang, 2009b; Fang, forthcoming), teachers were given the completed account, thesis and writing, and informed of the use of data.

The informed consent was oral (rather than written). The consideration here was that, with no prior experience of being engaged in research projects, signing the informed consent sheet might be threatening to teachers, particularly in the context of China where the awareness of research ethics is relatively low in comparison with the UK. Although my motivation was to protect teachers' rights, teachers might read

it more as a sign of their obligation, seeing their duties in writing. Additionally, it might also leave teachers with the impression of undergoing a foreign procedure.

3.5.3 The presentation of self

Following symbolic interactionism, we all in one way or another present a constructed 'self' in our everyday lives in order to sustain 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959). The researcher's self presentation is considered crucially important in ethnographic studies (Acker, 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

As discussed earlier (see 3.4.2), I was perceived as someone alien at the beginning stage of the fieldwork. A teacher said to me one day:

> "Foreigners have a lot of misconceptions about Chinese education. Actually it is very different from what they think. I hope you are not one of them…" (Mr. Wang, Informal Conversation, 12/10/2007)

I knew his worry that I might be 'one of them' could be problematic. He might intentionally construct and present a particular 'self' that was different from the other 'self' which he thought was perceived by people outside China and presented in journals outside China. In order to leave the impression that I was not 'one of them', I played and stressed my native aspect (see Table 3.6 for an introduction of the different levels of my familiarity and strangeness). I tried to show the part of my 'self' that could feel, understand and sympathize with their lives and their work, in order to be accepted as 'one of us'.

The multiple identities (see 3.5.1) and multiple aspects of our personalities made it possible for me to present a 'self' that fitted in with the values and behaviour of the group (Crang and Cook, 2007). In order to support the development of rapport, I emphasized my identity as a colleague rather than a researcher. I also played my novice identity. In China, a PhD student is often regarded interchangeably as someone who has a PhD and I was often addressed as "Dr. Fang" by teachers. I often reminded them that I was a PhD student, which was different from a PhD. I also emphasised the point that they had been teaching for many years, but I did not have too much practical experience of teaching, particularly in high schools. Therefore, I had much to learn from them. Furthermore, I intentionally chose some questions to ask other teachers at times (e.g. whether my course materials were

appropriate for students' language level). With the novice 'self', teachers might feel more confident in verbalizing their thinking to me.

I also presented a 'self' that was professional. It was the first time that most teachers in the school had met someone like 'me': a researcher, a female PhD student, or a student from a UK university. Emotionally, I had the concern to maintain 'face' (Goffman, 1959) either in consideration of myself or the group that I belonged to: I wanted to leave a good impression about PhD students, about researchers and about British educational quality. Ethically Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that researchers need to consider the potential impact of their conduct on future researchers who may want to gain access to the setting. Technically, I needed to play up my credentials so that teachers would think it beneficial to discuss their teaching and thoughts with me (Bryman, 2001).

As time progressed, teachers seemed to have become accustomed to having me in the setting. Most of them seemed to have accepted me as 'one of us'. I started more obvious research activities in October 2007, for example, locating research participants, starting classroom observations and interviews. There was a good 'rapport' between me and the research participants, particularly at a later stage of the fieldwork. For example, teachers appeared happy to be studied and they seemed supportive of my research activities, in spite of their extremely busy schedule. A participant said to me:

> "You are so nice. I really wish I could be of some help to your research…I don't have any experience of being studied and I'm not sure whether the kind of data I provided was useful for you…" (Anya, Informal Conversation, 09/11/2007)

In recognizing the role of rapport in facilitating data collection, I also remained reflexive and critical about the rapport. For example, the above comment could also be read as a part of Anya's 'face work' (Goffman, 1959). It might also be a sign of over-rapport (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Over-rapport could lead to certain level of dangers, for example, the research participants may intentionally construct an answer in order to help the researcher. The researcher, on the other hand, may feel loath to ask some threatening questions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). I was cautious to maintain the balance of non-rapport and over-rapport, insider and outsider, and 'self' and 'other'. I played and emphasised different aspects of my identities that were best for the situation.

For example, at one evaluation, the Head of the English Department asked me to comment on another teacher because I had studied her. I withheld any comment by emphasising my identity as a researcher. On another occasion I took part in an evaluation meeting by emphasising my identity as a teacher. A carefully constructed self presentation enabled me to collect rich data. However, I am also aware of the situatedness of myself and my perceptions (Denzin, 1996) and I tried to take this into account in my data collection and analysis. These are introduced in following sections.

3.6. Data collection: process, techniques and rationale

A triangulation of methods was used for data collection. These include: participant observation, interview and documentation. This section introduces the process for my data collection, the use of data collection techniques during the process, along with my rationale for the choices. In ethnographic studies, research design is progressive, often informed by data collection (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In order to give readers a better view of how the research progressed, presentation is organised according to the research process.

As an ethnographer, one data collection technique was participant observation[7], which involved the observation of teachers' classroom practices and out of class practices. I arrived on 29th August, 2007 and left on 6th July, 2008. Many writers have identified different degrees of participation in observation (Cohen et al., 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Junker, 1960): Junker (1960) suggests a continuum according to level of participation (Figure 3.1), ranging from complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant to complete observer.

---

[7]Delamont (2004) mentions that some writers may use participant observation, ethnography and fieldwork interchangeably. However, I regard these as different concepts, for example, not all ethnographers observe directly (Silverman, 2006) and participant observational studies may not always be ethnographic. Additionally, ethnography entails both research process and research outcome while participant observation only refers to research process (Tedlock, 2000; Bryman, 2001). Therefore, participant observation is used as a data collection technique in this thesis.

Figure 3.1: Continuum of Participant Observation

According to level of participation

←———————————————————————————————————————→

| Complete | Participant | Observer as | Complete |
| Participant | as observer | participant | Observer |
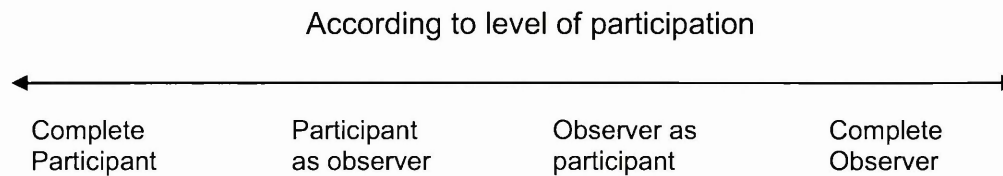
According to Cohen et al. (2007:404), the complete participant "takes on an insider role in the group being studied, and maybe does not even declare that he or she is a researcher". On the other hand, "with the complete observer, participants may not realize that they are being observed (e.g. using a one-way mirror)". My role fell somewhat between participant as observer and observer as participant. I considered my primary role was observer as participant because I participated in the everyday life of teachers with an aim to observe, although my role shifted in the continuum when it came to different activities. For example, my role was more of observer as participant on one occasion when I joined a discussion about laptops. However, the next minute the discussion progressed to the preparation of teaching materials. This had caught my ethnographer's eye, I started noting things for my research and my role thus moved on the continuum to be more participant as observer.

At the start of the study, I took notes of a wide range of areas, particularly norms, routines, patterns, interesting things or surprising events (e.g. those in contradiction to my previous assumptions, knowledge or the literature), considering that these data might be used at a later stage (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). All field notes were written in English and largely descriptive. Examples of key items were: the date and location of observations, the people present, and the interactions taking place. When possible, fieldnotes were taken during observations in order to best catch the event (Crang and Cook, 2007). However at some other occasions (e.g. dinner table) when it was not possible to take full notes, I noted down key words in order to remind myself of what happened. Participant observational fieldnotes provided data for me to see what was going on in the setting, and informed my subsequent research design.

The five research participants were the centre of participant observation, although other teachers' comments might also be used in the analysis to support

understanding. Additionally, classroom observations and interviews were also used to collect data about research participants. Classroom observations normally preceded interviews because teachers were used to being observed (each teacher needed to give demonstration lessons at times), but none had experience of being interviewed for research purposes. It would be more appropriate to conduct interviews after teachers were more used to their roles as research participants. I always sat in the back of the classroom, making my presence as invisible as possible, in order to reduce research reactivity for participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). All classroom observations were unstructured and I took "full field notes" (Bryman, 2001:305) during observations. Teachers' words appeared as they were said (e.g. in Chinese or in English) and my comments/explanations were written in English. They were transcribed as soon as the observations were completed (see Appendix 3 for an example of classroom observational fieldnotes). The rationale for my choice of unstructured classroom observation is discussed in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Rationale for unstructured observations

1. Unstructured classroom observation allowed me to attend to the complexity of classroom life in a holistic manner without the need to attend to fixed categories (Mason, 2002).
2. Given the explorative nature of ethnography, my purpose was to investigate and understand what was happening in the classroom, rather than imposing my presumptions and taken-for-granted knowledge (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Such purpose could best be achieved through unstructured observation.
3. The 'thick description' required by ethnographic presentation can best be obtained through unstructured classroom observation, which allows a large amount of detailed descriptive data to be collected (Bryman, 2001).

In order to gain a more comprehensive view of their classroom practices, the observations covered different units (topics) of teaching, different aspects of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, etc.) and different timing (e.g. before examination or after examination). Since I also had teaching duties, I asked teachers to complete entry logs of what they taught, when I was not able to

observe, in order to gain an idea how they taught the whole unit. A table with headings (date, unit, content/activity and remark) was designed to facilitate their documentation (see Appendix 4 for an example of entry logs). Entry logs also proved to be useful in counteracting my taken-for-granted knowledge. For example, in seeing teachers' explanations for the use of certain activities, I could gain ideas about areas I might have otherwise ignored.

In addition to observation, interviews were also used as a data collection technique. They served two main purposes: firstly, it was used to validate my understanding gained from observations (e.g. teachers' use of classroom activities) (Mason, 2002); secondly, it was used to generate data about teacher cognition (e.g. their views about the NEC and their beliefs in teaching), along with other areas (e.g. their past experiences) that were not observable (Bryman, 2001; Cohen et al., 2007).

May (1997) categorizes the interview into four types: structured interview, semi-structured interview, focused interview, and group interview. The techniques used in this study were semi-structured interviews and focused interviews. The rationale for employing semi-structured interviews and focused interviews in this study are explained in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Rationale for semi-structured interviews and focused interviews

1. My purpose is to explore the participants' views and experiences. Semi-structured and focused interviews enhance the flexibility of data collection by not pre-determining the conversation based on the researcher's pre-conceptions. They give the researcher a great opportunity to explore and discover interesting phenomena arising out of the conversation (Cohen et al., 2007) and allow the researcher to better and more fully represent participants' experiences, views, or feelings in their own languages (Fontana and Frey, 1994).

2. Since knowledge is situational and contextual, in-depth understanding can only be reached through the elaboration and discussion of concrete experiences (Mason, 2002). The Semi-structured interview and focused

---

interview allow such an agenda to be achieved.

3. In semi-structured and focused interviews, participants have the chance to freely express their views and the interviews proceed more like natural conversations. It may enable participants to better enjoy the interview process (Mason, 2002) and reduce research reactivity for them (Crang and Cook, 2007).

4. In semi-structured and focused interviews, the participants are encouraged to play an active part in the research. It allows the active involvement of the participants in communicating the sense-making process according to which they interpret their own experiences (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997).

Most of the interviews were conducted in my apartment (which was on campus), not the office, so that the interview would not be disturbed by the interactions in the office. Additionally, I was also concerned that teachers might carefully construct their talking in front of their colleagues to sustain "impression management" (Goffman, 1959). Due to the fact that all participants had no experience of being interviewed for research purposes, at the beginning stage, I only asked a small number of questions to participants. This was more like a discussion than an interview. These questions were also short and concrete (e.g. "Why did you leave this out?"). The number of interview questions gradually increased as the participants became more accustomed to being researched and communicating their ideas to me. On average, the time interval between the first observation and the first interview was about one week. At an initial stage, interviews mainly consisted of description, for example, participants talking about their learning experiences and working experiences. I felt that talking about experience was less threatening and easier than asking participants to elaborate their thinking or perceptions (e.g. "What is your view of the NEC?"). Interviews were conducted in Chinese. The interview notes were transcribed in Chinese, and translated into English. The reason why the interviews were transcribed in Chinese was because I was aware of possible distortion of meaning in translation and I wanted to keep the original words teachers said for future reference. From February 2008, all participants gradually accepted my request to record the conversations. Interviews were only translated into English because the recordings could be kept for sourcing teachers' words. An example of interview transcripts and translation is presented in

Appendix 5. Data were also enriched by informal conversations, e.g. dinner table talk and corridor talk.

In addition to data from the research participants, data also include fieldnotes for 38 demonstration lessons and teaching competitions (in school and outside school) and semi-structured interviews with 15 other teachers from the English department, in order to have a better understanding of the community in which the participants work. The interviews were recorded. Teachers were identified according to representation by gender, age group and teaching experience (Cohen et al., 2007). Questions were mainly about their educational background, teacher education, professional experiences, and perceptions of the NEC (see Appendix 6 for an example).

In addition, documentation was also used to support data collection. It served two purposes: firstly, to gain information about the NEC; secondly, to collect further data about teachers' views and practices. Table 3.9 illustrates types and sources of documentation in this study and examples of the data collected. The classification of the types of documentation was adapted from May (1997) and Brewer (2000). After this, the summary of data is presented in Table 3.10.

Table 3.9: Sources and Examples of Documentation

Information About:	Types of information	Examples	Purpose
The NEC	Official	■ High School English Curriculum Standard (HSECS) (MOE, 2003) ■ Examination outline and examination papers ■ Textbooks and teachers' handbooks ■ New policy announcements by the government	To obtain information about the NEC
	Personal	Articles written by some teachers to introduce the new NEC, for example, those written by the English teaching and research coordinator of the province	■ To gain a deeper understanding of the NEC ■ To serve as a source of references to other documents used by teachers
Teachers' understanding and implementation of the NEC	Solicited (produced for research purposes)	Entry logs of teaching	■ To access teachers' teaching when the researcher was unable to observe ■ To describe classroom experience from another perspective allowing researcher to discover information that may

65

			otherwise be taken-for-granted
		■ Lesson plans	■ To better understand teachers' planning process
Teachers' understanding and implementation of the NEC	Unsolicited (Data already in existence)	■ Instructional materials (e.g. PPT presentations) ■ Teacher-produced handouts for students	■ To gain a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' teaching
	from teachers in CHS	■ Teachers' observational field notes when observing other teachers in demonstration lessons	■ To understand what teachers perceive as important in teaching
		■ Published Papers	■ To gain more understanding about what teachers think and what they do

66

Table 3.10: Summary of Data

Research Participants	Time joined the study	Number of Observations	Numbers of Interviews	Numbers of Entry Logs		Other
Anya	October 2007	15	16	12		4 Published articles + 3 public speeches
Baijuan	December 2007	16	10	4	Informal Conversations	2 Demonstration Lessons
Caili	November 2007	16	12	9		1 Demonstration Lesson
Denghua	April 2008	10	6			1 Demonstration Lesson
Enchu	March 2008	12	9	8		1 Demonstration Lesson

In addition:

- 38 demonstration lessons and lessons for teaching competitions[8] of teachers in the school and other schools
- 19 powerpoint presentations of teaching plan competitions[9] of teachers in the school and other schools
- 15 interviews with other teachers in the English Department
- 1 interview with the Teaching and Research Co-ordinator of the County Education Committee
- Fieldnotes of participant observational data: about 250,000 words
- Documentation

67

[8] See glossary.
[9] See glossary.

After the interviews were transcribed and translated, I gave teachers the translation for validation. The motivation was that:

> "If the intent is to give an account of how the participants in a situation see it, then checking the account with the participants (or with a selected "informant") is a vital step". (Phillips, 1987:20, in Borg, 1998:34)

Due to the interplay between experiences, accounts and interpretations (Denzin, 1996), there might be slippage between teachers' accounts and my interpretations, and the fact that their words were translated into English might have added to the slippage due to the more complicated process of interplay.

At the beginning of the study, Anya did not make any changes to or comments on the interview transcripts and Caili's validation was confined to a few grammar changes. Similar experience is also reported in Borg's (1998) PhD thesis. In order to encourage the participants to work on the validation, he returned interview transcripts to teachers with further questions for them to clarify or to elaborate issues raised during interviews and discovered that this strategy helped him to gain richer data and deeper understanding. I subsequently adopted his strategy which proved to be helpful in generating richer data and validating participants' voices. Apart from motivating the participants to reflect about the interview transcripts, another function of having further questions accompanying interview transcripts was that it motivated participants to reflect. This point is illustrated in the following data. Comment 1 is a statement from participant four Denghua's interview data, for which I needed his validation of my understanding. On reading my questions (see comment 2), he clarified his point (see comment 3).

1. Denghua: "...Most of the time, I search information on the Internet..." (Interview, 19/06/2008)
2. Researcher: So, the Internet is your most frequent source for information? What about others? Reading books? Why? (Transcription, 21/06/2008)
3. Denghua: Although I use the Internet very frequently, I think discussion with colleagues may be more frequent for me? At least it's more useful for me! Because I think that this discussion is more relevant to my work. (Validation, 23/06/2008)

Participant validation with accompanied questions thus helps me to get closer to the 'truthfulness' of their meanings. However, I was also aware of the limitations of participant validation. As argued many times in this thesis, knowledge and understanding is situated (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). What the informant can offer is only a single and embedded perspective on some aspects of their complex lifeworld. Their accounts are bound to be situated and limited because there may

be conditions or understanding unimagined (Rock, 2001). Furthermore, participants might be too polite to challenge what I said because of considerations of 'face' (Hwang, 1987). They might also have their own understanding of how they wanted to be represented and presented in order to sustain their 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959). Caili corrected what she perceived as grammar mistakes in her words which may be an example of how they want to be represented (e.g. she was concerned that her words would appear on my thesis and she did not want to leave the impression that she made grammar mistakes). Therefore, the participants' validated transcription is not taken as the final account. It is regarded only as a voice, a voice that is subject to further validation and analysis in context.

3.7 Data organisation and analysis

In this study, concepts from grounded theory and the work of Pierre Bourdieu were used to analyse and present the data.

3.7.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory was used as a guiding tool for data analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in this research. It was used because principles of the grounded theory, such as theory should be grounded in data and data analysis should take place alongside data collection, are consistent with the explorative, progressive and interactive nature of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Although the initial model of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss,1967) is largely positivist in nature, it has been moving towards new directions. Charmaz (2005) proposes a constructivist grounded theory, which adopts grounded theory guidelines as tools but does not subscribe to the objectivist, positivist assumptions in its earlier formulations. My stance is similar to Charmaz's.

Using grounded theory to assist analysis for my ethnographic enquiry, I applied the guidelines suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), for example, theories emerge from data, and data analysis feeds into research design and data collection. However, the essential difference is that I did not aim to reach "theoretical saturation" through a hypothesis-testing way of working. I did not aim to generalise

the patterns to a wider population, but to understand and explore the reasons behind the patterns. Grounded theory was treated only as a tool to help me to build theories from the data. My enquiry was assisted, but not confined by categories and concepts. In another word, apart from "look for the data", most importantly, I also "look at data" (Robrecht, 1995:171). My objective was to build a system of themes that emerge from the data, before, during, and after data collection, that represent the practical context of teachers' work and their experiences of teaching the NEC. The process for my use of grounded theory in my data analysis is illustrated below:

1. I started my research with a framework of potential themes based on my literature review (see chapter 2). From this came three broad themes:
   (1) Teachers' implementation of the NEC
      A. Classroom practices
      B. Out of class practices
   (2) Themes underlying practices
      A. Teacher cognition
      B. Social context
2. I analysed each participant's data and looked for themes and patterns in the data, to see how these linked with the broad themes in 1 above. However, some data did not fall into the categories and they were separately presented under the title: other themes. From this, I analysed themes for each teacher and wrote individual reports for them. During this process, teachers' voices were maximally kept, for example, through the use of "in vivo" (see titles with double quotation marks) (Richards, 2005). Examples of the themes are:

Participant one Anya:
   (1) Teaching the NEC
      A. Frequent and creative use of TBLT and other CLT activities
      B. Focus on form
      C. Teaching differently in class one and class two
      D. Extending class hours
   (2) Themes underlying Anya's practices
      A. "Found resonance in the NEC"
      B. Two voices in mind
      C. Students' different views about Anya's teaching

    D. "Teachers are tailors of the textbook"

  (3) Other themes

    A. An era of change

Participant two Baijuan:

(1) Teaching the NEC

  A. Incorporation of tasks

  B. Development of all-round skills

  C. Emphasis on form

  D. Heavy workload

(2) Themes underlying Baijuan's practices

  A. "Examination preparation is more needed than skills development"

  B. Activities as a way to please students

  C. "Homework load is a strategy for dealing with low-motivated students"

  D. 'What is good' versus 'what works'

  E. Indifference to the curriculum change

(3) Other themes

  A. Baijuan's three moments of change

  B. Anya's Influence as a Role Model

During the process of writing, words frequently used by teachers were also captured in order to better represent teachers' voices and to show their work and life more vividly. Examples are:

- "Advanced" [先进]: Advanced is often used by teachers to describe the CLT approach characterising CLT as a recently developed idea and as superior to other approaches.

- What is "good" [好]: This phrase is also recurrently used by teachers, although carrying different meanings for different teachers, or even for the same teacher at different times. Examples are: good for students' language development and consistent with official discourse (also see 6.5).

- "Ride the train" [开火车]: A classroom teaching style, in which teachers select students to answer questions one after another according to their seats (e.g. from front to back, from left to right).

- "Big weekend" [大周]: The weekends when students and teachers have both Saturday and Sunday off from school.
- "Small weekend" [小周]: The weekends when students and teachers have to work on Saturdays.

After each case was written up, I gave it to teachers and asked them to comment on my writing (e.g. interpretation, representation and category). As discussed previously, teachers' validation was not undertaken as a test of 'truth' but as an additional method for insight and reflection, and also to ensure the research is ethical.

3. During the process of writing, repetition seemed to have become a main issue (e.g. there were similar accounts in Anya and Baijuan's reports), although these seemed to be natural due to the patterns in their teaching. I was also concerned about exceeding word limit in the thesis (e.g. the word count for Anya was 6,837 and for Baijuan 7,162). Furthermore, when the reports for all five research participants were written up, the connections between participants were more compelling for me. Therefore, it became possible and desirable to reorganise analysis in order for issues to be compared and organised into larger components. In this stage, I reorganised data according to the patterns that captured and described teachers' thinking and practices.

   (1) Teaching the NEC
       A. Similarity in teaching
       B. Focus on form
       C. Use of CLT approaches
       D. Extend class hours
       E. Long working hours
       F. Reciting from memory
       G. Demonstration lessons and everyday practice
       H. Teaching differently in different classes
   (2) Themes underlying practices
       A. Knowledge of the NEC
       B. Perceptions of the NEC
       C. Attitudes towards the NEC
       D. Challenges brought by the NEC
       E. 'What is good' versus 'what works'

F. New emotions associated with teaching the NEC

G. Class culture

(3) Other themes

A. Teacher development

B. Culture of teaching

These themes largely informed the presentation of the thesis. However, these themes were largely descriptive. Although they assisted with the identification and description of the complexity inherent in teachers' practices, I lacked a coherent theory to link them together. What was important to me was to understand how and why they interacted and the implications of that interaction for teachers' practices. In order to better make sense of the research findings, the work of Pierre Bourdieu was used to assist analysis in order to grasp and represent the complexity of teachers' work in a more theoretical way. This is discussed in the following sub-section.

3.7.2 The conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu

In my efforts to better understand teachers' thinking and practices, the conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu (1992, 1986, 1998) proves an ideal tool in supporting my analysis. Bourdieu proposes a dialectical relationship between objective structures and subjective phenomena: his work focuses on the visible social world of practice, and attempts to transcend epistemological couples: agency-structure, micro-macro and subjectivism-objectivism. Four concepts are central in Bourdieu's concept: field, habitus, capital and practice. They are used to assist analysis in this thesis.

Field

Bourdieu defines field as the social arena in which individuals struggle or manoeuvre for access to capital (Jenkins, 1992). Each field has its own logic and taken-for-granted structure of necessity and relevance that is both the product and the producer of habitus, specific and appropriate to the field (ibid). A field, therefore, is a structured system of social positions that defines the situation for its occupants, with the position interacting with the habitus to produce actions (Bourdieu, 1998; Jenkins, 1992).

There are various fields within the social world (for example, political, sports and ELT). In the field of ELT, for example, the occupants of positions may either be agents (e.g. teachers, learners or ELT researchers) or institutions (e.g. schools, governing bodies or professional associations) and they are constrained by the structure of the field (e.g. legislation, policies, relationships, discourses and practices). Therefore, ELT teachers are recognisable as ELT teachers and act accordingly, as do students and ELT researchers. On the other hand, certain ELT strategies may be more highly recognised than others and therefore more likely to be adopted and practised.

In addition, each field is immersed in its own institutional field of power, and forms part of the overall social space. Consequently, social reality is composed of multiple fields, with a relationship with one another where there are points of contact and overlap (Bourdieu, 1998). Therefore, the ELT field may be influenced by the field of education, the field of linguistics and the field of politics.

Practice

Bourdieu has used a number of terms to refer to practice, for example, social interaction, everyday life and social behaviour (Jenkins, 1992). In the field of ELT, examples of practices are teachers' classroom teaching, their interactions with students or the investigations conducted by ELT researchers.

Bourdieu perceives practice as the outcome of the dialectical relationship between structure and agency: "practice is always informed by a sense of agency (the ability to understand and control our own actions), but that the possibilities of agency must be understood and contextualized in terms of its relation to the objective structures of a culture" (Webb et al., 2002:36). Therefore, practice is neither objectively determined nor produced by free will (Bourdieu, 1998). For Bourdieu, practice is largely the result of the interplay between field and habitus (Webb et al., 2002). The positions people take are determined by the interplay of their habitus and capital (Jenkins, 1992).

Habitus

Habitus is defined by Bourdieu (1998) as a system of dispositions through which we perceive, judge and act in the world. Bourdieu (1992) argues that the habitus is not only a state of mind but also a bodily state of being. The body is a repository of

ingrained and durable positions and this incorporation of our history is demonstrated, for instance, in the differences in posture that men and women adopt, and in the way a teacher talks to his or her students.

These dispositions are acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings, via the internalisation of external constraints and possibilities (Bourdieu, 1998). Habitus is considered a bridge that links structure and agency (Webb et al., 2002). Bourdieu describes this dialectically as "the product of the internalisation of the structures" (Bourdieu 1989, p.18) of the social world, and as "internalised, embodied, social structures" (Bourdieu, 1984:468). For example, teachers are familiar with all the rules, both written and unwritten. They are aware of various circumstances that influence or determine their teaching and how they and their students will be judged. Since habitus is acquired as a result of occupation of a position within the field, not everyone has the same habitus and those who occupy the same or similar positions within the field are likely to have more similar habitus (ibid).

Capital

Capital is used by Bourdieu (1986) as a system of exchange that can include material goods and symbolic things. According to Bourdieu, the amount of capital a person has decides his or her positions in the field, and the system of dispositions he or she acquires (Bourdieu, 1998). Therefore, it is central in understanding people's habitus and practice. Bourdieu (1986) has suggested many forms of capital and the most cited forms seem to be economic capital (this can be immediately and directly converted to money), social capital (e.g. social positions and social connections), cultural capital (e.g. knowledge and educational credentials) and symbolic capital (e.g. honour and prestige). Bourdieu (ibid) further distinguishes between three forms of cultural capital: objectified cultural capital, which refers to objects that require special cultural abilities to appreciate; embodied cultural capital, which is the disposition to appreciate and understand cultural goods; and institutionalised cultural capital, which refers to educational credentials. For a well-known ELT researcher, for example, he or she has embodied cultural capital (knowledge and skills in ELT), which enables him or her to appreciate objectified cultural capital (e.g. be able to understand theories in ELT books) and to gain institutionalised cultural capita (e.g. the educational credentials he receives), symbolic capital (the fame and prestige he receives), social capital (e.g. the social

75

positions) and economic capital (e.g. remuneration received for publishing a book or giving a speech). Bourdieu (1998) asserts that society is structured along differences in the distribution of capital, with individuals constantly striving to maximise their capital. Positions in the field are dependent on the volume and composition of the capital possessed by agents (Bourdieu, 1986).

3.8 Ethics

This section considers ethics in the research. Creswell (2003) states that researchers need to consider ethical issues before the research, during the research and after the research. In this study, research ethics is ensured and strictly followed in the whole process, as illustrated in Table 3.11:

Table 3.11: Ethical considerations in the research

Research Stage	Examples of Ethical Considerations
Before research	■ This study is considered to have potential benefits for the research participants, and for other teachers in the school or from other schools (Punch, 1998) ■ This study is based on the ideology that teachers are competent individuals and it aimed to explore the world as teachers felt and experienced, rather than impose the researcher's authoritative role on it (Acker, 1999).
During research	■ Relevant authorities were consulted and necessary approval was obtained to start the study (Robinson, 1993). ■ Explicit authorization from the school and the research participants was obtained (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995)[10]. ■ The participation was voluntary and participants were informed of the right to withdraw at any time (Vaus, 2001). ■ The anonymity of the research participants and the setting is protected (Vaus, 2001): all the names used are not real names and detailed description of the setting is minimized to avoid easy identification.

---

[10] The informed consent was oral rather than written, see 3.5.2 for rationale and more discussion.

	- A fairer and fuller representation of the participants' perspectives was enabled through research design such as qualitative interview, which places the participants on a par with the researcher and allows the participants to expand or elaborate their thinking (Mason, 2002). - Participant validation (Mason, 2002): Observational field notes and interview transcriptions were given to participants for validation so that unforeseen and unseen events can be taken account of and the accounts are more consistent with teachers' own perspectives. - Ensure privacy (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007): Many interviews were conducted in my apartment to ensure participants' comments were not heard by others during the interview and the data were not revealed to any third party. - Protect the participants against harm (Crang and Cook, 2007): They were asked questions within their comfortable zones and the researcher endeavoured to suit the participants' needs, for example, arrange interviews at a time when the participant was less busy. - Protect against exploitation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007): Things were done in return for the participants, for example, help them marking examination papers. - Guard against deception (Bryman, 2001): participants were aware of being researched and they were informed of my identity, my research purpose, their roles and involvement in the research and the potential use of data. - Consider consequences for potential researchers in the future (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007): This was the first time that many of the teachers had met a researcher and a positive image was maintained to ensure that negotiation of access by researchers in the future might be facilitated.
After research	- Report progress to teachers (Robinson, 1993): My report was sent to teachers for validation to make sure their views are consistently represented, and they had the right to withdraw any data that they did not wish to be used.

3.9 Reflection

This section reflects on some of my considerations in the field, focusing on two particular areas: making the familiar strange and dilemmas in the field.

3.9.1 Making the familiar strange

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:9) illustrate how Schutz's discussion of the stranger points to two kinds of strategies in ethnography, namely the 'anthropological destrangement' in which one tries to make the unknown known and 'anthropological estrangement' in which one tries to make the known unknown. With regard to these concerns, I believe I have my advantages both as an insider and an outsider (see Table 3.6). On one hand, my familiarity with education in China prevented me from having cultural shock, and facilitated my establishment of rapport and sense-making about teachers' lives. On the other hand, my strangeness enabled me to question some taken-for-granted knowledge that might otherwise be ignored by complete insiders (Crang and Cook, 2007).

However, I was also aware of the 'situatedness' of perception and understanding and how it might have affected my taken-for-granted knowledge. For example, I used to conceive of 'reciting from memory' as a part of Chinese culture, based on my experience both as a student and a teacher in China, and my reading of the literature on Chinese learning culture (e.g. Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Watkins and Biggs, 1996). I took this practice for granted at an early stage of the fieldwork. It was only when I visited two other schools in the province that I realized such practice was not shared by all schools. Additionally, the discussion with my supervisors also made me realize that some British schools also had such practice.

The field served as a place for me to collect information about teachers and also to become more conscious of my presuppositions. As more information unfolded, I became more aware of my presuppositions and taken-for-granted knowledge, and found it easier to bracket my presuppositions (Maso, 1995). The several participants also made it possible for me to discover some behaviour that I might otherwise taken for granted in a single case study of one teacher. Therefore, I was cautious to 'ground' my data in the phenomena observed in the field, to remain

open to features that unfold in the process of study, to triangulate my data from different sources and different perspectives, to guard against jumping too quickly to a conclusion (Maso, 2001). I also tried to be self-critical and reflexive in order to gain a fuller and richer understanding of teachers' practices. However, due to the situatedness of perceptions and knowledge, there may still be areas where I was not able to uncover my taken-for-granted knowledge.

3.9.2 Dilemmas in the field

The fieldwork was largely successful. I collected rich data, answered my research questions and gained more thinking. However, there were still dilemmas in this research, particularly concerned with the researcher's multiple roles as a researcher, teacher and colleague in the setting.

A researcher and a teacher

Teaching occupied a large amount of time, although the head teacher intentionally gave me fewer responsibilities than other teachers have. I needed to plan my teaching, conduct it and assess students' achievements now and then. I was aware that my most important role should be a researcher. However, when I faced over 700 students, I felt I needed to do more for them. Although I drew boundaries in time and space between teaching and researching, for example, I devoted most of my office hours (apart from observations and interviews) to teaching, I still felt I did not do enough for my students when I saw other teachers spend so many hours per day on teaching. The time and space boundaries helped technically, but the dilemma was still difficult to resolve.

A researcher and a colleague

As the research progressed, teachers seemed gradually to change their views of me and acted differently towards me. In the beginning, they might have perceived me as an expert, an authority, or a scholar, and acted warily. At a later stage, as rapport seemed to develop, they appeared to treat me more as a colleague or a friend. This helped me to collect a lot of interesting data, but posed other issues, in particular those in relation to ethics. Some examples follow.

- Misinterpretation of different identities: Although research participants and other teachers were aware of my identity and research purpose, as time progressed, especially after the rapport was built, they might have accepted me more as a

colleague, or someone they enjoyed talking to. My researcher role became less dominant, particularly in informal conversations. I could have reminded them during the informal conversations that I might be collecting data, but this would definitely have destroyed the informal atmosphere, which I did not want for either interaction or research. As a solution, I sought teachers' validation and permission to use these data, but because of the rapport, were they in a position where they felt sorry to say no because I had already transcribed the data?

- Free will or coercion: My participants all voluntarily participated in the study and they were informed of the right to withdraw at any time. However, I sought their permission to participate in the study after the rapport was built. I wondered whether it was their free will or it was a kind of coercion? Would they feel sorry to say no because of the rapport?

- The eagerness to help: One of the researchers told me that she felt there was a need to do something for me because I was so nice. She also said she wanted to provide more "good" and "helpful" data for me in order to help with my research. Unfamiliar with Western ways of doing research, especially ethnography, she might have thought that it would be useful to provide some "expert" data so that my research would be acceptable.

- Extra pressure brought to teachers: as will be shown in chapter 5-7, teachers in this study have busy schedule and I was concerned that participating in this study might bring extra pressure to them.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter introduced my theoretical considerations and their implications for my research design; discussed the data collection and analysis techniques I used for my study along with my rationale for choices; described procedures that I followed, along with my reflection in the field. It also discussed my ethical considerations before research, during research and after research and reflected on my fieldwork. The next chapter discusses the social context of teachers' practices.

CHAPTER 4: THE CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND FOR THE NEW ENGLISH CURRICULUM (NEC)

The influence of social context in education policy is highly recognised by many researchers (Ball, 1994; Holliday, 1994; Pennycook, 1989). Ball (1994) has emphasised how curriculum implementation is related to political and economic factors. Holliday (1994) has described the close relationship between curriculum design and host institution culture. He has identified how the conflict between the new curriculum and host educational environment can result in "tissue rejection" in which only the surface action of implementation is observed (Holliday, 1992). In a more recent work, Fullan (2007:84) argues that educational change is "technically simple and socially complex" and there are various sources relating to the initiation and implementation of new curriculums. In order for the readers to better understand the new English curriculum (NEC) and identify its potential implication for teachers' practices, this section deals with the education context in China, namely field in Bourdieu's (1998) term. The emphasis of discussion is on issues that may be most relevant to the development and implementation of the NEC. The first section discusses some salient features of the Chinese education system. The second section investigates the initiatives of the NEC. The third section explores the NEC framework of concepts, and the fourth section examines public response to the NEC. Scope of this chapter is presented in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1 Scope of chapter 4

4.1 Salient features of the Chinese education system

    4.1.1 The significance of education

    4.1.2 The hierarchical education system

    4.1.3 Highly competitive education environment

    4.1.4 NUEE and high school education in China

4.2 Initiatives of the NEC

    4.2.1 Political agenda

    4.2.2 Critique of China's education system and reform as a response

4.3 The new English curriculum (NEC) framework of concepts

    4.3.1 New objective: all-around ability to use English

    4.3.2 Inductive approach: try, explore, discover and practice

    4.3.3 Catering for individual differences

4.1 Salient features of the Chinese education system

This section discusses some salient features of the Chinese education system that are believed to be closely related to the development and implementation of the NEC. Although the focus of analysis is the macro context at the national level, data collected at the school for this ethnographic study is also used to illustrate and support arguments.

4.1.1 The significance of education

Chinese conceptions of education have been largely influenced by Confucian thinking (Scollon, 1999; Watkins and Biggs, 1996). Education is perceived as important not only for cultivating people but also for strengthening a nation (On, 1996). The significance of education has been well internalised throughout Chinese society, even by those who themselves have not received any schooling (Cheng, 2000), as shown in the saying "nothing is superior to being well educated [万般皆下品，唯有读书高]". Confucius sees a utilitarian function of education: that is, education can bring social recognition and material rewards (Zhu, 1992). This is illustrated in the saying "to be found in the books are golden mansions, beautiful wives and tons of corns [书有自有黄金屋，书中自有颜如玉，书中自有千钟粟]". These perceived functions and benefits of education have provided generations of Chinese with powerful motivating forces to aspire to success in education (Hu, 2002). For example, for 1,300 years (605-1905), it seems a popular dream for many Chinese to pass the competitive civil service examination [科考] and return to their hometown with higher prestige [衣锦还乡] (Yu and Suen, 2005).

The Chinese society under Confucian tradition is also highly hierarchical. Although the word 'class' is seldom used nowadays in China, the hierarchical nature of the society is obvious. The main evidence of the social hierarchy is the legal resident status [户口] system (shown in Table 4.2).

82

Table 4.2: Chinese legal resident status system

Superior		Subordinate	
Social Class	Explanation or Examples	Social Class	Explanation or Examples
Urban citizen	People live in the cities	**Rural citizen**	People live in the rural areas
Non-peasant family	People with formal jobs e.g. teachers, doctors or government officers	**Peasant family**	People without formal jobs, e.g. peasants and people work for private enterprises
cadre	People with superior positions, e.g. mayor, director of the DOE	**non-cadre**	People without superior positions, e.g. teachers and doctors

The left columns represent the superior class and right columns signify the subordinate class. The status in the hierarchy is closely related to the quality of living, from housing and job opportunities to health service welfare and children's education. For example, until recently urban non-peasant citizens have enjoyed free health care while rural peasant citizens have to pay for the health service (the system is changing as a result of the health service system reform). Another example is that many job opportunities are only open to people with urban non-peasant residential status. Additionally, children's resident status follows their parents. Therefore, once social promotion is achieved, it is considered beneficial for all future generations (Yu and Suen, 2005).

Pragmatically, in current China, education, particularly examination, is the main way (if not the only way) for dominated groups to achieve social promotion (Yu and Suen, 2005). Among all the examinations, National University Entrance Examination (NUEE) is considered the most powerful one that has played a pivotal role in the social transformation. Through passing NUEE, students from rural areas and peasant families will be allowed to change their legal resident status to urban non-peasant residents. It is the prerequisite for working in many state-owned enterprises and government organisations and is otherwise very difficult to obtain. Therefore, NUEE is regarded by many people as a life-changing endeavour for students and their families (Yu and Suen, 2005). Since NUEE is so important, the pre-university stage (high school) is generally regarded in China as the most crucial stage of schooling. This is one of the reasons why this investigation is focused on high school ELT. Another reason is that high school is often at the forefront of China's educational reform and it has experienced more changes than many other stages of schooling (Hu, 2002). It is therefore considered an interesting stage of investigation. Before furthering investigation of the NUEE and the high school education in China, the next two sections examine the education system and education environment of China in order to give readers a better idea of the context.

4.1.2 The hierarchical education system

The stages of schooling in China are illustrated in Figure 4.1. As is shown in the figure, educational institutions are highly hierarchical. For example, higher institutions are graded into four hierarchical levels: national key universities, provincial key universities, provincial common universities and colleges. Schools are graded into at least two levels: key schools and non-key schools.

The grading is very often stricter than shown in the figure. For example, in LQ, the city where the school for this ethnographic study is located, the 82 high schools are graded into four levels: grade 1 key schools, grade 2 key schools, grade 3 key schools and non-key schools. The criteria for grading include teaching facilities, previous students' academic performances, and staff members' qualifications and achievements. The higher on the hierarchy, the more power is enjoyed by the institution, for example, selection of students.

Figure 4.1: Stages of Schooling in China
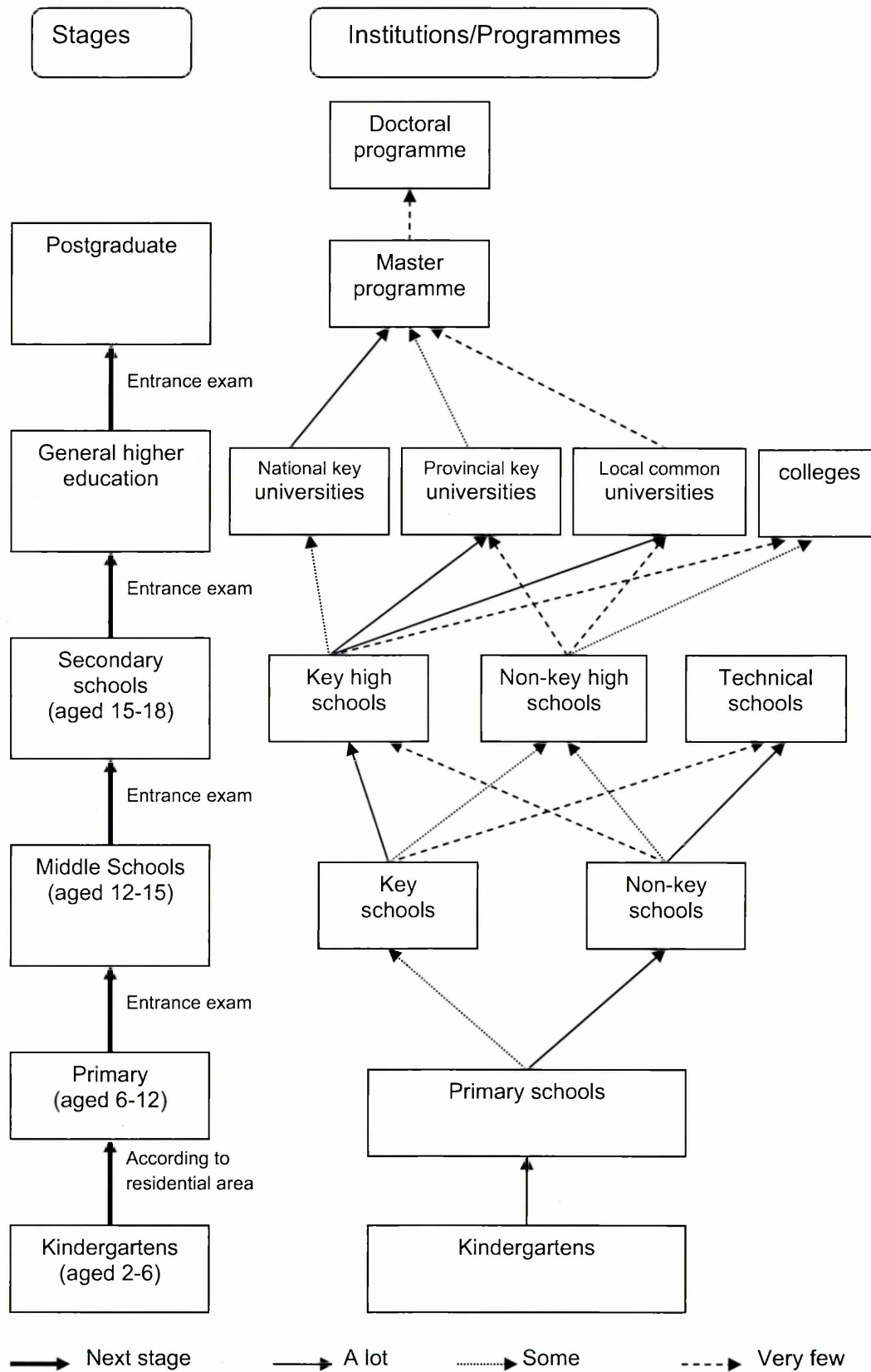
Sources of information: MOE (2009) and National Bureau of Statistics of China (2009)

Associated with the hierarchy of institutions is the hierarchy of students. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, apart from admission to primary schools (according to residential areas), the admission to all other levels is dependent on entrance examinations. Those students with higher scores will be admitted to higher positioned institutions (e.g. key schools or national key universities) and enjoy better further education or employment opportunities (illustrated by the arrows in the figure). Those with lower scores will be admitted to lower positioned institutions (e.g. non-key schools or colleges) and their opportunities of further education and employment are less promising (see section 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 for further discussion). Those with even lower scores will not have opportunities for continued education, apart from the compulsory stage of primary and middle school. There is also a hierarchy of students in the same school, as evidenced in CHS, the school for this ethnographic study. Students are graded to study in 'top classes' and 'ordinary classes' based on their scores in the high school entrance examination. Therefore, the task for most students is not merely to be accepted to a further education institution, but to be accepted to institutions with high ranking. It is not merely to pass examinations but to pass examinations with high scores.

Teachers are also graded and hierarchically positioned. Apart from their different institutional positions (e.g. head teacher vs. class teacher; 'top class' teacher vs. 'ordinary class' teacher), teachers are also graded into four professional levels (expert, senior[11], level 1 and level 2) according to their teaching experiences, their publications, their (students') achievements and, for expert and senior teachers, an anonymous vote in school and in the city (see further discussion in 5.4).

Another level of hierarchy is the management structure within the educational field. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the education administration is highly hierarchical. Schools are at the bottom level, below at least four levels of hierarchical government institutions. At the highest level, the MOE plays a central role in the planning of education policies (e.g. the NEC is initiated and developed by the MOE). Subordinate to the MOE are Provincial Department of Education, City Education Bureau and Local County Education Committee. These government organisations all play a role in the adoption, dissemination and implementation of the NEC before it is transmitted to the school level.

---

[11] See glossary for explanation of expert teacher and senior teacher.

Figure 4.2: Management structure in China's education system


```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Ministry of Education (MOE)        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│     Provincial Department of Education    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           City Education Bureau           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Local County Education Committee     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 Schools                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

──────▶ Under the management of
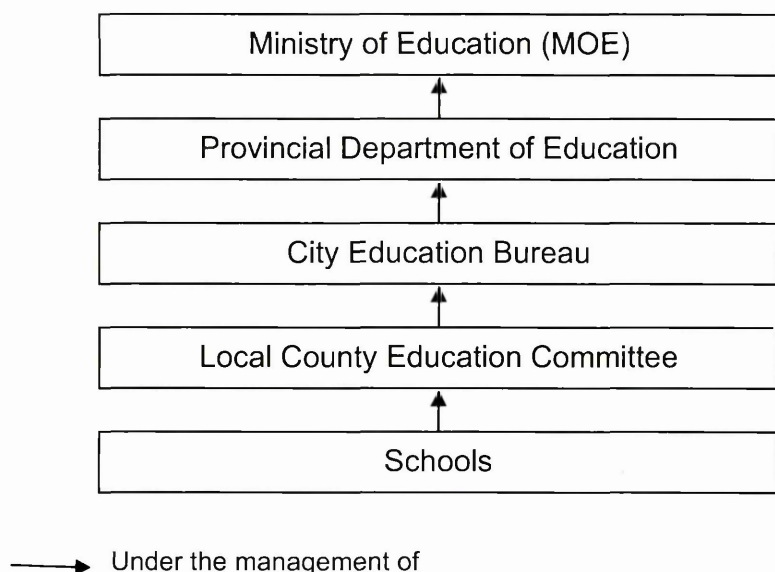
4.1.3 Highly competitive education environment

Section 4.1.1 discusses that the ideological influence of Confucian thinking and the pragmatic function education plays in social upgrading has made education a significant undertaking in China. Section 4.1.2 shows that the Chinese education system is highly hierarchical. These, in addition to the large population in China, may have made the education environment rather competitive in China. According to statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2008), presently less than 15% of students have the opportunity to enter Chinese higher education. The opportunities for going to key schools and key universities are even more limited. For example, in September 2008, only 5% of the middle school graduates in LQ were accepted for key high schools (Deputy Head Teacher, Informal Conversation, 02/07/2008). Therefore, students have to go through severe competitions in order to gain education opportunities, particularly opportunities to study in higher positioned institutions.

In addition to the competition between students, the competition between institutions is also intense. This argument is supported by the findings collected during the ethnographic study. As introduced earlier, the 82 high schools in LQ are graded into four levels by the Provincial DOE. However, on top of the formal league table is another level of unwritten league table given by locals, particularly parents.

At the centre of the ranking seems to be the 15 grade 1 key schools because students with higher academic performance seem to be more concerned about finding a good school in the hope of entering a prestigious university. Figure 4.3 seems to represent most locals' views of ranking according to data collected from fieldwork and information collected from discussion on Internet forums[12].

The main criteria of judging schools seem to be their students' performances in examinations, particularly the NUEE. CHS is currently on the top of the ranking because of the good NUEE performance CHS students have achieved in the past few years. For example, the city's 2007 and 2008 NUEE champions are all from CHS. Although there is no direct evidence to establish the relationship between school achievements and economic situation, the ranking does suggest there is a potential link between the two. Counties A, B, C and D are more economically developed than other counties and schools in these counties also rank higher than schools in other counties. With a better economic situation, they are more likely to be in a better position to develop education, for example, increase salary to attract teachers from other cities and develop modern teaching resources to support teaching and learning.

Figure 4.3: Ranking table of schools in LQ according to local's view

CHS (in county A) & ZT High School (in county B)

2 Schools in county B & a school in county C

Other schools in county A, B, C & D

Schools in county E, F, G, H & I
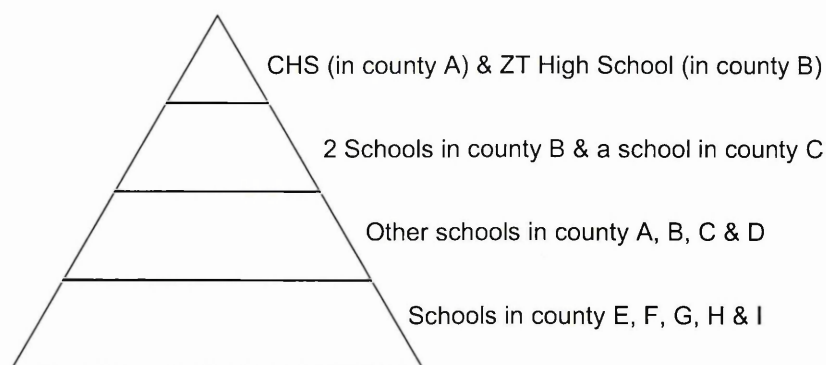
Since the ranking is closely related to students' scores, it is changing as a result of the changes in students' academic performance. For example, ZT High School (in County B) used to rank ahead of CHS, but currently ZT High School and CHS are in the same place. Although CHS currently stays top on the table, it has pressure from two sources. One source of pressure is from ZT High School, which has very close academic results to CHS. Another source of pressure is from EZ High School in the

---

[12] The main forum I visited is LQ city forum. The web address is not given in order to ensure anonymity. Although there are different opinions regarding the ranking, the ranking presented in Figure 4.3 is believed to represent the views of the majority.

same county (County A), which uses high financial incentive (e.g. free tuition fees) to attract students.

One reason why the league table is taken seriously by schools is perhaps because it often directs parents' selection of schools for their children. In addition to top schools' selection of students, students with high academic performance are also well placed in selecting schools. The need to attract students with better academic performance, along with the economic capital (tuition fee), symbolic capital (prestige brought by students' high academic performance) and cultural capital (better learning environment brought by high-performing students) makes the competition between schools, between County Education Committees and City Education Bureaus very intense.

4.1.4 NUEE and high school education in China

This section introduces NUEE and high school education in China. According to information provided by National Bureau of Statistics of China (2008), there are 15,681 high schools in China, providing education for 25,224,008 students and the number of teaching staff is 1,443,104. Therefore, the teacher-student ratio is 17.48:1. The average class size is between 50 and 60.

NUEE is considered as the most important stage in high school education. As previously discussed, it is regarded by many people as a life-changing endeavour (see 4.1.1). Apart from the role of social upgrading, NUEE scores also relate to the level of higher institutions to which students can be accepted, along with the tuition fees they have to pay, for example, students with lower scores often have to pay higher tuition fees for studying in universities (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002). Additionally, symbolic capital is often associated with students with the highest NUEE scores. It is frequently seen in many cities that the names of top NUEE scorers are posted locally at public places to honour their successes in the examinations. In CHS, for instance, a student with the highest NUEE score in the city and his parents were interviewed by all local news agencies and his name constantly appeared on TV and newspapers (Fieldnotes, 29/06/2008).

The NUEE is described as a "highly centralised testing system" by Yu and Suen (2005:20). On June 6th, 7th and 8th each year, students across the entire country

take the same examination. Prior to 2003, the examination papers were the same across the entire country, set up by the MOE. Since 2003, some provinces are allowed by the MOE to set their own examination papers (in 2009, the number has risen to 18 out of 34 provinces in China). The tested subjects of the NUEE are reflected in the "3+X" system. This system requires all students to take examinations on three common areas: Chinese language, mathematics and foreign language. 95% students choose English as a foreign language. In addition to the common areas, students need to take an additional full test on their chosen track. Students on the liberal arts track need to take the additional examination on "comprehensive art" [文科综合], which includes history, geography and politics. Students with the science track need to take the additional exam on "comprehensive science" [理科综合], which includes chemistry, physics and biology. The NUEE framework is presented in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: NUEE Framework
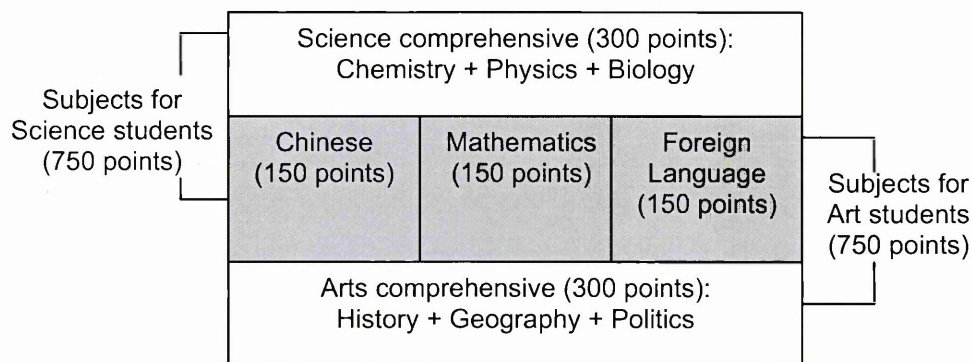
On one hand, the high-stakes examination and the highly competitive educational system have promoted a very positive learning atmosphere. Chinese students are described as highly motivated learners (Biggs and Watkins, 1996). Additionally, NUEE is generally viewed as a symbol of equity and justice in comparison with the nomination/recommendation system used during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The latter had resulted in widespread nepotism (Yu and Suen, 2005). On the other hand, some researchers argue that the high-stakes examination driver system has brought a number of counterproductive activities in terms of the quality of education and the social and psychological counter effects it brings, which will be further discussed in section 4.2.2.

4.2 Initiatives of the NEC

Having discussed some salient features of the Chinese education system, this section investigates the possible initiatives of the NEC.

4.2.1 Political agenda

Pennycook (1989:590) argues that all education is political and all knowledge is "interested". He claims that decisions on language teaching (e.g. what languages to be taught and the teaching approaches) are closely related to political agendas. Howatt and Widdowson's review (2004) of the ELT history also suggests that ELT is often the result of politics and power struggle, for example, the use of English in the outer circle as a result of colonisation. In reviewing the history of ELT in China, many researchers also argue that the rises and falls in China's ELT are closely related to political agendas (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Liu, 2008; Ross, 1992). Based on the division of period made by Daoyi Liu (2008a), chief editor of the national ELT textbook for thirty years, this section investigates the ELT history in China and discusses the potential political agenda that may underlie the NEC.

The first period (1949-1977): to neglect ELT

For the majority of this period, ELT was largely neglected. In the early 1950s, the close relation between China and the (then) Soviet Union made Russian the most commonly taught foreign language in China. In the late 1950s, ELT reemerged following the cooling down of the China-Soviet Union relation (Zhu, 1982). However, the lack of contact between China and the English speaking world reduced people's desire for learning English. The quality of teaching was also confined due to the lack of personnel (e.g. many English teachers were re-trained Russian teachers) and resources (e.g. lack of original English literature) (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hu, 2002). During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), education was largely devaluated due to the over-emphasis on politics. Schools were closed for long period of time, ELT programmes were extensively reduced from the secondary curriculum and many ELT experts were put to work in farms or factories (Ross, 1992). Since education was used to serve politics, most of the textbook topics were politic-centred (Zhu, 1982). For example, the text *Long Lives Chairman Mao* was used to preach Chairman Mao's contribution and teach students to be respectful to Chairman Mao. The text *Rooster Crows at Midnight* was used to describe how poor peasants were

exploited by rich land owners in the pre-1949 time and preach the contribution of the Communist Party.

The Second Period (1978-1992): start to see the importance of ELT

After the Cultural Revolution, political movement has given much way to economic development. English was seen as an important tool in reform and opening up China (Zhu, 1982). English was made a core subject in both secondary schools and universities. It has been an important subject in the NUEE since 1978 and passing an English test has been the condition for non-English majors to graduate from university since 1989 (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). Although there were fears in the 1980s that learning English might bring cultural contamination to China, English was still very much valued in this period (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002).

ELT at this time was largely teacher-centred and textbook-based. The function of ELT started to be seen as developing the ability to use English, particularly four skills. In terms of teaching materials, a national textbook was used throughout the whole country. Textbook editors were mainly influenced by the structural theory of language and behaviourist theory of language learning (Liu, 2008). The suggested teaching approaches were the functional and situational approaches (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002). The concept of CLT was introduced to China in 1979 and actively promoted by a scholar called Li Xiaoju in the 1980s (Yu, 2001). By the late 1980s, most English teachers had heard of and had some idea of the CLT approach but very few had the opportunity to see what this meant in classroom practice (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002).

ELT at this period was largely influenced by Britain. In the early 1980s, editors were sent to Britain to learn editing and publishing, and in 1986, Longman Publishing House became a partner of the People's Education Press of China in producing textbooks (Liu, 2008b). The *New Concept English* edited by L. G. Alexander (1967) was a widely used textbook in colleges in 1980s and it is still popularly used in China. BBC's *Follow me* and *Follow me to Science* Series were broadcasted on Central China TV and were seen by over 100 million viewers all over China (Crystal, 1985).

The Third Period (1993-2000): start to see the necessity of CLT

Since 1990s, the Chinese government has been placing very high emphasis on economic development and China has become more actively engaged in world

affairs. The reform and the open-door policy progressed and in 1993, Beijing held Asian Games. Meanwhile, China was determined to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Under these circumstances, CLT was seen as necessary and communicative aspects of language learning was introduced in the 1993 syllabus for English in the junior middle schools (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002).

At an official level, British English seemed to be the norm. The majority of the textbooks were jointly compiled between China and Britain. For example, *Senior English for China* (Liu, 1993) was jointly edited between People's Publishing House of China and Longman Publishing House of Britain, and it was used in high schools across the country apart from Shanghai. In Shanghai, *Oxford English* was jointly compiled between Shanghai Curriculum Reform Committee and Oxford University Press. Additionally, the British norm was also followed in examination syllabus. For example, spellings should be correspondent to British conventions.

At the same time, a large number of Western teachers were also employed by the State Education Commission of China (now MOE) to teach in Chinese institutions, mainly universities. Different from the relatively monolithic norm on textbooks and examinations, these teachers were from different countries, for example, America, Britain, Canada, Australian and New Zealand (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). They brought with them different norms in English. In addition, in the 1990s America seemed to be a most popular destination for those students who wanted to study abroad. Its influence seemed to be strengthened through tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and TV programmes such as *Family Album*, which was very popular in the 1990s (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). A conflict between British influence and American influence at official level and non-official level was seen in this period.

The fourth period (2001-Now): "to keep in line with the world trend"
The NEC was produced in 2003 when motivation for learning English was perhaps at its height in China, triggered by two events: Beijing's winning bid for the 2008 Olympic Games in August 2001 and China's entry of the WTO in November 2001. The government announced in 2001, after winning the Olympic Games, that the whole nation should learn English - so that in 2008 visitors to China can be warmly welcomed in English (Guo, 2001). This implicates the communicative needs for English use (to welcome foreign visitors). The position is further confirmed by an

article written by Lianning Li (2001), then Director of the Department of Basic Education under MOE:

> "Currently, economic globalisation is accelerating; our country is on the verge of joining the WTO and is opening its doors wider to the outside world. In the meantime, communications and co-operation between our country and others are increasing day by day, which requires us to improve our ability to use a foreign language for communicative purposes···"

The view is also reflected in the High School English Curriculum Standard (HSECS) (MOE, 2003:1-2) in describing the purpose of English learning:

> "Studying English makes it possible to learn advanced culture, science and technology from abroad. It also creates conditions for International communication...English learning improves national quality and strength and supports our country's open-door policy and International communication".

The integration of English learning with national political agenda is evidenced in these two quotes. Apart from the promotion of CLT as a tool for achieving political agenda, Waters (2007) may argue that it is also an ideological consideration to keep with 'the spirit of the times'. Following the economic development, China is determined in strengthening its national power and becoming a world giant. This is evidenced in manifestations such as "to hold the world's most successful Olympic Games". In such circumstances, using an 'advanced' teaching approach may seem necessary in China's image building. The phrase "in order to keep in line with the world trend" is often seen in policy documents, for example, HSECS (MOE, 2003).

4.2.2 Critique of China's education system and reform as a response

In addition to political agenda, the NEC may also be a practical need in China's response to the critique of its education system, which seems to become increasingly stronger since the late 1990s. A major critique is the phenomenon of "high score low quality students [高分低能]". The reflection in English learning is that students can often achieve high scores in examinations, but their communicative proficiency is criticised as limited. A number of reasons are believed to have confined students' skill development, for example, an examination-oriented education system, the exclusive emphasis on scores and 'out-of-date' teaching methods. The government seems to also acknowledge that the education quality in China is low, as evidenced in a MOE (1998:1) policy document:

> "...The education quality in our country is still low. Our system, concepts and approaches for education are not adequate for modern construction...A main

factor that constrains our country's innovation and competitiveness in the world is the shortage of International-standard innovative talents…"

In this context, reform seems to be a practical need for the government. The Central Government has initiated a number of reforms since the late 1990s, and in 2001, the nationwide basic education reform started. Major documents in relation to China's basic education reform are reviewed in Table 4.3 in order to provide more historical background to the policy.

Table 4.3: Major documents in relation to basic education reform

Policy	Issuing Organisation	Issuing Date
(1) "Action Plan for Rejuvenating Education in the 21st Century [面向21世纪教育行动振兴计划"]	MOE	24/12/1998
(2) "Decisions on Deepening Education Reform and Fully Promoting Quality Education [中共中央国务院关于深化教育改革全面推进素质教育的决定]"	Central Government of China	13/06/1999
(3) "Decisions on basic education reform and development [关于基础教育改革与发展的决定]	Central Government of China	29/05/2001
(4) "Outline of Basic Education Reform (Experimentation) [基础教育课程改革纲要(试行)]"	MOE	07/06/2001
(5) "General High School Curriculum Scheme[普通高中课程方案（实验）]"	MOE	31/03/2003

Reference: MOE (2009)

A key theme in the policies is the 'quality education [素质教育]'[13] stated in policy 2. In order to accommodate such needs, policies 2 and 3 are reiterated with the involvement of the Central Government of China. The two documents suggest that a

---

[13] See glossary.

new curriculum system for basic education be constructed. Policy 3 marks the start of basic education reform with a series of changes being proposed. Examples are: the change of instructional method from textbook-based and teacher-centred to learner-centred; the transformation of teaching concept from subject-centred to skill-based; the change of assessment purpose from testing to promoting teaching and learning; and the change of education administration from centralised administration to a three-fold decentralised administration of state, local areas and school. As a part of this project, policy 5 was implemented in March 2003 with the NEC a part of it.

This section has discussed the context in which the NEC was initiated. The next section examines the NEC framework of concepts.

4.3 The NEC framework of concepts

This section discusses main features of the NEC framework of concepts based on guidance of the High School English Curriculum Standard (HSECS), which was developed by the MOE in 2003. The NEC is considered by many scholars (Liu, 2008a; Lu, 2007) as the most comprehensive reform in the ELT history of China. As outlined in the curriculum guidance, the purpose of the NEC is "to establish a new foreign language teaching philosophy" (MOE, 2003:1), rather than fragmented change in certain areas. The first manifestation of change is a new teaching objective to promote "all-round ability to use English". The framework includes multidimensional language teaching objectives, for example, language proficiency, cognitive goals and affect. The second manifestation of change is the promotion of an inductive approach that encourages "trying, exploring, discovering and practising" (MOE, 2003:6). A number of new approaches are suggested, for example, TBLT. The third manifestation of change is a decentralized attitude that highlights individual needs and contextual differences. These three areas of core change are discussed in this section.

4.3.1 New objective: all-round ability to use English

The phrase "all-round ability to use English" seems to be the main theme of the curriculum guidance that has appeared 20 times. This is also identified as the core of change by prestigious authors (e.g. Liu, 2008a; Lu, 2007) and most domestic publications. A framework of "the all-round ability to use English" is presented in

Figure 4.5. The framework includes five key areas of development: language skills, linguistic knowledge, cultural awareness, affective factors and learning strategies.

In order to promote "all-round ability to use English", teachers are requested to innovate both teaching and assessment methods. In terms of the principles of teaching, teachers are first of all advised to "motivate students to value all-round development" (MOE, 2003:25). They are also advised "to support English language learning, English skills development, English communicative proficiency, and to promote integration between English and other skills" (MOE, 2003:26); and to "improve their independent learning skills in order to lay foundations for life-long learning" (MOE, 2003:61). Additionally, schools are advised to set up optional modules in order to "increase students' knowledge and promote quality education" (MOE, 2003:24). For more discussion of teaching approaches, see 4.3.2.

Additionally, teachers are requested to innovate methods of assessment. HSECS (MOE, 2003:40-41) states that "the purpose of assessment should be to develop students' all-round ability to use English, rather than for the purpose of testing". Therefore, "assessment should include spoken, listening, and paper-based examinations in order to test students' all-round ability to use English" (MOE, 2003:42); "The four skills should all be tested and the criterion should be students' ability to use the language", "the emphasis of the oral examination is on students' communicative strategies, proficiency and effectiveness" and "the focus of the listening examination is on students' ability to understand and obtain information" (MOE, 2003:41-42). To achieve these goals, detailed strategies are also suggested, for instance, "Presentation, written assignment, performance, debate and report of scientific experimentation can all be used", "purely form-focused questions must be avoided", "contextually based questions should be increased" and "thinking-provoking questions should be increased" (MOE, 2003:40-41).

In the ELT literature, a framework of language teaching objectives was developed by Stern (1992). Stern argues that language teaching should include four objectives: language proficiency, cognitive goals, affect and transfer. Language proficiency refers to either one of all of the following three areas: proficiency as competence (the most widely used one being Canale and Swain, 1980), proficiency as the mastery of skills (e.g. grammar and phonetics) and proficiency as language behaviour (e.g. language for special purposes). The cognitive goals include

knowledge and information about the target language and culture, along with the development of other cognitive skills (e.g. problem-solving, reasoning and organizing information). Affective goals include the development of positive feelings about the target language, target culture and learning. Transfer goals refer to the skill of applying language learning experience to other contexts, for example, learning skills acquisition. Although the wording differs, the HSECS (2003) seems to be largely consistent with Stern's (1992) framework of concepts.

The framework has also reflected principles of the "quality education" presently promoted by the central government, by including both knowledge (e.g. language skills) and skills (e.g. learning strategies). Additionally, by including such principles as "Patriotism", the curriculum framework has reflected education doctrine of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that "education should serve proletarian politics and modern socialist development".

Figure 4.5: Framework of all-round ability to use English

Framework of all-round ability to use English

Language skills
- Listening
- Reading
- Speaking
- Writing

Linguistic knowledge
- Phonetics
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Function
- Topics

Affective factors
- Motivation to learn
- Interest in learning
- Confidence in learning
- Determination to learn
- Teamwork to improve
- Patriotism
- International horizon

Learning strategies
- Cognition (e.g. guess new words through context)
- Regulation (e.g. make learning plans)
- Communication (e.g. talk with native speakers)
- Resources (e.g. learn English with TV)

Cultural awareness
- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Awareness
- Ability

99

4.3.2 Inductive approach: try, explore, discover and practise

In response to the new teaching objectives is a new teaching approach system being suggested. First of all, teachers are requested to change their roles in teaching. HSECS (MOE, 2003:27) states that "the teacher is not only the transmitter of knowledge, but also the facilitator, guider, organizer, helper, participant and partner for students' learning". HSECS (MOE, 2003) highly values students' active roles in learning and requests teachers to recognize, value and encourage students' contributions to learning and teaching. For example, students' opinions should be consulted in module selection and the application of teaching approaches.

A key principle of teaching is that teachers should encourage students to "experience, practise, discuss, co-operate and explore in order to develop the four skills" (MOE, 2003:25). In achieving this goal, "teachers should increase open-ended tasks and exploratory activities for students to express their opinions" (MOE, 2003:26). TBLT is thus suggested as a method for instruction. HSECS (MOE, 2003) defines tasks as "all language practices that facilitate students to do things in English" (HSECS, 2003:26). Six principles for task design are given. Tasks should:

- Have clear aims;
- Reflect authentic language use;
- Involve information reception and processing;
- Require language use;
- Require students to do things;
- Have specified criteria for task completion.

Discussion of TBLT is confined to the above content in the main body of the curriculum guidance, although 4 examples are given in the appendix to support understanding. Two examples (Example 1 and example 4) are demonstrated below to illustrate.

Table 4.4. Teaching example 1, HSECS (MOE, 2003:35-36)

Examples for Teaching (1)

Task purpose: Use English to discuss problems encountered in everyday life and find solutions for these problems. The emphasis is on oral expression and written expression.

Task sequence:

1. Introduction:

(1) Teacher describes to students unpleasant experiences in everyday life, e.g. someone pats you on the shoulder from behind and some people spitting everywhere;

(2) Students describe similar experiences;

(3) Students discuss solutions for the above experiences.

2. Group work: divide students into groups of 6, each group nominates a leader, group members discuss most hated experiences and reasons, and group leader takes notes.

3. Whole-class activity: group leaders report to the whole class findings from the discussion. Teacher writes on the blackboard the report.

4. Group work: divide students to groups, each group discusses solutions for handling one of the situations on the blackboard. Examples are: How would you tell a person not to spit on the floor without hurting his or her feelings?

5. Report:

   (1) Each group produces a report based on the above discussion;

   (2) The group representative from each group makes the presentation to the whole class;

   (3) Publication of the written report in the class' noticeboard.

Remark (from HSECS):

This activity integrates classroom English teaching with students' real-life. Through discussion, students not only use language but also shares life experience and solve real-life problems together.

Table 4.5: Teaching example 4, HSECS (MOE, 2003:39)

Examples for Teaching (4)

Task purpose: Obtain information from advertisements, learn language of advertising, and try to design and act out advertisements.

Task sequence:
1. Teacher collects English advertisements before class;
2. Students identify the most effective advertisements and the reasons;
3. Teacher displays English advertisements, leads students to analyze wording and structuring of language for advertising;
4. Teacher provides realia for students to choose and students design advertisements in groups;
5. Groups act out advertisements.

Remark (from HSECS):
The purpose of this activity is to integrate reading with expression. The emphasis is on training critical ability and skills in expressing personal views.

As indicated by the examples, the task design of these activities has incorporated strategies suggested in major TBLT literature. In example 1, for instance, the task designer has incorporated Willis' (1996) framework of pre-task (1, brainstorming), the task cycle (2, 3, 4, 5-1, 5-2, task, planning and report) and post-task (5-3, written production). It has also reflected Nunan's (2004) concepts of schema-building and scaffolding. In both tasks, task completion is based on meaning-production, rather than form practice (Skehan, 1998). This is consistent with modern literature on ELT.

Skehan (1996, 2003) distinguishes between a strong form and a weak form of TBLT. Proponents of the strong version argue that tasks should be the unit of teaching, and that everything else should be subsidiary. Proponents of the weak form suggest that tasks are not the driving force for syllabus design. Rather, they are used as adjuncts to facilitate the structure-based teaching. Tasks are necessary and helpful, but not essential (Bruton, 2002). It is difficult to assert from these examples whether the HSECS supports a strong form or a weak form of TBLT. However, remarks on

both the above activities seem to suggest that language is an emphasis in training. In example 1, "…students not only use language but also share life experiences…" and in example 2, "the purpose of this activity is to integrate reading with expression…".

Despite the promotion of modern approaches, wording of the curriculum guidance seems to indicate curriculum developers' sympathy for the eclectic approach commonly used in China (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002). This is demonstrated by wordings such as "can be used", "be increased" (rather than must be used) and the constant reference to "dependent on individual needs". In a word, although a number of teaching strategies are promoted, the curriculum guidance still gives much room for teachers to reinterpret and implement the curriculum.

4.3.3 Catering for individual differences

Another strong theme of the NEC is catering for individual differences, including learner differences, institution differences and regional differences. The personal and contextual aspect of language teaching is highly valued (Bruce and Rubin, 1992).

The first manifestation is the learner-centredness of the NEC. HSECS (MOE, 2003) recognizes that "all learners are different…teachers should respect the differences between students and satisfy their different needs" (MOE, 2003:23). Therefore, teachers should "design tasks according to students' individual needs so that every student can progress", offer optional modules "to provide more personalized choice for students "(MOE, 2003:23). In terms of assessment, teachers are advised to use a stratified assessment system to allow students "to choose an assessment method catering for their individual needs, and presents their advantages, so that students of all levels can all experience success" (MOE, 2003:41). The principles of the HSECS reflect a constructivist nature of learning and teaching. Learners' previous experience and knowledge are highly valued and they are encouraged to join in the active construction of knowledge with teachers (Piaget, 1967).

The other manifestation is the recognition of contextual differences between schools and regions. Prior to the curriculum reform, only two types of high school curriculum were used across the entire country (4.2.1). However, under the NEC guidance,

schools are allowed to "purchase textbooks under the supervision of education management, based on the discussion with teacher representatives, student representatives and parents' representatives" (MOE, 2003:58). Additionally, schools can "choose appropriate teaching materials from abroad in order to enrich classroom teaching". This is sharply different from the 1980s when some people were concerned that learning foreign language might contaminate Chinese culture (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002). Advice is also given to textbook editors that "the components of the textbook should offer teachers and students room for selection" (MOE, 2003:60). Currently, there are 7 types of textbook available in the market edited and published by different publishing houses. Authors include some prominent figures in ELT, notably Nunan. Examples are *New Senior English for China* compiled by People's Education Press and *Senior English* compiled by Beijing Normal University Press. The textbook used in CHS is the *New Senior English for China* compiled by People's Education Press.

Additionally, teachers are also given much freedom in terms of the use of textbooks. They are allowed to "add, delete, replace, expand and reorder the textbook materials" (MOE, 2003:62). Additionally, schools can develop "school-based teaching materials" (MOE, 2003:59). In terms of teaching approaches, HSECS (MOE, 2003:63) states that "due to contextual differences and learner differences, sometimes teaching methods suggested by textbooks are not appropriate for classroom teaching", therefore, "teachers can adjust their teaching methods" (MOE, 2003:63).

Based on the above analysis and further information from the HSECS, I have summarized an action plan of the HSECS (MOE, 2003) in Table 4.6:

Table 4.6: Action plan of the HSECS (MOE, 2003)

Promoting all-round development by:	- Providing opportunities for students to use English to obtain and process information, to analyze and solve problems, and to think and express; - Incorporating communicative activities in in-class and out-of-class activities for students to develop communicative proficiency; - Creating links between linguistic knowledge and language use; - Creating links with other subjects of teaching; - Helping students to view all-round development positively and developing learning methods that suit all-round development;

Reforming teaching approaches by:	■ Playing different roles according to teaching and learning needs.; ■ Creating opportunities for students to learn through experience, practice, discussion, co-operation and exploration; ■ Increasing task-based activities and exploratory learning; ■ Creating opportunities for students to explore topics they are interested in and solving problems; ■ Encouraging students to be critical and innovative and giving opportunities to develop creativity and imagination; ■ Using IT in teaching and planning; ■ Creatively using course materials and achieving teaching objectives.
Reforming assessment methods by:	■ Engaging learners in the design of assessment methods; ■ Using a stratified assessment system to suit different learner needs; ■ Using both formative and summative assessment methods and taking account of students' everyday performance; ■ Applying various strategies to ensure that all areas of development are covered in the assessment.
Catering for individuals needs by:	■ Respecting differences and individual needs; ■ Providing optional modules based on students' personal needs (not teachers' interest and knowledge); ■ Helping students to develop personalised study plans (and constantly adjusting plans according to progress and learning effects).
Developing learning strategies by:	■ Encouraging and promoting autonomous learning; ■ Leaving time and space for students' autonomous learning and reflection; ■ Encouraging students to use various materials to support learning;
Valuing emotional development by:	■ Being aware of affective factors; ■ Motivating and encouraging students with poor academic performance; ■ Providing team-working opportunities for students to share thoughts, ideas and feelings, and build relationships with teachers and students.
Developing own skills by:	■ Establishing close teamwork with colleagues; ■ Encouraging reflection on teaching; ■ Pursuing continuing development opportunities; ■ Enhancing engagement in teaching-based research activities.

4.4 Responses to the NEC

The NEC was developed in 2003 and disseminated in September 2004 in four trial provinces: Shandong, Guangdong, Hainan, and Ningxia. Subsequently, Jiangsu province joined the experimentation in 2005; Tianjin Municipal City, Zhejiang Province, Fujian Province, Anhui Province and Liaoning Province joined in 2006. Up

until 2008, about one third provinces have taken part in the high school new curriculum experimentation. The province where this study takes place is among one of the five provinces that joined the curriculum experimentation in 2006 and it will be referred to as JZ province in this thesis. This section introduces the public response to the NEC, along with actions taken by the JZ provincial Department of Education (DOE) in response to the NEC.

4.4.1 Response of the JZ provincial DOE

Given the hierarchical nature of the education system in China (4.1.2), decisions of CHS are influenced by not only MOE but also JZ Provincial DOE, LQ City Education Bureau and County A Education Committee. Apart from MOE, the most influential one seems to be JZ Provincial DOE, particularly through its right to set NUEE paper in the province, given the importance of NUEE in Chinese education system (4.1.4).

JZ provincial DOE seems to have taken an active response to the NEC. A number of actions are suggested or have taken place. First of all, before the NEC was implemented in 2006, representatives from different schools were gathered in the capital city for a one-week training programme on guidance of the NEC principles and strategies for implementing these strategies. Teachers were supposed to go back to their schools and preach these ideas to their colleagues. Secondly, in order to provide a positive discourse for the NEC implementation, news agencies in the province are suggested to advertise CLT as "an advanced teaching principle". Thirdly, a team comprising of university lecturers, researchers, head teachers and prestigious teachers was formed to provide guidance for teachers on NEC implementation and to give advice on major decision makings. Fourthly, it was announced that schools taking active roles in the implementation will be selected as role models for the province.

Among all the actions, the reform on NUEE system seems to have caught the most attention in the country and has been frequently reported by media from other provinces. First of all, in order to support all-round education, students' non-academic performance is evaluated and the evaluation can be considered as an additional condition for university admission. Secondly, in the evaluation of students' academic performance, the NUEE is supported by other examinations, for example, course completion examinations. In terms of English, listening

examinations are added to the NUEE. Additionally, information was passed to administrators of the City Education Bureau that the NUEE paper will be reformed in order to accommodate the NEC principles. In terms of English, it was said "questions to test communicative use of English will be added and there will be no direct questions from the textbook" (Ms. Han, Administrator of LQ City Education Bureau, Talk in the city's ELT seminar, 03/09/2007). The third measure is that students should register in the NUEE as individuals rather than as enrolled members of a particular school. The motivation is to prevent schools from competing NUEE scores with each other and therefore promote management staff and teachers to shift focus from examination preparation to skill development. These measures were officially announced in April 2008 and was implemented in the NUEE in June 2009 (the first NUEE after the NEC is implemented). Although there are some doubts about the reliability and applicability of the new NUEE policy (the Beijing News, 20 July 2008), it does indicate the provincial DOE's effort to promote principles of the NEC.

4.4.2 Public responses

Apart from education institutions, the discourse for the implementation of the NEC is also shaped by mass media, prominent writers, scholars and teachers. The voice from mass media was largely positive. One possible reason is the government's urge that news agencies should "be co-operative in order to facilitate the new curriculum implementation" (minutes of a news press for new curriculum implementation in a province). It is frequently seen in news papers that the NEC is described as 'advanced', 'radical' 'breakthrough' and 'keeping in pace with the world' (e.g. Guo, 2008; Lu, 2007). Similar reports are also identified in professional journals. My review of articles in major Chinese journals (e.g. *Foreign Language Education [外语教学]*, *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools Journal [中小学外语教学]* and *Foreign Language and Their Teaching [外语与教学杂志]*) suggests that it is a norm in publication that terms such as 'behaviourism' and 'grammar-translation' are often associated with 'out-of-date', and terms such as 'constructivism', 'learner-centred' and 'CLT' are equated to 'advance'. The following views seem to be predominant in publications:
- CLT approach is 'advanced' and other approaches are out of date;
- Teachers have to use TBLT which represent principles of the NEC guidance;

- Group work and discussion are advanced and grammar-translation method is out of date.

Similar experience is also reported by Carless' study (2001) in Hong Kong. He finds that in terms of public response of a new curriculum, there is a tendency to justify reform by means of a critique of existing practices in schools, primarily by use of terms such as teacher-centred, traditional, exam-oriented, passive pupils.

The second force that has participated in shaping the discourse is prominent writers and scholars, through providing consultation to education organizations, editing textbooks and exercise papers, giving lectures and demonstration lessons, writing articles (for publication) and blogging. The majority of them are ELT professors and lecturers at the tertiary level. Although some of them have advised teachers to use an 'eclectic approach', in a large CLT is promoted as an 'advanced practice'. Additionally, school teachers may have also played a part in shaping the discourse. For example, there are normally one or a few teachers in each school that are representatives of People's Congress[14]. They may have voiced their opinions through proposing or responding to policies. Secondly, prominent teachers may exert their influences through giving lectures, writing articles or blogging. For example, Anya, one of the research participants in this study is a well-respected teacher in the city and she was often asked to be the keynote speaker in the city's ELT seminars. In these occasions, CLT is often introduced as an 'advanced approach' and the discussion is normally centred at strategies for using CLT approaches (also see 6.1.2).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter investigated some salient features of the education system in China, discussed initiatives of the NEC, analyzed the NEC framework of concepts and examined public responses to the NEC. As is demonstrated in the discussion, the NEC was developed in a context of development and conflicts. It was developed as a response to the national need for CLT and it was also developed as a solution to the problems in China's education development. The discussion also shows that the NEC is promoted as an 'advanced' approach in the official discourse. After the

---

[14] People's congress is an occasion for people of different background to have a say in proposing policies or approving of policies. It is comprised of people of different background, include ethnic background, education background and etc.

investigation of the wider social context in this chapter, chapter 5 discusses the school context, before turning to the discussion on teachers' orientation and engagement with the NEC in chapter 6 and their practices in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 5: THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Having introduced the NEC framework and the context in which it was initiated and developed, this chapter describes the school in which this ethnographic study takes place, along with the five research participants and their work. In order to ensure anonymity, the school will be referred to as CHS throughout this thesis. The presentation structure of this chapter is presented in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: Scope of chapter 5

5.1 General Introduction of the school

5.2 Teachers' and students' timetables

5.3 My role as a teacher

5.4 Hierarchy of teachers and defining capital in CHS

    5.4.1 Institutional position

    5.4.2 Teachers' teaching skill

    5.4.3 'Face' [面子] and 'social connections' [关系]

    5.4.4 'Seniority' in terms of age and years of working

5.5 Positioning the five research participants

    5.5.1 Participant one: Anya

    5.5.2 Participant two: Baijuan

    5.5.3 Participant three: Caili

    5.5.4 Participant four: Denghua

    5.5.5 Participant five: Enchu

5.6 Multiple duties of the English teachers

5.7 Workflow of the Grade Two English Team

5.8 Teaching materials used by teachers of the Grade Two English Team

5.9 Conclusion

5.1 General introduction of the school

CHS is located in a medium-sized coastal city in Southeast China and it is one of the key schools[15] in the city. It had a history of 155 years at the time when this study took place. The school has about 4,500 students and 300 academic staff members. High school is a pre-university stage in China, providing education for students aged 15-18. There are three grades (age groups) in CHS and each grade has 26 classes. The class size is between 55 and 60, a common class size in China according to Cortazzi and Jin's (2001) investigation and the statistics provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2008).

In the 26 classes of each grade, classes one to four are "top classes". These classes accommodate students with the highest performance in the high school entrance examinations and a few 'special students' (e.g. children of important government officials and children of CHS staff). The other 22 classes are 'ordinary classes'. Grade 1 students all study the same curriculum. When they start grade 2, students can choose to study in either arts class [文科班] or science class [理科班] according to the track they want to take in the NUEE (see 4.1.4 for NUEE framework). Therefore, in addition to Chinese, English and mathematics, science students have to study chemistry, physics and biology; and arts students have to study history, geography and politics. These subjects are called 'main subjects' [主科] because they are required for the NUEE. Other subjects that are not required for the NUEE, such as education technology or music, are called 'minor subjects' [副科]. Most of the 'minor subjects' are only offered in grade 1 and grade 2. It is a common practice in Chinese high schools to cancel or decrease 'minor subjects' in grade three in order to prepare for NUEE (Yu and Suen, 2005). The classification and number of classes in CHS is presented in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: classification and number of classes in CHS

Classes / Grade	'Top class'	'Ordinary class'		Total
		Science class	Arts class	
		follow science track	follow arts track	
Grade 1	4	22		26
Grade 2	4	18	4	26
Grade 3	4	17	5	26

---

[15] See glossary.

As is shown in the table, all 'top class' students follow the science track. There are more students following the science track than those follow the arts track. A number of reasons have contributed to this. First of all, many parents think that following a science track leads to a 'better future' for their children because there are more 'hot-pursuit subjects' (e.g. banking, computer and civil engineering) being offered for students following a science track when they graduate from the high school. The subjects offered for students following an art track (e.g. Chinese, history of journalism) are often considered less promising at least in terms of financial return. Secondly, the school has a strong tradition in science subjects. The head teacher and two (out of three) deputy head teachers all teach science subjects and more emphasis seems to be placed on science classes. Students are often encouraged by their teachers to study in science classes. Thirdly, the learning atmosphere in arts classes is considered less favourable than that in science classes. A large number of students in arts classes have poor academic performance. The reason why they join arts classes is because their academic performance is too low to follow the science track (traditionally, history, geography and politics are considered easier than chemistry, physics and biology to follow). Some students choose to study in science classes in order to avoid the potential 'bad learning atmosphere' in arts classes.

There are normally six regular teachers (teachers of the 'main subjects') for each class. These teachers usually follow the same group of students for three years, from students' admission in grade one to their graduation in grade three. This is called a 'round'. After a 'round' is completed, teachers take a new 'round'. Each class has a class teacher and two assistant class teachers. In Chinese schools and universities, it is common to have a class teacher, who takes the main responsibility for monitoring and supporting students' social development and disciplinary management. For example, class teachers write developmental records for their students and discuss learning progress with them and their parents. Being appointed a class teacher is often a sign of trust from management staff for the teacher, for being able to maintain discipline. Having two assistant class teachers is a unique feature in CHS. The system, being promoted as a strategy to 'minimize big class', was initiated in 2005. One physical class is divided into three smaller classes in terms of disciplinary management. Each small class is taken charge of by a class teacher or an assistant class teacher. The consideration is that teachers may give more personalized care to students with a smaller number of students to support.

Like many other schools in the city, CHS has a newly-built campus. The new campus was built in 2001 and covers a land area of 0.1 square mile (0.27 km^2). Construction and facilities in the school are considered very modern, for example, an in-campus swimming pool, and projection facilities and central video system in each class. Building the campus has cost 180 million RMB (£18 million, hereinafter money will be presented in pound). Sources of funding include £10 million' government grant and £8 million' self-funding[16]. The latter is met by loans from the bank. Each year CHS needs to pay a bank interest of around 100,000 pounds (Assistant to the Head Teacher, informal conversation, 10/12/2007).

In order to pay off the loans, CHS has developed two methods to cover the cost: profits through obtaining shares from private schools and students' fees. In order to relieve financial pressure from campus building, in early 2000s, CHS co-operated with a private middle school, a private bilingual school and a private vocational training centre in the local area to form the CHS group (In this thesis, differentiation is made between CHS and CHS group. The ethnographic study takes place in CHS and therefore description and analysis applies to CHS only, unless specified). Being a key school, CHS enjoys high reputation in the local area. Therefore, other members of the CHS group can use the name of CHS to attract more students. CHS, on the other hand, gains considerable income from becoming shareholders of these schools.

Another source of income is fees from students. This is common for schools in JZ province. There are two types of charges to students: tuition fees and admission fees. Students rank top 500 (out of over 10,000 middle school graduates in county A each year) in the high school entrance examination are officially admitted to the school and they do not need to pay admission fee apart from an annual tuition fee of about £250. However, all other students need to pay a one-off admission fee of about £3,000 upon entering CHS, in addition to the annual tuition fee.

---

[16]In 1999, the central government announced a policy that universities and high schools should accept more students in order to create more learning opportunities. This policy is followed by a wide-range campus rebuild and extension in China, due to the need to accommodate more students. In order to relieve its financial pressure for campus construction, the Central government decided that schools and universities should contribute to the cost through tuition fees or developing school-based business. Although CHS is a state-owned school, it also needs to cover part of the school cost.

The city where CHS locates is called LQ. As previously introduced, it is a medium-sized coastal city in southeast China. The city ranks one of China's best in terms of economic development, while it is still labeled as a provincial area, perhaps due to the fact that 90% of the 6 million populations are rural peasants (see 4.1.3 for Chinese legal residential status system). Although their legal status is peasant, most people in LQ are not peasants in conventional sense. LQ is very famous in China for its township enterprises (enterprises invested and owned by peasants) and most people in this area are engaged in self-employed business. Major business types are sea products (e.g. seafood and pearls), clothing and automobiles.

There are 82 high schools in the nine counties of LQ. These high schools are hierarchically graded according to their 'qualities' of teaching (see 4.1.1 and 4.1.2). CHS is in county A and it is considered by locals as one of the two 'best' schools in LQ (also see 4.1.3).

5.2 Teachers' and students' timetables

Following the convention in China, the academic year in CHS is divided into two semesters. The first semester runs from the 1st of September to January. After about one month's winter holiday, the second semester starts in February and ends in early July, when the summer holiday starts. However, grade three students normally have shortened holidays, due to the pressure of the NUEE. In 2007 to 2008 academic year, grade three students in CHS have about 10 days' winter holiday and about one month's summer holiday.

The normal weekdays in China are five days. However, in order to have more time for study, CHS operates a system of "big weekend" [大周] and "small weekend" [小周]. These two types of weekends work in turn. When it is a "big weekend", students have two days break on Saturday and Sunday and when it is a "small weekend", students have to study on Saturday and have Sunday off. Since each English teacher teaches two classes, each of them has 11 lessons per week in average and each lesson lasts 45 minutes. The school timetable is presented in Table 5.3. As is seen on the table, there are one morning reading, eight classes, one evening reading and two evening sessions per day. About 80% of the students live on campus and they are expected to get up at 6:10am and go to bed at 9:45pm. The

rest of the students live off campus and they may need to spend extra time on commuting to and from the school.

Table 5.3: School timetable

Timetable			
	Session	Time	Period of Study
Morning	Get up	6:10am	
	Breakfast	6:20am – 6:50am	
	Morning reading	7:00 am – 7:25 am	25
	Class 1	7:30 am– 8:15 am	45
	Class 2	8:25 am – 9:10 am	45
	Physical Exercise	9:10 am – 9:35 am	
	Class 3	9:40 am – 10:25 am	45
	Class 4	10:35 am– 11:20 am	45
	Lunch	11:20 am	
Afternoon	Class 5	1:30 pm– 2:15 pm	
	Eye exercise	2:25 pm– 2:30 pm	
	Class 6	2:30 pm– 3:15 pm	45
	Class 7	3:25 pm – 4:10 pm	45
	Class 8	4:20 pm– 5:05 pm	45
	Free Play	5:05 pm– 5:25 pm	
	Dinner	5:25 pm	
Evening	Evening reading	6:20 pm – 6:50 pm	30
	Evening session 1	6:55 pm– 8:00 pm	65
	Evening session 2	8:10 pm– 9:15 pm	65
	Go to bed	9:45 pm	

The school requirement is that teachers have to be in the school between 8am and 5pm, with about 2 hours' lunch break. However, English teachers and Chinese teachers need to supervise morning readings and evening readings in turn, and all teachers have to supervise evening sessions in turn (main duties for these sessions are to monitor disciplinary management, for example, make sure students keep quiet and arrive in classroom on time). The schedule for the English teachers is illustrated in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Schedule for the English teachers

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat. (every other week)
Morning Readings		√		√		√
Teaching (2 X 45 minutes)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Evening Readings	√		√		√	
Evening sessions	√					

5.3 My role as a teacher

In order to gain an insider-outsider perspective, a position was created for me at my suggestion. This was to teach vocabulary to grade 2 and grade 3 students (see 3.5.1 for discussion on the creation of my role). Before March 2008, I taught 12 classes per week. These included 4 arts classes in grade 2 and 5 arts classes in grade 3, in addition to three special classes for students with lower level language development. The head teacher thought being a PhD student in Education I must have special strategies for improving students' English proficiency. Hence the special classes were set hoping I would have some 'special remedy' to improve students' scores. The schedule of my teaching is shown in Table 5.5:

Table 5.5: my teaching schedule before March 2008

Day of the Week / Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday and Saturday
Class 1					
Class 2					
Class 3		3 (22)			
Class 4				2 (24)	
Class 5	3 (23)	3 (26)		2 (26)	
Class 6	3 (24)	3 (25)			
Class 7				2 (23)	
Class 8	3 classes for poor students			2 (25)	

Note: 3 (23) refers to Grade 3 Class 23

Offering vocabulary lesson seemed to have become the complaint of some teachers of other subjects (e.g. Chinese teachers and mathematics teachers), who considered that having more English lessons meant taking students' time away from

learning the subjects they teach (Fieldnotes, 12/11/2007). In March 2008, all my grade 3 classes had to be cancelled because "students needed to have more time for NUEE preparation" (An administrator of the Academic Affairs Division, Informal Conversation, 10/03/2008). Apart from vocabulary classes, the only other 'minor subject' physical education class was also cancelled. Afternoons were scheduled as examination time only and students needed to take examinations every afternoon from 2pm to 5pm. After grade 3 classes were cancelled, I was asked to teach grade 2 'top classes' in addition to grade 2 arts classes and my teaching schedule was:

Table 5.6: my teaching schedule after March 2008

Day of the Week / Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday and Saturday
Class 1		2 (1)			
Class 2		2 (2)	2 (3)		
Class 3			2 (4)		
Class 4				2 (24)	
Class 5				2 (26)	
Class 6					
Class 7				2 (23)	
Class 8				2 (25)	

5.4 Hierarchy of teachers and defining capital in CHS

There are about 300 academic staff members in CHS. The organisation of academic staff, as demonstrated in Figure 5.1, is highly hierarchical.

The head teacher is the most senior person in the hierarchy. The three deputy head teachers and he constitute the 'top management level'. Below them is the 'senior management level': Academic Affairs Division[17] and Department of Discipline[18]. There follows the 'junior management level': head of each grade and head of each subject. The school management is predominantly male dominated and science-subject teachers dominated. Among all of the management staff, there are only two female teachers[19] (Head of the English Department and Deputy Head of

---

[17] See glossary.

[18] See glossary.

[19] In Chinese schools, management staff members are also called teachers because they teach in addition to doing administrative work.

the Academic Affairs Division) and three non-science-subject teachers (one deputy head teacher and the two female teachers who teach English).

Figure 5.1: Organisational structure in CHS

Departments	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Chinese	14	13	13
English	14	13	13
Mathematics	13	14	13
Chemistry	9	10	10
Physics	9	10	9
...			
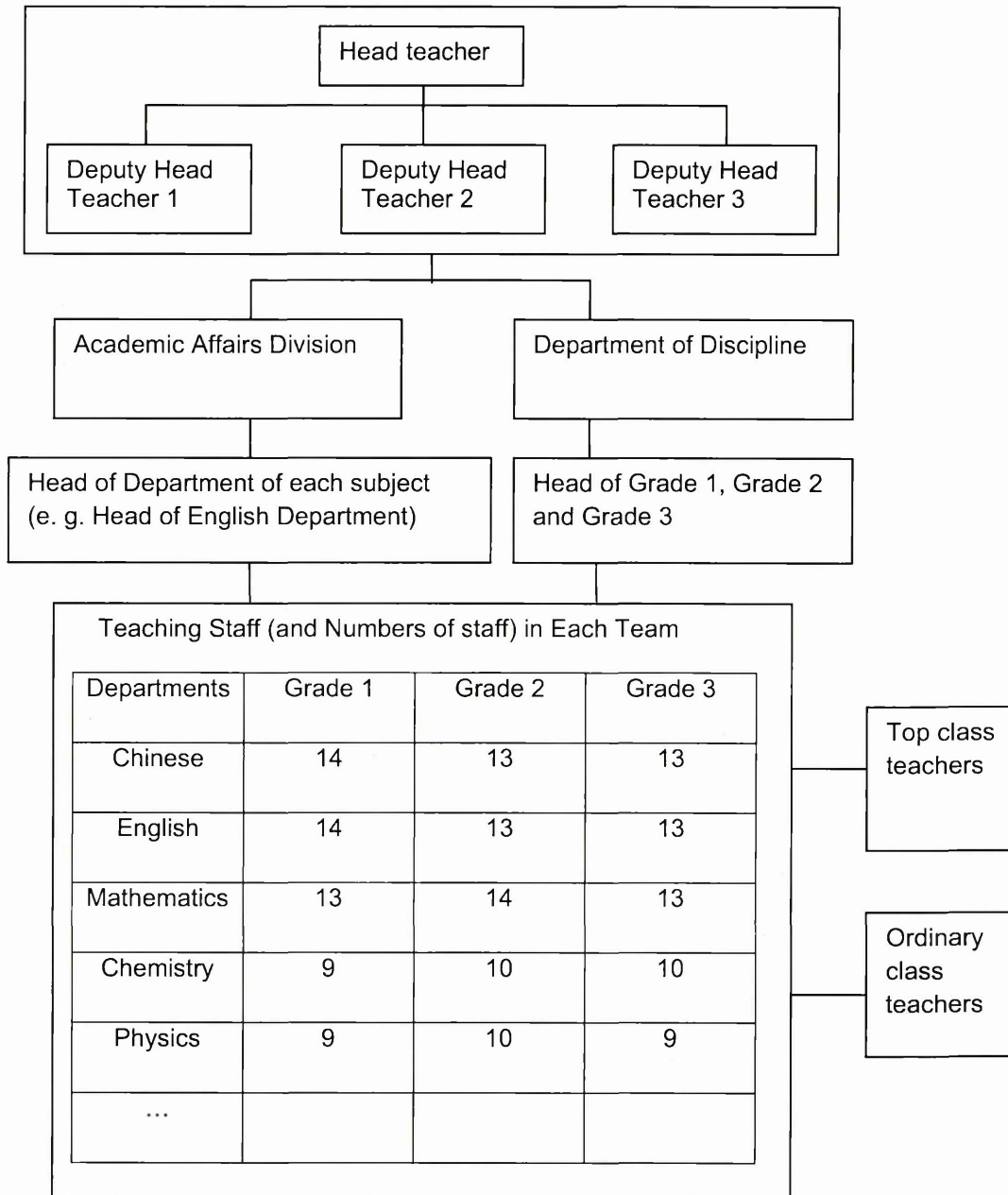
Bourdieu (1998) argues that capital, habitus, and field all work together to generate practice, or social action. The interplay of a person's habitus and capital determines his or her position in the social space, which in turn influences the reproduction of habitus and capital. Therefore, field is 'a field of struggles', in which agents' strategies are more or less concerned with the preservation or improvement of their positions with respect to the defining capital of the field and the reproductivity of each capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Jenkins, 1992). In order to better understand

teachers' practices, it is therefore necessary to analyse the defining capital in CHS and research participants' relative positions in the social space in terms of the volumes and compositions of the capital they possess.

Among the different forms of capital suggested by Bourdieu (1986, 1998) (see 3.7.2), the following types of capital are considered of high importance and reproductivity in CHS: (1) Institutional position; (2) teachers' teaching skill; (3) teachers' 'face' [面子] and social connections [关系]; (4) "seniority [资历]" in terms of age and years of working. Data suggests that different forms of capital are connected in diverse ways, either formally or informally; either explicitly or implicitly, as will be illustrated in the following sub-sections.

5.4.1 Institutional position

Institutional position (as outlined in Figure 5.1) is considered a highly important and reproductive capital in CHS. This is first of all illustrated through the difference between 'top class' teachers and 'ordinary class' teachers. Having 'top classes' to teach means the possibility of generating more cultural capital (e.g. students achieve better performance), economic capital (e.g. teacher salary is related to students' examination scores) and symbolic capital (e.g. 'top class' teachers generally receive better respect and trust than teachers of 'ordinary classes'). Since the difference between teaching 'top class' and 'ordinary class' is apparent, the right to select classes to teach seems to be an important capital. The right is enjoyed by teachers with senior positions, particularly the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teachers and Head of the Academic Affairs Division. There is also the relationship between social positions and cultural capital, evidenced through more Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities being offered to teachers with senior positions. For example, prior to the implementation of the NEC, head of department for each subject was given a one-week training opportunity in the capital city of the province.

5.4.2 Teachers' teaching skill

Teachers' teaching skill is considered an important cultural capital in CHS. According to Bourdieu's classification of cultural capital, teachers' teaching skill is a form of embodied cultural capital. Through the educational system, it has converted

to institutionalised cultural capital, for example, teachers' professional titles, their awards in teaching competitions and their attainment judged by students' examination scores. The successful winning of one or several forms of this capital may gain teachers the recognition for their teaching skills, which is embodied through both cultural capital (recognition from a professional body, e.g. senior teacher certificate and expert teacher certificate) and symbolic capital (e.g. recognition from other teachers). This is highlighted in the following comment:

> "What are important to new teachers, in the first few years of teaching, you should work really hard to achieve good students' examination scores. As long as the recognition is gained, you may be assigned to teach good classes. This produces a positive cycle. Otherwise, you will always stay in the 'ordinary classes'..." (Mr. Pan, an English teacher, Informal talk, 10/01/2008)

Mr. Pan's quote highlights the possibility that students' examination scores may outperform other cultural capital (e.g. awards in teaching competitions) and be taken as the most important criterion to judge teachers' teaching skill. Although the school policy does not overtly say that high student examination scores lead to promotion, it seems that teachers with good student examination scores are more likely to be promoted to important positions, particularly to be 'top class' teachers. In the English department, three teachers were promoted from 'ordinary class' teachers to 'top class' teachers in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Although there is no definite evidence to prove their promotions were the direct result of their students' high examination scores, the chance is big because their students' average examination scores all rank top in the grade. Since the promotion policy is implicit, some other factors may also come into play, including 'face' and social connections.

5.4.3 'Face' [面子] and social connections [关系]

The importance of 'Face' [面子] and social connections [关系] in the Chinese culture is widely discussed in literature (Abbott, 1970; Hu, 1944; Hwang, 1987). According to Hu (1944), 'face' refers to an individual's social position or prestige, gained by successfully performing one or more specific social roles that are well recognised by others. It may be derived from a socially ascribed status such as family background. It may also be derived from achieved status, such as personal qualities of knowledge, ability, wealth, authority, social positions and social connections (Ho, 1976). Therefore, having good student examination scores can add 'face' to teachers. On the other hand, not achieving good student examination scores or not winning teaching competition may be considered signs of 'losing face'. Some

researchers argue that China is a relation-oriented society and social connections are particularly important in the 'face work' (Hwang, 1987). It seems that in CHS, people with strong social connections, particularly with significant others (e.g. Head Teacher) have more 'face' and they are treated more favourably. This is exemplified in the following transcript when a 'top class' teacher Ms. Wang was talking to me about the assignment of teachers when a new 'round' started.

> "I think I am still teaching 'top class' in the next round. Head of the Grade said to me that he asked the head teacher to have me in his group of teachers."
> (Ms. Wang, a 'top class' teacher, Informal talk, 02/07/2008)

Ms. Wang gained her position because of her personal connection with the Head of the grade. The previous section discusses that most teachers with senior management positions teach 'top classes' and this also points to the possibility of how 'face' works in CHS. Admittedly, in order to defend the school's interest (e.g. good NUEE scores to attract 'better' students), teachers' teaching ability to achieve high student scores may be taken as the most important criterion for promoting teachers to teach 'top classes'. However, the limits may be modified to some extent at times in order to give 'face' to high-stake people. In *The Forms of Capital*, Bourdieu (1986:249) has given a good explanation of how "network of connections" work. It is interesting to see how such concepts work universally.

5.4.4 'Seniority' in terms of age and years of working

Given the Confucian culture to highly respect the aged, seniority in terms of age and years of working seems to be an important symbolic capital in CHS. It may not be helpful in supporting teachers to become 'top class' teachers, but it bestows on older teachers much freedom in their practices. For example, a teacher with many years' working experience was criticised by parents for her classroom practices. No action was taken in order to save this teacher's 'face' (Fieldnotes, 12/05/2008).

This section has discussed four types of capital that may be powerful in CHS. The analysis suggests that the different forms of capital are closely related to each other. For example, the possession of more social capital brings the possibility of more cultural capital or symbolic capital. The next section introduces background information of the five research participants and discusses their positions in CHS in terms of the capital they possess.

5.5 Positioning the five research participants

The selection of the five research participants was discussed in 3.4.2. This section further introduces their background and discusses their positions in the field in terms of the capital they possess.

5.5.1 Participant one: Anya

Anya teaches two 'top classes'. Her professional title is senior, the highest among the research participants. Being in her late 40s, she is the most experienced teacher among the research participants, even in the whole English department. She graduated from college in 1980, majoring in English Education. After that, she taught English in a teacher training school for two years and became a teacher in CHS in 1982. It appears that she was immediately identified as a talented teacher because she was asked to demonstrate teaching to others when a new curriculum for middle school was implemented in 1982. Many teachers from the city, particularly the suburban schools, were assigned by the LEA to observe Anya's teaching. Anya also won a number of prizes in the city's teaching competitions in the 1980s and 1990s. Recognition of her skills and status is still growing. Anya has many honorary titles and social positions. Apart from being Head of the English Department, she is a representative of the People's Congress of the city, which is an annual conference to give non-politicians a say. She is also one of the role models of the city, which is an honorary title awarded to highly respected people who are expected to serve as examples for other people professionally and morally. She also seems to be recognized as an authoritative figure in the city's English language teaching (ELT) field. For example, she is often the keynote speaker at ELT seminars and she is a regular judge of teaching competitions. In CHS, Anya seems to have very good interpersonal relationship, including the relationship with senior members (e.g. Head Teacher) and ordinary teachers. Anya is married with a daughter of 12 years old. Her husband is a government official and her daughter is studying in the local primary school. Anya normally lives at home, which is about 15 minutes' drive away. She commutes to work by school bus. Occasionally she stays in the campus accommodation, particularly when she has to work at night. Compared with other research participants, Anya seems to have the most social capital (e.g. highest social positions, institutional positions, and most social connections), cultural capital (e.g. highest professional titles) and symbolic capital (e.g. public recognition for her

teaching skills).

5.5.2 Participant two: Baijuan

Baijuan teaches two science classes. She is in her early thirties and her professional title is level 2, the lowest level. She is now preparing for the assessment to upgrade her professional title. She is one of the few non-local teachers in the school. After finishing her BA studies in English Education in a normal university in the neighbouring province, Baijuan applied for a job in CHS and was offered the position. It was her 9th year of teaching when the study started. Baijuan's teaching can be roughly divided into three phases. She firstly taught in the main campus of CHS for five years (1998-2003). After giving birth in 2003, she took one semester off and was assigned to work in the bilingual school attached to CHS. The bilingual school used to be a private school and it was taken over by CHS in early 2000s (see 5.1). Although bilingual education is being planned in the school, the term "bilingual" is used more as a strategy to attract students. In contrast to students in the main campus, most students in the bilingual school have low entrance scores. After teaching in the bilingual school for three and a half years, Baijuan was assigned to return to teach in the main campus in September 2007. Currently, Baijuan teaches two grade two science classes and is the assistant class teacher for one of these classes. As previously introduced, in CHS and most other high schools in China, teachers normally follow students for a 'round' of three years. Baijuan took grade two classes because the previous English teacher for these classes was having maternity leave. In December 2007, Baijuan won the first prize in the city's teaching competition and she was asked to demonstrate teaching on a number of occasions for teachers from the whole city. Baijuan is married with a son of six years old. Her husband works in the vocational training school of the CHS group. Since she is often busy with work, Baijuan's husband is mainly responsible for childcare. Compared with other research participants, Baijuan seems to have very low capital due to her lower institutional position (science class teacher), less social connections (for being a non-local teacher), lower professional titles (level 2) and low cultural capital (low achievement in the past in terms of student examination scores). Although winning in the city's teaching competition can be counted as one of her cultural capital, the influence it exerts seems to be limited.

5.5.3 Participant three: Caili

Caili seems to represent a typical group of CHS teachers. She is local. She studied in CHS, went to a normal university in the province and was assigned to teach in CHS upon graduation. In the English Department, a number of teachers share her experience, for example, the expert teacher Ms. He and participant four Denghua. When Caili was studying in CHS, her English teachers were Anya and Mr. Liu. The latter teaches in grade one at the time of this study. Caili started working in CHS in September 1999, after completing her BA degree in English Education. This is her 4th round of teaching. Her teaching history is demonstrated in Table 5.7:

Table 5.7: Caili's teaching history

Year	Round	Note
1999-2002	1st round	Students performed well in the NUEE (average score ranked No. 2 in the school)
2002-2003	2nd round	Assigned to take a grade 3 class, perhaps due to excellent student achievement in the previous round (grade 3 is often considered the crucial year because of NUEE); started working with Anya's team
2003-2006	3rd round	
2006-now	4th round	Was assigned to teach 'top class'

Caili is recognized as a 'good teacher' [好老师] in the school. This is evidenced by her role as a teacher of 'top classes'. Her husband is a mathematics teacher in grade one. He teaches two 'top classes' and is the Deputy Head of Grade 1. Due to their heavy teaching duties, they have hired a nanny to take care of their five-year-old daughter and other domestic stuff. Caili seems to have considerable capital among the five research participants because of her identity as a 'top class' teacher and her professional title of level 1. Additionally, her social connection (e.g. the fact that she was Anya's student and her husband is deputy head of grade 1) may also be important social capital for her.

5.5.4 Participant four: Denghua

Like Caili, Denghua is also one of the typical local teachers. He graduated from CHS, went to a normal university in the province and was assigned to teach in CHS upon

graduation. His English teachers were Mr. Pan and Mr. Li. The former was retired and the latter taught grade one at the time of the study. Denghua started working in CHS in September 2002, after completing his BA degree in English Education. This is the 3rd round of his teaching. His teaching history is summarized in the following table:

Table 5.8: Denghua's teaching history

Year	Round	Note
2002-2005	1st round	Students had excellent academic performance, was asked to teach grade 3
2005-2006	2nd round	Students had very high academic performance in the NUEE
2006-now	3rd round	Was assigned to be a class teacher

Currently Denghua teaches two 'ordinary classes' and is the class teacher of one of these classes. The average scores of his two classes are often among the highest in the grade. However, his teaching skill seems not to be highly recognized by other teachers. Denghua is known in the whole team for being the most rigorous and hardworking teacher. For example, he chases every student for their homework to be completed. At the time this study took place, Denghua was doing a part-time MA Education in the university where he got his BA degree. He is in the 2nd year of his course and he goes to university for about 15 days every year for lectures. Denghua is married with a son of about two months old. Similar to participant two Baijuan, Denghua also seems to have relatively less capital due to his position as a science class teacher, his low professional title, his junior age and his less reputation for his teaching skills.

5.5.5 Participant five: Enchu

Enchu is in her early forties and she is one of the most experienced teachers in the Grade Two English Team. She is married with an 18-year old daughter, who is studying in Caili's class. Enchu has been working in CHS since 1989 after getting her BA degree in English Education. Her professional title is senior. Her present position is Head of the Grade Two English Team. However, since Head of the English department Anya works in the same office, Enchu's role seems limited only to administrative duties (e.g. financial management of the team) and Anya has taken

charge of the academic duties, for example, decisions on the teaching progression and the assignment of staff to take part in teaching competitions. Currently Enchu teaches two arts classes. As previously described (5.1), in CHS, the average academic performance in arts classes is lower than science classes and there are more disciplinary problems in arts classes. There are altogether four arts classes in grade two. The other two classes are taught by another teacher of Enchu's age. There are two reasons why Enchu was assigned to teach arts classes: (1) arts classes are known for having less good 'learning atmosphere' [学风] and experienced teachers are assigned in order to maintain discipline (it is considered by teachers that experienced teachers are generally better at discipline management); (2) Enchu expressed to head teachers at the beginning of the 'round' that her focus in these three years would be her daughter's NUEE preparation and she would not be able to spend much time on academic duties in this 'round'. Therefore, she prefers to have a job with less pressure. Under this condition, she prefers to teach 'ordinary classes' or arts classes rather than 'top classes' (Informal talk, 08/05/2008). Among the five research participants, Enchu seems to have enjoyed considerable capital due to her position as Head of the Grade Two English Team, her senior professional title and the respect and 'face' she gets because of her 'seniority'.

5.6 Multiple duties of the English teachers

In Chinese schools, there are rarely full-time administrators. Therefore, school management staff have to teach and teachers have to do administrative work. All teachers in Grade 2 English Team have different non-academic roles, as represented by the five research participants.

Table 5.9: research participants' non-academic roles

Research participants	Non-academic Roles
Anya	Head of the English Department Assistant class teacher of class 2
Baijuan	Assistant class teacher of class 12
Caili	Class teacher of class 3
Denghua	Class teacher of class 17
Enchu	Head of the Grade 2 English Team

	Assistant class teacher of class 24

As shown in the table, all teachers are either class teachers or assistant class teachers (see 5.1 for discussion on class teachers). Therefore, in addition to teaching duties, all teachers need to have at least two one-hour conversations with each student and arrange one home visit to each student in each semester. There are about 60 students in each class and therefore each teacher needs to have about 40 hours' one-to-one coversation with students and arrange about 20 home visits each semester. Additionally, there may be some other temporary duties assigned to teachers at times. For example, English teachers may be asked to be the interpreter when there are foreign visitors. For another example, all teachers are asked to collect information about school alumni at the time when this study took place because the school was arranging for its 155th anniversary ceremony. Therefore, teachers are often loaded with tasks.

5.7 Workflow of the Grade 2 English Team

The workflow of the grade 2 English team is presented in Figure 5.2. As is shown in the figure, teaching pace, coursebook units and materials for teaching are decided by Anya and Enchu based on instructions from LEA and school management staff, and consultation is made with their colleagues on finalizing the teaching progress. As previously discussed, the textbook being used is *New Senior English for China* edited by People's Education Press (Liu, 2006, 2007) because it is required by the Provincial DOE. Anya and Enchu decided that the whole grade would purchase two kinds of supporting materials (*Student Times* and *General Practice*) and compile school-based exercise papers in addition to these materials (see 5.8 for discussion on teaching materials).

There are normally four patterns in terms of teachers' lesson planning, ranging from the first type of complete individual work to the last type of planning wholly dependent on other teachers. Most teachers are between type 2 and type 3. In this way, there may be a great similarity of teaching between teachers due to share of information and ideas during lesson planning. Although the school system seems to have created many tensions between teachers (e.g. ranking table, teaching competitions and the bonus in relation to these), the working atmosphere in grade two seems largely co-operative in comparison with the tensions existing in some

other teams. For example, in one office of the English Department teachers rarely share information and resources with each other. The co-operative atmosphere among grade two English teachers may be opportunistic due to the personality of these teachers. Another reason is there are some external factors to encourage and promote the co-operation among grade two teachers. Since this is the first round of the NEC, the City Education Bureau organises teaching plan competitions twice each year and these competitions require teachers from each school to participate as a team. These experiences may have promoted co-operation and team-working in the team. Additionally, Anya's effort to promote team-working may have also contributed to the collegiality. The factor that most teachers in the office are in their early thirties and some of them are Anya's former students has also facilitated such influence to be made. The idea of taking turns to compile teaching materials is a way to facilitate such co-operation and information sharing.

Figure 5.2: workflow of the Grade 2 English Team

Decide teaching progress & purchase supporting teaching materials

LEA's instruction

School management's instruction

→ Anya discusses with Enchu → Anya and Enchu consult other teachers

Edit supporting teaching materials

Teachers take turns, one teacher one unit → Anya supervises when being asked

4 patterns of preparing teaching

Discuss with colleagues → Individual Plan → Communicate plans with colleagues

Borrow colleague's teaching materials

1

2

4

Finalize plan

3

Make adaptations

Assessing learner achievements

End of unit/ Monthly Examinations

Teachers take turns, one teacher one unit → Anya supervises when asked

Half-semester Examinations

Anya sets examination papers, with the assistance of other teachers

End-of-semester Examinations

City-wide examination, LEA assigns well-respected teachers in different schools to set examination papers

Within the Grade Two English Team, there seems to exist some 'small groups': Anya's group and two other groups. These implicit groups are not formally organised. However, it seems that teachers prefer to discuss ideas and share materials within their own groups. For example, Anya is often Baijuan and Caili's first candidate for asking questions. Denghua often discusses his ideas with another experienced teacher Ms. Zhang. However, when there is a tough question, Anya is often the last resort.

There are four kinds of examinations to assess learner progress: end-of-unit examinations, monthly examinations, half-semester examinations and end-of-semester examinations. End-of-unit examinations are organised by the grade 2 English office and it is considered only as a test. However, all the other examinations are either school-wide or city-wide. Students' English scores, together with scores of other subjects, are ranked in a league table. Similar to exercise papers, end-of-unit examination papers and monthly examination papers are also compiled by teachers in turn. In order to ensure the NEC principles are better conveyed, Anya decides to compile the half-semester examination papers by herself. The end-of-semester examination is normally a city-wide examination and the City Education Bureau assigns well-respected teachers in different schools to set examination papers. Therefore, the extent to which the NEC principles are incorporated in the examination papers vary between examinations, dependent on the persons who are asked to set examination papers.

Having gained some idea of the workflow of English teachers, the next section discusses the materials used for teaching.

5.8 Teaching materials used by teachers of the Grade Two English Team

There are mainly four types of materials used for teaching: the textbook, *Student Times*, *General Practice* and exercise papers edited by teachers in the Grade Two English Team.

The textbook is the main material used for teaching. The one used by CHS teachers is the *New Senior English for China* (Liu, 2006, 2007), which is selected by the Provincial DOE. Among the 11 modules (volumes) of the textbooks, modules one to

five are compulsory. Although modules six to eleven are optional, HSECS (2003:4) suggested that "all schools should teach modules six to eight and actively create conditions for teaching modules nine to eleven". In CHS, it is planned that all the eleven modules will be taught. It is also planned that modules one to four will be completed in grade one, modules five to eight will be completed in grade two and modules nine to eleven will be completed in grade three. The grade 2 teachers for this study are expected to complete module five to six in semester 1 and seven to eight in semester 2. There are about 19 weeks in each semester and each module comprises 5 units. Therefore, the plan is to complete each unit in about one and a half weeks to two weeks. Modules of study and the plan for study are demonstrated in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Modules of Study and plans for study

Level of difficulty	Whether Compulsory	Modules	Year of Study
Difficult ↑ Easy	Optional	Module 11	Grade 3
		Module 10	
		Module 9	
	Suggested	Module 8	Grade 2
		Module 7	
		Module 6	
	Compulsory	Module 5	
		Module 4	Grade 1
		Module 3	
		Module 2	
		Module 1	

Units of the textbook are organized according to topics. For example, *Robots*, *Travelling abroad* and *Living Well*. Each unit is centred on a particular topic to carry out language activities. The textbook editors promote it for having included both language practice, TBLT and other CLT activities (Liu, 2007). Organisation of the unit is summarised in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Elements of the Textbook

Elements	Purpose	Content	Samples of Activities (if suggested)
Warming up	■ To familiarize students with topic of the unit ■ To stimulate students' interests	Questions about the topic of the unit	Questions and answers/Group discussions/ Questionnaires
Pre-reading	■ To lead students to the reading passage	Questions about the topic of the reading passage	Questions and answers/Brief discussions
Reading	■ To study a reading passage of about 800-900 words	A passage containing information about the topic, and the words, expressions and grammar structures of the unit	
Comprehending	■ To check students' understanding of the reading passage	Questions about the reading passage, for example: main ideas, author's attitudes and detailed information	True or False/Summarize/Retell/Cloze
Learning about language	■ To discover and practise language points	Discover important sentences and practise words, expressions and language structures	Write down important sentences/Complete sentences with proper words/language structures/Rewrite sentences
Using language	■ To further practise language points	A reading passage of about 400-600 words and exercises	Rewrite sentences/Cloze/Listening and speaking/

		Writing and discussion
Summing up	■ To ask students to sum up their learning in the unit	Sum up what students have leant in the unit
		Group discussion/Writing
Learning tips	■ To introduce learning tips to students	Using dictionaries, the rules of compound words, the importance of talking in English learning, group work

133

The Weekly *Student Times* is the main supporting material. It is an 8-page paper. Six pages of the paper are mainly devoted to language practice, as can be seen from the themes: grammar and vocabulary, reading and writing, practice for testing and test site. The other two pages provide five to six reading passages (about 300-400 words) to extend reading or discussion of the topic being taught in the unit. Although the paper seems to be form-focused, many NEC principles are identified. For example, the reading passages mainly aim at extending knowledge and understanding of the topic, rather than focusing on practice of form. Additionally, in other parts (e.g. practice for testing), there are also some meaning-focused questions. Anya's rationale for the choice of *Student Times* is "the questions are flexible rather than merely focusing on language practice" (Informal Conversation, 20/01/2008) and Enchu's comment is "I suggest students read passages from the *Student Times* because the topics and discussion seem more interesting than the textbook" (Interview, 10/04/2008).

General Practice is an exercise book organised according to units. Each unit contains 10-page exercises in the form of examination papers. Question types include choices, cloze and reading comprehension.

Additionally, there are also exercise papers edited by teachers in the Grade Two English Team being used every day. Each teacher compiles one unit and they take turns to compile. Supervision is given from Anya when being asked. Normally, one A4-size exercise paper is given to students every day. The content varies according to the persons in charge of the compilation.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the school context for this ethnographic study. It has given a general introduction of the school and analysed that the following capital may be of high importance and reproductivity in CHS: (1) institutional position; (2) teachers' teaching skill; (3) teachers' 'face' [面子] and social connections [关系]; (4) "seniority [资历]" in terms of age and years of working. It has also discussed the position of the five research participants in terms of the capital they possess. It seems that participant one Anya has the most capital among the five research participants. Participant three Caili and participant five Enchu also have considerable capital. Participant two Baijuan and participant four Denghua seem to

possess the least capital. In addition, the workflow of the Grade Two English Team was discussed, along with materials being used for teaching. Chapter six investigates the implementation of the NEC from the five research participants' perspectives.

CHAPTER 6: TEACHERS TALKING ABOUT THE NEC AND THEIR PRACTICES

Having discussed the context of this research in chapter 4 and chapter 5, I now turn to the investigation of the five research participants in chapter 6 and chapter 7. The presentation is organised thematically (e.g. orientations, new emotions and perceived conflicts) to allow norms and patterns in teachers' thinking and practices to be shown more clearly, as these are central in ethnographic investigation (see 3.3.1). The decision to omit additional chapters for each participant is due to considerations of word limits (see 3.7). However, I am aware that presenting each participant in a separate chapter may give readers a more coherent understanding of each individual. Therefore, accounts of each participant are also given (e.g. 5.5, 6.1 & 6.4) in addition to the norms and patterns of their practice. Readers will be able to gain an overall view of the group while not losing sight of individual differences.

Chapter 6 explores the NEC experience from the participants' perspectives. Data presented in this chapter are mainly collected from interviews, in addition to informal conversation and fieldnotes from participant observation. Chapter 7 focuses on my observation of teachers in practices. There are two main reasons underpinning the analysis of teacher thinking before the analysis of their practices:

1. Position-taking is a central theme in Bourdieu's (1992, 1998) sociology, which is heavily drawn on in the analysis. Therefore, it is useful for the reader to be able to gain in Chapter 6 some idea of the positions held by the research participants regarding the NEC, before moving on to their use of the NEC in the next chapter.
2. An important aim of the investigation is to understand the NEC experience from teachers' perspectives: how teachers make sense of their work and the NEC. Interview data gives more access into teachers' thinking processes so that this was treated first.

As discussed in 2.2 and 3.6, the research is a process of constantly shuttling forth and back: data collection was informed by theories and also open to themes emerging from data. The importance of teacher cognition in teacher practices was identified in chapter 2 (e.g. Borg, 2006) and a large amount of discussion in this chapter is focused on different dimensions of teacher cognition, for example, their

knowledge of the NEC, their orientation towards the NEC and their beliefs in teaching. Further to that, teachers' emotions associated with teaching the NEC, their cultural orientations and teacher development are also investigated. The choice for teachers' emotions is because it appears to be recurrent in teachers' data. Cultural orientations and teacher development were chosen because they are identified as important areas of investigation (Borg, 2003; Holliday, 1994; Tsui, 2003).

The integration of data and interpretation in this chapter is deliberate. Firstly, it reflects the ethnographic research process that I followed, in which data analysis takes place alongside data collection. Secondly, putting participants' accounts and the researcher's analysis in one place (rather than in separate chapters) gives readers a more coherent understanding of the situation. Thirdly, it seems more logical to integrate data and interpretation because data reflects interpretation: there is no uninterpreted data (Guba and Lincoln, 2000). Rather than showing data as 'hard facts' and denying the researcher's implication, I would like to show the process of my interpretation, thus allowing readers to judge the situation and my interpretation through the transparency of data and the interpretation process.

One disadvantage of this organisation, however, is the potential confusion it may bring to readers with regard to the version of reality it presents (e.g. whether it is the researcher's or the participant's version of reality). Therefore, wordings such as "she says" or "he says he believes" are deliberately used in the presentation in order to show the researcher's distance and to indicate that these are teachers' voices. "In vivo" (i.e. the words of the participants) is also frequently used in headings to illustrate teachers' positions (Richards, 2005). In addition, in section 6.1 for example, teachers' voices are separately given in the first paragraph of each sub-section and my interpretations are followed in the subsequent paragraphs to show the distinction. The presentation structure of this chapter is given in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Scope of chapter 6

6.1: Teachers' positions regarding the NEC: Knowledge, orientation and engagement

    6.1.1 Anya: "find resonance in the NEC"

    6.1.2 Baijuan: "you can't do this every day"

6.1 Teachers' positions regarding the NEC: knowledge, orientation and engagement

This section discusses teachers' general positions regarding the NEC, focusing on three main areas: knowledge, orientation and engagement. After each participant's position is investigated, an analysis is given in the end of the section.

6.1.1 Anya: "find resonance in the NEC"

Among all five research participants, Anya (see 5.5.1 for background information) expresses the most positive orientation towards the NEC and the highest level engagement with the NEC, along with the demonstration of a high-level knowledge of the NEC guidance. She voices the belief that the NEC is "a crystallization of many experts' wisdom", the NEC is "directional" for her teaching and therefore teachers "have to understand it in order to teach better" (Interview, 16/10/2007). She says that she believes the NEC represents "good practice" and it is "the direction of development for China's ELT" (Informal Conversation, 12/11/2007). She also claims that she "finds resonance in the NEC" because she has been using these principles since early 1980s. Additionally, having seen her idealized teaching in the NEC confirms her beliefs and assures her of her practice (Interview, 16/10/2007). Admittedly, Anya thinks that teachers of 'ordinary classes' may not be able to apply some NEC principles due to the low-level language proficiency of their students, and these teachers should adapt the NEC principles to suit the needs of their students. She believes teachers can find space to make their decisions within the framework of the NEC because "the NEC is a general outline and it gives teachers much freedom in operation" (Interview, 22/05/2008). She says she recognizes that other teachers use fewer CLT activities in grade two and grade three to prepare for NUEE. However, she tries to incorporate CLT activities in spite of examination preparation because CLT activities help students come to a higher level command of English (Telephone Conversation, 06/05/2009).

There are perhaps three main reasons underlying Anya's knowledge, orientation and engagement. First of all, her role as Head of the English Department gives her more opportunities to learn and improve her knowledge about the NEC. For example, when the NEC was introduced in the province in 2004, two training programmes were organized by the Provincial Department of Education (DOE) on introducing the NEC framework of concepts and strategies for implementation. As Head of the English Department, Anya was sent by the school to participate in these two programmes (Informal Conversation, 25/09/2007). Secondly, being Head of the English Department and a prestigious teacher in the city (see 5.5.1), Anya's high stakes may have brought its own pressure for her to increase and display her knowledge, and position her in a place where she has little choice not to implement the NEC and show an active engagement with it. For instance, the pressure to show

that she does understand the NEC and knows how to implement it (e.g. she is sometimes asked to present her ideas in seminars or conferences, and she is constantly asked for guidance by her colleagues), the perceived obligation to shape a teaching community that represents 'good practice' advocated by the official discourse, and the pressure to present to the researcher 'a positive image' of the school (also see 3.4.2). Thirdly, the active engagement of most of her students with the NEC principles (e.g. CLT activities) may have also motivated her to learn and apply NEC principles. From observing and teaching grade two students, I also felt that Anya and participant three Caili's students have shown the highest engagement with NEC principles and most of them are appreciative for CLT activities being used. This may produce a 'virtuous circle' for both Anya and her students for teaching according to NEC principles: Anya is interested in CLT and she applies it in her class; her students' engagement motivates her to further explore and develop CLT strategies, which gains more interest from her students; and this leads her to further discovery and development (see 7.4.2 for further discussion).

6.1.2 Baijuan: "you can't do this every day"

Interview data seem to suggest that Baijuan (see 5.5.2 for background information) holds the most critical view of the NEC among the five research participants. She claims that she has very little knowledge of the NEC and she has not read the curriculum guidance (Interview, 20/05/2008). She also says that the NEC is only to display that China is keeping in line with modern western approaches and it is not applicable in everyday classroom practices (Informal Conversation, 05/02/2008; Interview, 20/05/2008). She believes that students learn more through traditional teaching approaches (e.g. grammar-translation method) than through CLT activities, and it is difficult for her to implement NEC principles in her classes, particularly in one of the classes because students in this class have low motivation for CLT activities (Interview, 20/05/2008).

> "We sometimes have the chance to listen to lectures about teaching or observe others' teaching. They will tell you to incorporate a lot of activities...I was wondering, if it's not a demo lesson, would they use so many activities? A lesson will look good if there are a lot of activities, but for a lesson like that, how much can students learn? Demonstration lessons and competitions are just like cheating, because you can do one single class like this, but you can't do this every day. It's difficult to do it everyday...Now when you take part in a competition or demo lesson, they require you to have more activities. But you may not be able to do it everyday. Like my classes. I can do it in class 12, but it will be difficult in class 13. Therefore, I think competitions and demo lessons are

140

superficial. The real thing lies in everyday classroom practice...Actually I don't think there is much change in teaching approaches over the years, especially in our country. Sometime ago TBLT was popular in China, but there's not too much change from our previous teaching approaches. Now activities are advocated, but how does it differ from TBLT that was once famous? You still do tasks. You just divide tasks into different activities. Actually I can't see much change in teaching approaches apart from the different names being used..."(Interview, 20/05/2008)

The underlying comment ("I was wondering...") seems to have posed some interesting points. First of all, Baijuan's denial of the effectiveness of activities for students' learning is obvious ("...for a lesson likes that, how much can students learn?"). She even assumes promoters of the NEC principles may also not accept that these strategies are effective ("if it's not a demonstration lesson, would they use so many activities?"). However, she thinks lessons with activities "look good". This implies a certain level of dissonance in her thinking. On one hand, she seems to have accepted the incorporation of activities as received practice. On the other hand, she is not very convinced of its effectiveness. There is a possibility that in spite of her disapproval of activities, she perceives activities are needed for her lessons to be approved by others (If so, she has also joined in the reproduction of such perception (Bourdieu, 1998). This points to another theme in Baijuan's comment: the divergence between demonstration lessons and everyday teaching practice. Because of her perception of the difference between 'are good' and 'look good', Baijuan believes teachers intentionally use activities in demonstration lessons in order to present a 'look good' lesson and therefore they are divorced from everyday practice. This theme is further investigated in chapter 7.3.

Baijuan may have used some NEC principles in her teaching ("I can do it in class 12..."), although she may not realize it or she does not acknowledge it. It may not be she does not want to implement these strategies, as she claims overtly. Rather, it may be her classroom realities (e.g. students' low language proficiency) that have made using CLT activities unthinkable or undoable practice for her (Bourdieu, 1998). On the other hand, since her classroom realities have constrained her use of the NEC principles, she may feel the need to defend her practice by criticizing the NEC. Another possible explanation is that Baijuan seems to have a confused understanding of various teaching approaches, and she may have applied NEC principles without recognizing it. She thinks TBLT is an old approach being replaced by activity approach (although Activity Approach was implemented in some Hong

Kong Schools in early 2000s, it seems to have never been suggested as a teaching approach in major ELT publications).

Baijuan's suspicion of the nature of curriculum change is also identified in the above quote. She thinks the NEC is 'old wine in a new bottle' (Nunan, 2004) and curriculum reforms only change the name of teaching approaches rather than approaches. However, 'old wine' may not necessarily refer to the NEC guidance. From her statements (e.g. "I can't see much change in teaching approaches..."), it can not be inferred that she perceives the NEC guidance to be lack of change. It is also possible that she is suggesting teachers (rather than the NEC guidance) have not made much change in terms of their classroom practices, regardless of frequent curriculum changes.

Section 6.1.1 has suggested that Anya's high stakes may have given her higher pressure for demonstrating an active orientation towards the NEC. Being in a lower position, Baijuan may have less pressure to demonstrate such orientation and engagement, at least to the researcher. Additionally, the difficulty of using NEC principles in 'ordinary classes' may have built into her habitus (Bourdieu, 1998), which makes her take a less active orientation towards the NEC guidance. Furthermore, Baijuan's success in the teaching competition suggests that she has the capability to teach according to NEC principles and judges' expectations. However, she does not see an association between this capability or skill and the improvement of students' examination scores (section 5.5.1 demonstrates that her students' examination scores often rank as one of the lowest in the grade) and her own capital increase (Bourdieu, 1986). This experience may have also discouraged Baijuan's engagement with the NEC.

6.1.3 Caili: "you have to use it in 'top classes'"

Among all five research participants, Caili (see 5.5.3 for background information) seems to have taken the most similar position to participant one Anya. Like Anya, Caili says she believes the NEC is useful in guiding teaching, particularly for 'top classes'. She says she feels largely comfortable in using NEC principles in her teaching because she has been using such approaches prior to the implementation of the NEC (Interview, 19/12/2007). Although she expresses some levels of difficulty in implementing certain approaches (e.g. she believes her English proficiency is

142

limited and has restrained her use of CLT approaches and she sees certain contradiction between NEC implementation and examination preparation), Caili believes her implementation is largely successful because she can find ways to balance contextual needs and constraints (Interview, 12/05/2008; 20/05/2008). Additionally, Caili has also made much effort in increasing her knowledge about the NEC. One example is that Anya and Caili have made a self-financed trip to Beijing to attend a NEC training programme (Informal Conversation, 05/12/2007).

Bourdieu's theory may offer an explanation for the similarity between Anya and Caili's position taking. According to Bourdieu (1998), proximity in the space of social positions, along with the dispositions and interests associated with those positions, enables agents to have similar position-taking. Compared with other participants, Caili has the most similar institutional position to Anya due to their identities as 'top class' teachers. As discussed in 6.1.1, Caili's students have similar language proficiency to Anya's students, and most of her students have also displayed high engagement with CLT activities and other NEC principles. Therefore, implementing NEC principles may be more achievable or thinkable for Anya and Caili than for Baijuan (Bourdieu, 1998). Secondly, Caili states that talking with Anya is the main way in which she acquires her knowledge and she has shown a high trust in Anya's views. Therefore, her understanding is very likely to be built on Anya's understanding. Anya may have transmitted her values to Caili through discussing ideas with Caili and sharing her teaching materials with Caili. Thirdly, it is considered that teachers' beliefs are related to their own learning experience (Borg, 2006; Woods, 1996). Caili was Anya's student when she was studying in CHS (see 5.5.3) and she refers to her learning experience with Anya as influential in her beliefs of teaching (Interview, 08/01/2008).

Admittedly, Caili's identity as a 'top class' teacher seems to place her in a position where active engagement with the NEC is needed. On one hand, she says that students in 'top classes' have a stronger desire for CLT activities to be applied (Informal Conversation, 20/03/2008). On the other hand, the discourse in CHS seems to reflect an expectation that 'top class' teachers should implement NEC principles, while the attitude towards 'ordinary class' teachers may be more tolerant. This is represented in the following comments:

"I often remind them that they should delete some activities when they are using

my teaching plans because our students are different..." (Anya, Interview, 22/05/2008)

"You have to use it in 'top classes'. Our students have higher cognition level and you need to create some activities for them..." (Caili, Interview, 06/05/2008)

"They are different. They are 'top classes'." (Denghua, Interview, 19/06/2008)

As can be seen from the above comments, both 'top class' teachers and 'ordinary class' teachers see it taken for granted that NEC principles are taught in 'top classes'. In this context, 'ordinary class' teachers (e.g. Baijuan) may use students' language proficiency and low motivation to defend not using NEC principles, while 'top class' teachers (e.g. Anya and Caili) are positioned in a place they are expected to be the implementers of NEC principles. On the other hand, Anya is an active promoter of the NEC and she has demonstrated that NEC can be implemented in the 'top classes' in CHS. In such context, the space for Caili to choose is rather limited. An active engagement with the NEC may be the best choice if she expects recognition for her teaching skills. Admittedly, since Anya has much power in the English department (e.g. to nominate a 'top class' teacher, to give someone opportunities to participate in teaching competitions and to voice her opinions about a particular teacher to senior managers), demonstrating a similar position to Anya may also be beneficial for Caili's own capital acquisition, for example, stabilize her position as a 'top class' teacher (Bourdieu, 1986).

6.1.4 Denghua: "NEC principles are only for 'top classes'"

Similar to participant two Baijuan, Denghua (see 5.5.4 for background information) also expresses his low engagement with the NEC guidance. He says he is not particularly interested in knowing the NEC guidance because it is not very much related to his teaching. He says he has some knowledge of the CLT approach which he learnt in his part-time MA Education programme. Apart from books written by Chinese authors, he has also read the Chinese translation for *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). However, he believes that CLT activities are only for 'top classes' because students in these classes have better English, while 'ordinary class' teachers should be more concerned with NUEE preparation because students of 'ordinary classes' have more difficulty in surviving the NUEE (Interview, 02/06/2008; 19/06/2008). Believing in the NUEE as the "guiding baton" for teaching, Denghua says following previous NUEE question types may better benefit his teaching than implementing NEC

guidance. He also says he is sceptical of the prospectus of 'quality education' and examination reform (see 4.4.1 for NUEE reform in JZ Province), as long as the examination-oriented education system is still carried out in China.

> "No. No matter how it changes, I believe the essence is going to be the same. It's impossible to integrate CLT assessment in our system. We have such a large number of students and the time for examination is limited... I often read blogs on the Internet, there are a lot of complaints about the NEC. Let's take TBLT for an example. Honestly, Miss Fang, I think it's useless. We have such a big class and I don't think we can do it in our class. Students won't like it."
> (Interview, 19/06/2008)

Although Denghua voices certain scepticism about applying CLT approaches in his teaching, his statement does not show he is against the NEC principles. He says he is not interested in knowing the NEC, but he has searched for information on the Internet. It is perhaps the difficulties he met in implementing the NEC principles, along with the critics on the website, have confirmed his decision not to take a CLT approach, and hence not to further acquire knowledge about CLT and other NEC principles, apart from that required by his MA Education course. In section 6.1.1, a 'virtuous circle' is identified in Anya's practice. In contrast, Denghua's situation may tip him into a 'vicious circle' for teaching according to NEC principles.

Denghua mentions that he often reads blogs on the Internet and this is common among teachers. Observation data show that in addition to reading, listening to lectures, or talking to colleagues, the Internet has become a very important source for teachers to acquire information. A lot of 'education experts' open blogs on the Internet to publicize their thinking or approaches. This includes the former English teaching and research co-ordinator of the provincial DOE. All research participants state that they often use the Internet to obtain information about teaching (e.g. ideas on activity arrangements, the background information about topics and supporting pictures for the powerpoint presentation). Four research participants (Baijuan, Caili, Denghua and Enchu) state that the Internet has become the second most important source of their knowledge acquisition, the first being discussion with colleagues, particularly discussion with more experienced teachers like Anya. They believe the latter is more beneficial for them because it is more relevant and practical due to teachers' shared context of teaching.

Like other teachers, Denghua is also a pragmatist. Out of the possible choices for teaching, he has taken an approach that may enable him to see a more immediate result (approaches oriented towards the question styles of the NUEE papers). On

the other hand, based on the information he acquired from the Internet, Denghua is suspicious about the nature and the possibility for change. He does not believe change will happen in the education system in general, and in NUEE in particular. In such context, he has chosen to disengage himself from implementing the NEC principles.

The teacher evaluation method currently in place in CHS may have also confirmed Denghua in his choice of position taking. As previously analyzed, students' examination scores seem to be the main criterion for judging teachers (see 5.4.2). Denghua's 'teaching skill' is not highly recognized in the school. However, this does not prevent his students from achieving high marks in examinations, including city-wide examinations. This also did not affect him to be promoted to be a class teacher. Therefore, in comparison with ensuring high student examination scores, implementation of the NEC may seem less essential for Denghua's capital acquisition (Bourdieu, 1986).

Additionally, being an 'ordinary class' teacher, Denghua is not under high pressure as Anya and Caili are to apply NEC principles in his practice. Under these conditions, ensuring the student examination scores seems to be adequate for Denghua to sustain his position (Bourdieu, 1986). In an informal conversation (30/06/2008), Denghua has expressed his lack of interest with promotion. He seems to be content with his current situation and position. Therefore, his strategy may be more associated with preserving his capital rather than changing his capital. Assuming agents' strategies are more or less concerned with capital acquisition with a purpose to upgrade their social positions (Bourdieu, 1986), it may not appeal to Denghua to change his practice (e.g. implement NEC principles). Bourdieu (1998) argues that position taking is associated with position and disposition. Denghua's disposition in terms of his English proficiency (Denghua believes that his spoken English proficiency is poor and he does not believe it qualifies him to successfully use CLT activities) may also disengage him from using CLT activities and other NEC principles.

6.1.5 Enchu: "Students won't listen if it's not relevant to NUEE"

Enchu (see 5.5.5 for background information) says that she has a very positive orientation towards the NEC. She talks favourably of the NEC and its suggested

146

principles. She believes the NEC guidance is "directional in the tendency of future teaching" because "our traditional teaching is out of date and there must be changes". She says she enjoys the changes brought by the NEC, for example, words are more difficult in the textbooks. Therefore, her daughter can understand CCTV 9[20] although she is only a grade two student. She holds the most favourable view of the textbook among the five research participants. She says, comparing the four textbooks she has used, the new textbook is the best because topics are up-to-date and they are very close to everyday life, which makes her think that "the advantage of being an English teacher is that we can often catch up with societal development because we are learning new things at the same time as teaching language". Additionally, she also says she likes the activities suggested in the new textbook because they offer better interaction between teachers and students (Interview, 17/06/2008). However, she thinks her engagement with the NEC is not active. Most of her knowledge about the NEC was gained in the city's training programme, in which she was asked to participate as Head of the Grade 2 English Team. She says that she spends little time in furthering her knowledge about the NEC because she is too occupied in caring for her daughter. As shown in 5.5.5, she says she told the head teachers at the beginning of the 'round' that she would switch her focus from teaching to caring for her daughter in this 'round' in the latter's NUEE preparation (Informal talk, 08/05/2008). Enchu says she uses NEC principles more often in grade one than in grade two because students are too engaged in examination preparation and they show less interest in CLT activities.

Researcher: Any group discussion?
Enchu: We had more in grade 1, but very few in grade 2...Students were very active and enthusiastic in grade 1. Now they become very realistic. They listen to those they think are useful, and ignore those that they think are useless...
Researcher: What is useful?
Enchu: Those in relation to examination...It's true. We were the same when we were students.
(Interview, 16/03/2008)

Similar comments are also expressed by Baijuan (Interview, 10/04/2008), Caili (Interview, 20/05/2008) and Denghua (Interview, 19/06/2008) at other occasions. As previously discussed, Anya is also aware of such situation (see 6.1.1). In contrast to other research participants' relative consistency between orientation and engagement, a conflict between orientation and engagement is identified in Enchu's

---

[20] English channel of China's Central Television Station.

comments. She has used caring for daughter and students' low motivation in grade two to justify her low engagement. However, there is still a certain level of conflict. Her acknowledgement of students' disengagement from CLT activities implies that she may think CLT activities are not effective (at least for examination preparation), and therefore her orientation towards NEC may not be as high as she has stated. One possible explanation is Bourdieu's 'doxa' theory (Webb et al., 2002). From one aspect, like Anya, against the NEC principles may be unspeakable for Enchu because her role as Head of the Grade Two English Team presupposes that she should display a consistent attitude with the official discourse according to the role expectation suggested by Confucius that ministers should follow emperors which may be read in modern situation as that leaders should be more actively respond to policies of the government. From another aspect, her 'doxa' also includes an awareness of the very restricted options available for students in terms of their own cultural trajectory (Webb et al., 2002): her students' limited level of language proficiency may make using CLT activities unthinkable for her. Additionally, there is a general thinking that older teachers have more difficulty in accepting the NEC principles (e.g. see discussion on pilot study, 3.2.2). As an experienced teacher, Enchu may feel a need to defend her position that she is keeping in line with the time by showing her acceptance of the NEC principles to preserve her 'seniority' as an experienced teacher and Head of the Grade Two English Team. It is apparent that Enchu's 'seniority' comes into play in her position taking. She states an overt disengagement from teaching due to the reason to take care of her daughter. However, it was not (at least overtly) blamed by the senior managers and her request was approved. Secondly, supposing teachers' strategies are more or less concerned with the preservation or improvement of their capital in order to improve their positions in the social space (Bourdieu, 1998), the need to improve capital may seem less important to Enchu because of her 'seniority', as she states:

> "Young teachers need to work hard because they need to upgrade their professional titles to senior. However, I am already a senior teacher. There's nothing I'm striving for at the moment. I teach to enjoy myself." (Informal talk, 09/05/2008).

One more reason may explain the discrepancy between Enchu's orientation and engagement. Enchu's orientation towards the NEC possibly comes from two sides: the side of a mother and the side of a teacher. As a mother, she is happy with the NEC because she can see her daughter's English proficiency is relatively higher than her students from previous 'rounds' and she attributes the improvement to the reorganisation of textbooks. As a teacher, she may be discouraged by the

148

implementation at times. However, the side of a mother may have downplayed the side of a teacher to enable her to show a positive orientation towards the NEC.

6.1.6 Conclusion

The above sections introduce the five research participants' knowledge, orientation and engagement with the NEC. It can be concluded from the analysis that:

- Three teachers express positive orientation towards the NEC and two of them have expressed active engagement with the NEC.

- Although the NEC is described as a 'radical change' by the official discourse (see 4.3 and 4.4), teachers do not seem to see the change to be 'radical' and all of them state that their teaching is not much changed due to the introduction of the NEC.

- There is a general consistency between each participant's orientation and engagement: apart from participant five Enchu, all other participants' stated engagement is consistent with their stated orientation.

- Although orientation towards the NEC varies, principles suggested in the NEC seem to be generally accepted by teachers as 'good practice' or 'received practice'.

- NUEE is considered as the main obstacle for NEC implementation, along with students' English proficiency and their motivation for CLT activities.

- Teachers' reported orientation and engagement seem to be very much related to their positions in the field (Bourdieu, 1998). 'Top class' teachers are more engaged with the NEC and 'ordinary class' teachers are less engaged with the NEC. Teachers with managerial roles have shown more positive orientation than teachers without managerial roles.

- There are difficulties or pressures associated with teachers of different positions. 'Ordinary class' teachers voice the difficulties (e.g. students' language proficiency and motivations) for the NEC to be implemented. However, high stakes have also brought higher pressure for 'top class' teachers, who are expected to implement NEC while expectation of 'ordinary class' teachers is less demanding.

- Four participants mention that they have used more NEC principles in grade one than in grade two, because in grade two they have higher pressure to prepare for NUEE and students are less motivated to do CLT activities.

149

- As illustrated by the cases of Baijuan and Denghua, whether NEC is implemented in everyday practice may not have a direct impact on the assessment of learning and teaching. This may have reduced teachers' motivation for using NEC principles. They seem to think that CLT is not associated with high examination scores and that form-focused teaching leads to high marks. It may also encourage teachers to wear two pairs of shoes by doing CLT activities in front stage performance (e.g. demonstration lessons) and doing form-focused practice in back stage teaching (everyday teaching) (see 7.3 for further discussion).

6.2 New emotions associated with teaching the NEC

While emotions seem to be a less studied area in teaching literature, Hargreaves (1994) argues that it is an important dimension of research in understanding teaching. In this study, teachers' emotions associated with teaching the NEC feature frequently in the data. Among the different emotions they have talked about in response to the NEC (e.g. ambivalence, anxiety, frustration and expectation), the following three seem to be most recurrent: uncertainty, insecurity and ambivalence. There also seems to be an interwoven relationship between these different dimensions of emotion. The discussion in this section is titled uncertainty and insecurity. However, teachers' ambivalence can also be seen in the discussion in both sections.

6.2.1 Uncertainty

The first recurrent theme to be identified in the data is teacher uncertainty brought by the curriculum change. Wheatley (2002) argues that uncertainty is part of the broader context of any educational reform. This is evidenced in Cohen and Ball's (1990) finding that the achievement of reform-related goals is often only apparent after a long time, thus making it difficult for teachers to find unambiguous evidence. This is also supported by Riley's (2000) argument that the broader process of reform requires substantial disequilibrium in educational systems and therefore it is generally non-linear and filled with uncertainty. All five research participants have stated different levels of uncertainty in response to the NEC.

Teachers' first uncertainty seems to be caused by a lack of clarity in the agenda for change. Given the importance of NUEE in the Chinese education system (see 4.1.4), the agenda of NUEE reform that JZ province is planning to take (see 4.4.1) seems to be highly influential on teachers' practices. However, at the time when this study took place, the NUEE reform policy still seemed to be less clear. Information was passed to teachers from administrators of the City Education Bureau that NUEE reform would be taken place. However, no definite policy document was published before April 2008. In this context, both administrators (of the City Education Bureau and County Education Committee) and teachers seem to be caught in a difficult position for decision making.

> "The provincial DOE says there is definitely reform on NUEE. However, before the reform policy coming out, we can only cross the river by feeling the stones." (Mrs. Liu, administrator of County A Education Committee, Interview, 25/03/2008)

The metaphor "cross the river by feeling the stones" clearly shows Mrs. Liu's uncertainty that she has to test her actions step by step. The same feeling was also expressed by Anya (Informal talk, 05/03/2008). Although the provincial DOE reminds the LEA administrators that there is definitely to be a reform of NUEE policy, the extent to which NUEE reform will take place is still vague. The information passed from administrator of the City Education Bureau, who got the information from administrators of the provincial DOE is "questions to test communicative use of English will be added and there will be no direct questions from the textbook". However, 'add' itself is a less specific term. To what extent meaning-focused questions will be added is less clear for teachers. Although there may be no direct question from the textbook, it does not suggest the NUEE paper will not be largely form-focused. As already mentioned, the new NUEE policy was announced in April 2008, nearly two years after the NEC was implemented. For most of this period of the time the prospect of NUEE reform was less clear. Although teachers may have decided to prioritize NUEE preparation ahead of NEC implementation, it still seems to be difficult for them to decide their practices. In this sense, the provincial DOE administrators' autonomy seems to have become teachers' constraints (Ball, 1994).

Secondly, due to technological developments and the advent of the 'information age', teachers are exposed to multiple sources of information, for example, books, 'expert' talks and Internet forums. These different sources of information may offer multiple levels of reinterpretations (illustrated in Figure 6.1) to the NEC guidance

and there may well be certain conflicts between these different sources reflecting different trends in the global ELT discourse (see 2.1). For example, a popular debate in ELT literature is the form of language to be taught (e.g. native speaker norm-referenced versus English as a Lingua Franca) (Brown, 1995; Seidlhofer, 1999; Widdowson, 1994). The new textbook seems to have favoured a focus on varieties of English view by presenting various language styles. However, most examination papers (e.g. city-wide examination papers and previous NUEE papers) and reference works (e.g. grammar books owned by teachers) still make almost exclusive reference to notions of the native speaker culture as the source providing the language to be taught and the information provided is relatively monolithic. Therefore, teachers have to make selections out of different and sometimes conflicting interpretations or 'interpretations of interpretations' (see Figure 6.1) (Rizvi and Kemmis, 1987, cited in Ball, 1994:17).

Figure 6.1: Interpretations and Reinterpretation of the NEC

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  High School English Curriculum Standard (HSECS) (MOE, │
│                    2003)                          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Level-1 Interpretation                       │
│                                                                 │
│  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐          │
│  │ Textbooks    │  │ Publications │  │ Editorials in │          │
│  │              │  │ on State     │  │ State         │          │
│  │              │  │ Teaching     │  │ Newspapers    │          │
│  │              │  │ Journals     │  │               │          │
│  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘          │
│                                                                 │
│  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐          │
│  │ Books and    │  │ Policies of  │  │     ...      │          │
│  │ 'talks' of   │  │ the          │  │              │          │
│  │ prominent    │  │ Provincial   │  │              │          │
│  │ scholars     │  │ DOE          │  │              │          │
│  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘          │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Level-2 Interpretation                       │
│                                                                 │
│  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐    │
│  │ Supplementary teaching & learning │  │ Policies of the  │    │
│  │ materials (e.g. examination       │  │ City Education   │    │
│  │ papers & teachers' books)         │  │ Bureau           │    │
│  └──────────────────────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘    │
│                                                                 │
│  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐    │
│  │ Publications on various Teaching  │  │ Comments on      │    │
│  │ Journals                          │  │ Local Newspapers │    │
│  └──────────────────────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘    │
│                                                                 │
│  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐    │
│  │ Books and 'talks' of different    │  │      ...         │    │
│  │ levels of 'experts'               │  │                  │    │
│  └──────────────────────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘    │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Level-3 Interpretation                       │
│  ┌────────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────┐        │
│  │ Policies of the│ │ Discussion │ │ Peer     │ │ ...  │        │
│  │ County         │ │ on Internet│ │ Discussion│ │      │        │
│  │ Education      │ │ Forums     │ │          │ │      │        │
│  │ Committee      │ │            │ │          │ │      │        │
│  └────────────────┘ └────────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────┘        │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Additionally, teachers seem to have also shown an uncertainty in the use of textbooks. As previously discussed, the MOE requires textbook editors to incorporate more content in the textbook and the motivation is to give teachers' more options for selection, for example, through the use of optional modules. Teachers are expected to make changes and selections to the textbook (see 4.3).

This situation is different from what was before the curricula changes started[21], when there was less content and most teachers followed the textbook rigorously (Ms. He, Informal talk, 11/12/2007; Mr. Pan, an English teacher from a middle school in LQ, Informal talk, 10/01/2008). The motivation of the MOE is to empower teachers. However, the feeling is not shared by all teachers, as illustrated in Enchu's comment:

> "We complained to the LEA, and they said we could take what we need and delete things we felt unimportant. However, I feel now that the material is here and we are worried something will be in the examination. They assured us that nothing from the textbook will appear in examination, but I still want to teach all the materials. We are in a dilemma. It's difficult to cover everything, you have to be selective. However, we think now that you have printed it and we want to pass more information to students. Additionally, if we often delete things, students will lose their trust on the textbook. They will think, teachers think textbook is not important because they delete so many things. Why would we recite texts? Additionally, nowadays students are very difficult to deal with. If they achieve low in examinations, they may complain to the head teacher and having not finished the textbook can be one of the reasons." (Enchu, 17/06/2008)

Enchu's uncertainty is obvious in her comment. Compared with her experience in the past, she seems to perceive herself in a position that she cannot choose not to choose (Woods, 1999): the selection of optional modules is a choice and on the other hand, not to select optional modules (that is, to follow all the modules) is also a choice. On one hand, she feels that it is difficult to cover all texts and teachers need to be selective. On the other hand, she feels she has to cover the texts in order to preserve the authority of textbooks and avoid potential criticism from students of not covering the textbooks (see 6.3.1 for further discussion on 'covering the syllabus'). Her decision is to cover the texts. However, her decision seems to reflect her uncertainty about the prospect of change because one of her reasons to cover all materials is to avoid potential criticism. This points to another theme in her emotions: insecurity. This emotion seems to be also shared by other research participants.

6.2.2 Insecurity

Associated with teachers' uncertainty is the insecurity brought by the curriculum change. In order to pilot the new curriculum implementation, two more 'new textbooks' were used prior to this new textbook. There are three grades (age groups) in high schools and each textbook was used for three 'rounds'. This means every

---

[21] The NEC was started in September 2006. However, two more 'new textbooks' were introduced previously (also see discussion in the next section).

time a new 'round' is started, teachers have to use a new type of textbook. Therefore, teachers have been using 'new textbooks' for the majority of the past ten years.

> "In the past, we used the same textbook for over ten years and we were very familiar with the texts. We knew what to expect (from students) based on our previous experience and we could emphasize on those important areas. Now the textbooks are new to us and the texts are very long. We spend a long time in getting to know the texts. I think it actually affects our teaching…Teachers always think, well, they are going to change the textbook in the next round, all this information is just for one-off use and there's not much point spending too much time…" (Enchu, Interview,17/06/2008)

Enchu's opinion seems to represent most teachers' viewpoints. The frequent textbook change seems to be an important factor in teachers' insecurity. It seems that such discourse is taken by some teachers as signs of educational managers' disapproval of their own decisions, and does not enable them from seeing the continuity of change, as highlighted in the following transcript:

> "The purpose of frequent curriculum changes is to keep in line with the International trend. Ok, now that you want to be 'advanced', please change it to the highest standard and make it as developed as the West, so we don't need to change any more…"(Mr. Yang, an English teacher from a middle school in LQ, 10/02/2008)

Apart from his rejection of the frequent curricula changes, Mr. Yang's comment also show a tendency of the "fallacy of the unidimensionality of development" as discussed in 4.2.1 that he perceives things introduced from the West as undeniably superior to practices in China (Sampson, 1984). This explains how teachers are spoken by the discourse, in which possibilities for thoughts are already constructed (Ball, 1994). Mr. Yang is criticizing actions of the official. However, his thinking (Western practices being more superior to Chinese practice) is constructed by the official discourse. This may also explain the interpretation in 6.1 why the NEC principles are perceived by all teachers as 'good practice' or 'received practice'.

In addition to frequent changes, the fact that the textbook is new also brings insecurity to teachers. In the same interview, Enchu expresses an additional fear, that is, with the new textbook, she is less capable of predicting the difficulties students may experience in their study, and hence they may not attain the learning outcomes. Such a concern is also shared by all other teachers. They all comment that predicting learners' confusion is an important part of their lesson preparation and the new textbook has made the task more challenging. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) argue that why Chinese teachers have to predict learners' questions is because many students do not ask questions for fear of 'losing face' or being perceived as

'showing off'. Therefore, teachers have to, without being asked, explain 'points' that students may have difficulty in understanding. All teachers accept such an explanation. In addition, Baijuan and Denghua think that the main problem is, with low English proficiency, their students may not know what questions to ask. If teachers do not explain, their students may miss important 'points' (Baijuan, Interview, 10/05/2008; Denghua, Interview, 07/06/2008). Baijuan also mentions the need of sustaining teachers' 'face' and authority. She says that although 'losing face' is not her particular concern, not being able to answer students' questions may reduce students' trust on her, and thus affect the maintenance of a positive teacher-learner relationship, which she believes is important for students' learning. Caili, on the other hand, states that not being able to predict students' questions affect the smooth delivery of lessons, because she can otherwise carefully arrange the sequence of learning in order to maximize learning outcomes (Interview, 10/04/2008). Anya also comments that she tries her best to ensure all potential questions are covered in her lesson plans so that she is prepared with all possibilities. Such a pressure makes her constantly worried that she is not making the best preparation (Interview, 09/03/2008).

Furthermore, although teachers have space to choose, they can only choose within given possibilities (Ball, 1994). Unifying government policy with perceived learning effectiveness may be the best choice for teachers. However, not all teachers see such a possibility. For example, it was discussed in 6.1 that Baijuan and Denghua perceive NEC principles to be less effective for supporting students' learning and they choose to engage less actively with the NEC. However, given the official discourse in promoting the NEC and the call that NEC principles will be incorporated in the NUEE, it is doubtful that they have never had any hesitation (although Denghua states that he does not see the prospectus of change). Such situation may add to their emotional insecurity. As can be seen in the discussion in both sections, teachers' ambivalence is obvious, for example, the extent to which the NEC is taught and the use of optional modules. Another reason that may have led to teachers' ambivalence is their perceived goal conflicts. This is discussed in the following section.

6.3 Teachers' perceived goal conflicts

Section 6.2 discusses teachers' emotions associated with teaching the NEC. As can be seen from the discussion, one of the reasons for their uncertainty, insecurity and ambivalence is their perceived goal conflicts. Goal conflicts are often noted in curriculum innovations, as exemplified in Boyd (1979:13):

> "New goals are acquired even while the established goals are retained. Expectations for the role of the schools seem to expand continuously. The school is asked to be an engine for progress and reform, but at the same time is always expected to maintain society. Thus, by a process of accretion, goals proliferate and increasingly compete with one another for scarce resources."

In this study, the different levels of goals voiced by research participants seem to represent a continuum ranging from short-term purpose to long-term purpose (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2: Continuum of goals suggested in teachers' comments

Short-term purpose (Immediate result)	Unit examination
	Monthly examination
	End-of-semester examination
	NUEE

Grammatical competence
Communicative competence — Sociolinguistic competence
Strategic competence

Mid-term purpose

Learning skills
All-round skills — Social skills
Emotional Attitude

Find a good job
Long-term purpose   Achieve success — Achieve success at work
Make contribution to the society

From another aspect, these conflicts are illustrated in Figure 6.3, with factors close to the NEC principles in one column and those more distant from NEC principles in the other column.

Figure 6.3: Teachers' perceived goal conflicts

Teachers' perceived goal conflicts

Focus on…   Focus on…

Form-focused practice	CLT activities

Knowledge acquisition	Skill development

Short-term purpose	Long-term purpose

Exclusive focus on cognitive development	Value affective factors

→

NEC Principles
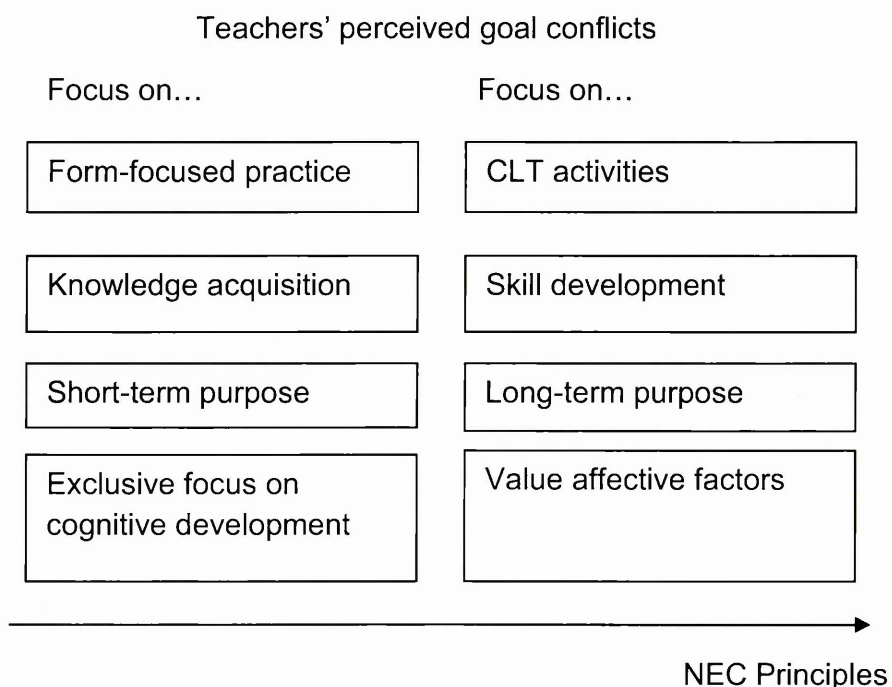
In comparison with other areas of conflicts, the conflict between affective and cognitive seems to be less strongly voiced by teachers. Anya's reason is that "affective factors do not take much time. You can set examples through your own behaviour. If you are respectful to other people, then students will also do the same" (Informal Conversation, 10/03/2008). Baijuan is also not struggling to make the decision. She thinks "affective factors need to be built up gradually and slowly. It is almost impossible to change a student's affective factors after one class. Emotion is broader and more general, not like reading ability, language skills, these are more specific" (Interview, 29/05/2008). Therefore, she has not much hesitation in choosing to focus on cognitive development. Both as class teachers, Caili (Interview, 11/02/2008) and Denghua (Interview, 12/05/2008) believe affective development can be achieved through their roles as class teachers, for example, one-to-one talk with students after class. Enchu has decided to make an exclusive focus on cognitive factors because of her students' resistance to her effort on affective factors (Informal Conversation, 12/05/2008).

In contrast, decision making in other areas of conflict seems to be more difficult for teachers. Very often they are caught in a complex situation with contradictory forces making it difficult to make decisions. On one hand, some pulling forces are pulling against NEC implementation (columns on the left row in Figure 6.3); on the other

hand, some pushing forces push towards NEC implementation (columns on the right row in Figure 6.3). This section discusses these forces and their influence on research participants. The next section discusses each participant's orientation towards the goal conflict.

6.3.1 Pulling forces against NEC implementation

"Form-focused instruction is more 'efficient' and 'effective' than CLT approaches"

The most important force that may pull teachers from teaching the NEC is that they do not seem totally convinced of the effectiveness of CLT approaches. Section 6.1 shows that Baijuan and Denghua's orientations towards the NEC are relatively conservative and the other three research participants have overtly stated a positive orientation towards the NEC. However, further investigation suggests that their recognition of CLT approaches may not be as high as they have thought of or overtly stated.

> "We want to do activities. It's easy for me. Students enjoy it. But at the end of the lesson, they will ask: how much have they learned?" (Baijuan, Interview, 20/05/2008)

> Researcher: What kind of teaching do you think is the best?
> Caili: Yours and the foreign teachers. However, it is not realistic for me to do so. Pressure exists all the time...Examinations, the need to complete a unit in given time..." (Caili, Interview, 03/04/2008)

> "What about the examination? I have to cover the syllabus. If I use games and activities, then I won't be able to cover the syllabus. I have to explain grammar points, distinguish words and give them points for examination[22]. The examination is the most important limitation." (Denghua, Interview, 19/06/2008)

> "I have to complete a unit in one week and a half, so I don't have enough time to do some more projects..." (Enchu, Interview, 03/05/2008)

Baijuan seems to be questioning the effectiveness[23] of CLT approaches and the other participants appear to be questioning the efficiency[24] of CLT approaches. Caili, Denghua and Enchu all mention that the need to 'cover the syllabus' is the main obstacle to using CLT activities. Their comments seem to suggest a vital relationship between 'covering the syllabus' and examination preparation. It seems to teachers that to prepare students for the examination they need to cover the

---

[22] 'Points' that are very likely to be questioned in examinations.

[23] Effectiveness is used to mean whether CLT adds learning.

[24] Efficiency is used to mean whether teachers can complete the syllabus economically (e.g. in shorter time).

syllabus; if the syllabus is not covered, students' examination scores will be affected. As highlighted in Denghua's statement ("I have to explain grammar points, distinguish words and give them examination points"), the view of knowledge as information, teachers as transmitters of the information specified by the examination syllabus, and explicit instruction as promoting learning is paramount. With such a perception, it may not be strange if teachers consider form-focused instruction to be more efficient and effective than CLT activities. Although Anya states a belief in "learning by doing" (Interview, 16/10/2007), implicit in her belief seems to be 'consolidating learning by doing'. Constructing her statements at some other occasions, the implication seems to be: she believes doing is needed for learning to be more effective. However, explicit instruction is necessary and it should precede doing. Therefore, doing is based on learning and it is a consolidation of learning. One piece of evidence is in her insistence that "input should precede output" (Interview, 16/10/2007; Informal Conversation, 09/03/2008).

Examinations and the need to see 'immediate results'

As implied in teachers' comments in the previous paragraph, examination seems to be another factor that may pull teachers from teaching the NEC. The important role of examinations in the Chinese education system was discussed in section 4.1.3 and 4.1.4. It is used as the normative criterion for judging teaching and learning, it is also, in the world outside education, an important tool for social upgrading (e.g. upgrading legal residential status from rural peasants to urban non-peasants). In LQ, over 90% of the population are rural peasants, which means a large number of students in CHS have the need or desire to upgrade their residential status through NUEE. Although the economy in LQ is highly developed and most students are from rich families, achieving success through education still seems to be most parents and students' desire, given the high significance attached to education by Confucian thinking (see 4.1.1). In this context, passing NUEE seems to be of the primary concerns for all teachers.

> "Students have the requirements. They want to achieve high results in examinations and they want to go to top universities. Of course, as a teacher I'm happier if my students can be accepted by Beijing University[25]. Having students accepted by top universities is the recognition for our work. It's the normative value in the society. We have to abide by it. No one will say: she's good at teaching, her students achieved low because the examination system is

---

[25] Beijing university is the topmost Chinese university.

unfair… Then there's face. Other people will say, you are trusted to teach 'top classes', but your students have such low scores. There's my face and the head teacher's face…" (Anya, Telephone Conversation, 20/04/2009)

"I know these are definitely good in the long run, but we need to see the immediate results…I know communicative competence is important, but my students are struggling to enter university. The examination is about grammar and vocabulary…If they can't go to university, they may be workers or shop owners…and they may never have the chance to use English…If they pass the examination, they still have the chance to develop spoken English in university…I think we have to choose at times." (Baijuan, Interview, 20/05/2008)

"They are in their 2nd semester of grade 2. Next year they will sit for the NUEE. With the pressure of NUEE, I'm not able to do many things…" (Caili, Interview, 03/04/2008)

"…No…Dealing with the examination is more important…We can do nothing, we have examinations facing us. Sometimes scores don't actually reflect your language level…But we can do nothing, an examination is just examination, you got to take it…Especially for those students with a lower level of language proficiency, a detailed analysis of language is more important. For those with a higher level of language proficiency, overall ability may be more important because they already know language points, grammar, vocabulary…I'll do whatever that is effective for students." (Denghua, Interview, 02/06/2008)

The participants seem to be talking from different angles. However, all of them have voiced the conflict between examination preparation and skill development, and their resort to emphasizing examination preparations. Buck (1988) argues that it is natural for both teachers and students to tailor their classroom activities to the demands of the test, especially when the test is very important to the future of the students, and pass rates are used as a measure of teacher success. He calls the influence of the test 'washback'. The influence of 'washback' is apparent in teachers' comments. Underlying their statements seems to lay a strong notion of 'playing safe' either in consideration of students' future development or in fear of not being recognized by others for their own work. Comparing their comments, 'ordinary class' teachers seem to have displayed a stronger sense of 'surviving' than 'top class' teachers, as highlighted in Baijuan's statement. 'Top class' teachers do not have much doubt whether communicative competence is needed in their students' future development because they are almost certain nearly all their students will go to universities (the university admission rate is almost 100% in 'top classes'). However, 'ordinary class' teachers may be less certain whether such skills are needed in their students' future because a large number of students in their classes are struggling to enter universities. In these conditions, they may choose to place "immediate results" ahead of "potential future needs", as Denghua says, he will "do whatever

that is effective for students"; and Baijuan says, students can "develop spoken English in university". Like their teachers, Enchu's students are pragmatic and "listen to those they think are useful" (see 6.1.5). In addition to the conflict between examination preparation and skills development, Anya still sees certain level of discrepancy between unit examinations, end-of-semester examinations and the NUEE because she is convinced changes will take place in NUEE. However, she cannot escape from unit examinations and end-of-semester examinations because these are also used to judge teachers' performance, and these results are more 'immediate' than the NUEE.

Bourdieu (1998) would say their pragmatism may be guided by the wish to improve or maintain positions in the field. Students need such "immediate results" to be accepted at university (or top universities for 'top class' students). Teachers may also need such "immediate results" to increase their capital in the field. In addition to salaries which are related to students' examination scores, Baijuan, Denghua and Caili may need good students' examination performance to help them pass the assessment to upgrade their professional levels (Baijuan and Denghua need to upgrade from level 2 to level 1 and Caili needs to upgrade from level 1 to senior). Most important of all, better students' examination scores can help them to enter a better circle for their future teaching (see 5.4.2). In comparison with junior teachers, Anya and Enchu's positions seem to be relatively stable due to their seniority. Anya's position may be even more stable as a well-respected teacher with a lot of 'face' (In the English department, Anya and the two expert teachers are well-respected and they teach 'top classes' almost every year). However, she may also need to have 'immediate results' to prove the effectiveness of her practices. Good results are needed if her ideology is going to be accepted and adopted by other teachers in the Department or in the city. Additionally, since 'face' is related to people's positions, Anya may have a higher pressure to sustain her impression management due to the more 'face' she has (Hu, 1944), for example, sustaining the head teacher's 'face' for his decision in choosing her as a 'top class' teacher and the Head of the English Department as she has voiced.

Teachers' Lack of English proficiency

In ELT literature, the relationship between English teachers' English proficiency and their use of CLT activities is often discussed. In his overview of CLT implementation

in fifteen countries, Ho (2004) cites teachers' uncertain command of English as a main factor that has hindered the introduction of communicative methods. In China, the similar experience is also reported by Burnaby and Sun (1989) and Li (2003). In this study, both Caili and Denghua mention that their own English proficiency, particularly spoken English, has limited their ability to teach the NEC.

> "...unable to catch it immediately...I have to spend a long time to do a lot of preparation beforehand in order to do activities. In order to respond to these follow-ups, I had to intentionally prepare many sentences beforehand..." (Caili, Interview, 10/04/2008)

> "And also, my ability as well...not able to express all this in a short time...If someone has better English, they can do it..." (Denghua, Interview, 19/06/2008)

The practice in the school seems that teachers speak English when CLT activities are organized and they speak Chinese when form-focused instruction is used. Thus, doing CLT activities places a higher demand on teachers' skills to express themselves in English. Additionally, doing CLT activities also places higher requirement on teachers' skills of 'noticing' (Skehan, 1998). According to strategies promoted by TBLT writers (e.g. Willis, 1996), teachers are expected to pick up students' language particularly in the task-cycle. This may be a challenging task to teachers. As Caili says, she has to "intentionally prepare many sentences beforehand" in order to respond to the potential questions. Similar experiences are often reported in staffroom talk, as exemplified by the following:

> "One day I was teaching in the classroom. A student said royal, however, I was confused between royal and loyal myself. I taught them it was loyal. I don't feel it's right, but I didn't realize. I realized after class. Luckily the students didn't find out." (Ms. Tao, a grade three English teacher, 05/12/2007)

As teachers comment, with the increasing difficulty level of the texts and students' improving English, they sometimes feel their English level is not adequate for teaching, particularly in circumstances where immediate responses are needed. Ms. Tao says in the comment "Luckily the students didn't find out...". Implicit in her comment is a sense of her effort to sustain her authority as a teacher. In this context, some teachers may feel that a transmitter role than a facilitator role is more comfortable in order to limit the chance of being questioned by students so as not to lose 'face' (Cheng and Wong, 1996). Anya and Baijuan's confidence in doing CLT activities seems also to support the view that teachers' English proficiency, particularly spoken English, is an important consideration in their use of CLT

activities (Anya and Baijuan seem to be very confident on their English proficiency and they state that they are comfortable in using CLT activities).

Production skills are difficult to convert to examination scores

Another pulling factor against teaching the NEC principles is that the effects of production skills are difficult to turn to examination scores, due to the current test system. It is commonly regarded that tests exert a powerful influence on what happens in the classroom (Taylor, 2006). Therefore, the way how tests are designed and evaluated can largely influence classroom practices. McGinley (2006) classifies three generations in the nature of tests in ELT. In the first generation, there was use of non-authentic texts, tasks which lacked contexts and the scoring was subjective. In the second generation, the emphasis is on objective type questions in order to correct the 'subjectivity' of the earlier tests. The focus is on the manipulation of grammar and vocabulary. The third generation test is a reaction against previous tests and is more authentic (from real-world sources) and contextualized (simulate real tasks). The emphasis has also shifted to integrative language use of language and other skills achieved through the production skills of speaking and writing, as represented by the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001).

The examination papers prior to the curriculum implementation largely reflect the second generation type above in which focus is on the manipulation of grammar and vocabulary, for example, spelling words, filling in blanks with the correct grammar form. In responding to the NEC guidance, JZ Provincial DOE has tried in recent years to incorporate questions that test the use of communicative proficiency. However, language knowledge is still stated as the focus (Examination Syllabus for JZ Province, 2008). Take the NUEE paper in 2008 as an example, there is no spoken test. The only element that tests students' production skills is writing, which represents 30/150 in the English paper. The assessment criteria seem to represent current trends in ELT, e.g. accuracy, content, organization, cohesion, range of structures and effect on the target reader (Taylor, 2006). However, many teachers seem to be concerned that marking the examination paper lacks reliability and validity, and the marking procedure may penalize the use of 'innovative writing'.

In JZ province and many other provinces in China, the practice is that after the NUEE, all examination papers will be gathered and sent to the provincial DOE. Afterwards, the Provincial DOE gathers personnel from different schools and some higher institutions in the province to mark the examination papers. The purpose is to ensure equality, neutrality and objectivity. However, problems are also reported in the marking process, particularly due to the high pressure brought on markers.

"I have the experience of marking NUEE papers. With the pressure to complete tasks, we have to mark the papers really fast. Therefore, the average time for marking each composition is about 1 minute (for a 120-word composition). Teachers won't have time to carefully look at what you write. They normally have a look at the first sentence, and then at the last sentence. A score will be decided. Therefore, I told my students to memorize some sample starting and ending sentences to be used in the NUEE…" (Enchu, Informal talk, 10/04/2008)

"There is a system of supervision and monitoring. If the score is too high or too low, there is chance the examination paper will be taken out to reexamine. Therefore, many people choose to mark between 16-24/30. So, there may be not too much difference to students whether they write good or less good. This is not fair to students with good language proficiency." (Ms Liu, a grade three English teacher, Informal talk, 20/06/2008)

In such a situation, many teachers may choose to 'play safe'. In order to ensure their students get a safe score, teachers may instruct their students not to be creative and to follow the norms and standard format. Since little hope is seen for production skills to be converted to students' examination scores, some teachers may choose to place more emphasis on form-focused instruction in order to achieve higher scores in objective type questions. Baijuan, Denghua and Enchu all cite this as a reason for their lack of enthusiasm in using CLT activities (Informal talk, 10/04/2008).

Students' low English proficiency and their low motivation for CLT activities

Student needs is a main concern for teachers. As evidenced in the discussion in 6.1, student participation has brought a 'virtuous circle' for Anya and Caili, and a 'vicious circle' for Denghua and Enchu. Students' English proficiency is one reasons and their low motivation for CLT activities is another reason. This is evident in Enchu's discussion in 6.1.5. Similar concerns are also voiced by all other research participants, including Anya:

"I know students in class one want me to teach more language. Their favourite way is to read the sentence, translate it, explain the words—prefix, suffix, language family, distinguish words… Students in class two are different. They

like talking, they like participating in classroom activities. I don't know how it happens and why there are so many differences between the two classes...Most of the students in class one come from the countryside or other cities, and the majority of students in class two are from the city. Is it because of students' different compositions? Or is it because of the different learning atmosphere..." (Interview, 10/05/2008)

Denghua also voices such a concern:

"Yeah, and also their mood. If you use activities, some students may not listen. Although students seem like activities, most students prefer grammar instruction. When we are doing activities, many students don't listen because they would think it's not relevant to examinations. (Interview, 02/06/2008)

Under such circumstances, teachers may choose not to use CLT activities in order to get students' attention.

After discussing factors that may pull teachers against teaching the NEC, the next section explores factors that may push teachers towards teaching the NEC.

6.3.2 Pushing forces of teaching the NEC

Activities as a Way to Please Students

A main pushing force of teachers teaching the NEC seems to be students' request for CLT activities to be used. Apart from Denghua, who states that his students are not interested in CLT activities, all the other four participants have voiced their students' preference for CLT activities. This is exemplified by Baijuan and Caili's comments.

"They like to play and talk. They don't like to study grammar." (Baijuan, Interview, 06/05/2008)

"Students asked me: can you teach like Miss Fang? I know your teaching is good and enjoyed by students, but I can hardly do this..." (Caili, Interview, 20/03/2008)

In this context, Baijuan says she makes compromises to incorporate some CLT activities in order to "get students' interest and attention", although she firmly believes that she has to control the amount of CLT activities for the "students' good". Caili says she also tries to use more CLT activities in order to "attend to students' needs". There is a contradiction here with the discussion in section 6.3.1 in which teachers attribute students' low motivation to be a reason for not using CLT activities.

166

One explanation is that many students seem to perceive CLT activities as fun (note Baijuan's wording "play"), rather than a learning process. This links to Baijuan's question in section 6.3.1: "but at the end of the lesson, they will ask: how much have they learned?". Students' paradoxical attitudes to CLT activities seem to be apparent. On one hand, they like CLT activities because it is more fun than learning grammar. On the other hand, they are concerned that doing CLT activities may affect their learning (students' perception of information as knowledge and explicit instruction as learning is also apparent here). Such perception seems also evidenced in the questionnaires I distributed to students and my own teaching experience, in which students' different behaviour before and after examinations is identified. Students generally show a much higher level of participation in CLT activities after examinations. However, prior to examinations, they seem to show a less active engagement in CLT activities. A lot of them look at grammar books and vocabulary list when they are not asked to speak. On one occasion, some students asked me not to teach so that they could revise for the examinations (Fieldnotes, 05/03/2008). Apart from Anya's conviction that some students in one of the classes she teaches show a high recognition of CLT activities in improving their learning, the majority of students seem to perceive CLT activities only as fun activities that add little to their learning. The second possible explanation is class culture. Anya notices that the two classes she teaches have displayed different engagement with CLT activities. Students in class one seem to be more resistant to CLT activities while students in class two appear to have shown higher engagement with CLT activities. Additionally, she also notices that students in the front rows appear to have displayed more active engagement with CLT activities (see 7.4.2 for discussion on class culture).

Belief in the role of CLT activities in students' learning

The second pushing force for CLT activities to be used is perhaps the belief in the role of CLT activities for students' learning. This belief is expressed most strongly by Anya.

> "The purpose of learning language is not just to acquire the language, but to use the language to do things. The latter should be the main aim." (Anya, Interview, 16/10/2007)

> "I don't know whether students can realize this, whether this is the kind of teaching that they want…but I still decide to do this. Maybe some of them don't

167

understand my motivation now, but I'm sure they will understand me in the future." (Anya, Interview, 10/05/2008)

Anya's belief in the role of CLT activities is obvious particularly in the second comment, in which she voices a determination to do CLT activities despite some students' low recognition.

No matter how teachers express their orientations towards CLT activities, no data shows any of them denying the role of CLT activities in students' learning. Baijuan questions whether a CLT approach helps the learning (6.1.2). Caili, Denghua and Enchu believe that form-focused instruction is more efficient than CLT activities in examination preparation (6.3.1.). However, their comments do not suggest they are denying the role of CLT activities, just they believe their application is constrained because of the examination-oriented system.

This relates to a discussion about Chinese teaching and American teaching in the literature. Gardner (1989) argues that the differences between Chinese and American may lie in beliefs about the appropriate order of learning-related activities. Americans generally believe that exploring precedes skill development. However, the idea of one right way makes the Chinese believe in skill development first after which there is something to be creative with. Skill is developed first in pursuit of the 'right way'. The end is a product, not a process while Americans are more concerned with the process than with the product. With such a perception, teachers seem to perceive form-focused instruction as the skill development and CLT activities as the display and development of such skill. Denghua's comment that "for those with a higher level of language proficiency, overall ability may be more important because they already know language points, grammar, vocabulary..." seems to support such a view. Additionally, 'ordinary class' teachers' encouragement of their 'top students' to participate in English corner[26] also seems to be an evidence of their recognition of CLT activities in developing English proficiency (Fieldnotes, 20/03/2008).

---

[26] This is a weekly occasion organized by the American teachers for students to talk with each other in English.

Section 6.1 has argued that although orientation towards the NEC varies, principles suggested in the NEC seem to be generally accepted by teachers as 'good practice' or 'received practice'. This seems to have also become a pushing force for teachers to use CLT activities in their teaching. Additionally, as voiced by Baijuan (6.1.2), it is a requirement in teaching competitions that CLT activities are used. Such discourse may push teachers to use CLT activities, particularly in demonstration lessons or teaching competitions, if their teaching skill is going to be recognized by others. The need may be higher for teachers such as Anya who are often asked to demonstrate lessons to other teachers in her role as mentor for some junior teachers.

"Many people come to observe my classes and I think I should set a positive example for them. I shouldn't be too selfish just thinking about examination scores." (Anya, Informal Conversation, 12/04/2008)

This comment is very interesting. On one hand, Anya considers using CLT activities as positive examples for other teachers. On the other hand, the second sentence seems to suggest she is not highly convinced of the effectiveness of CLT activities for achieving examination results. There may be two reasons underlying her decision to use CLT activities. First of all, because the NEC is promoted by education management organizations, Anya may feel the obligation to show teachers that she is using it and they should also support the decisions of education management organizations by using NEC approaches. Secondly, since CLT is regarded as a 'received practice', Anya may feel the responsibility to demonstrate it to teachers in order to facilitate their learning of the 'best practice'. Additionally, given Anya's influence in Grade Two English Team and her active promotion of CLT activities, the recognition of CLT activities seems to be higher in Grade Two English Team than in the other English teams. It clearly shows how teachers shape the discourse and on the other hand being shaped by the discourse (Ball, 1994).

Section 6.3.1 discusses the potential constraints of NUEE on teachers' implementation of NEC principles. However, given the possibility of NUEE reform (see 4.4.1), the NUEE may serve as a double-edged sword in teachers' decision making. If the prospect of incorporating NEC principles is clear to teachers, the NUEE can serve as an important stimulus for the NEC principles to be taught. Given the ambiguity in the change agenda at the moment (4.4.1 & 6.2.1), the expectation of change seems to vary between the five research participants. Anya has shown a most positive view towards the prospect for change (see 6.1.1). Caili and Enchu show some levels of conviction about the prospect for change (see 6.1.3 and 6.1.5) and show some suspect at other times (Caili, Informal Conversation, 09/06/2008; see 6.1.5 for Enchu). However, Baijuan and Denghua seem to be less convinced of the prospect for change (see 6.1.2 & 6.1.4).

6.3.3 Conclusion

This section analyses the goal conflicts faced by teachers. The goal conflicts can be represented in a continuum ranging from short-term purpose to long-term purpose. It can also be represented in a figure representing two orientations. It has discussed different pushing and pulling forces that may influence teachers' orientation towards the NEC implementation. Teachers believe the following factors have pulled them from teaching the NEC.

- "Form-focused instruction is more 'efficient' and 'effective' than CLT approaches";
- Examinations and the need to see 'immediate results';
- Their own lack of English proficiency;
- Production skills are difficult to convert to examination scores;
- Students' low English proficiency and their low motivation for CLT activities.

Teachers also think that the following factors have pushed them to teach the NEC:

- Activity as a way to please students;
- Belief in the role of CLT activities in students' learning;
- Pressure brought by the official discourse to use CLT activities;
- The possibility that NEC principles may be incorporated in NUEE.

The next section discusses each participant's orientation in response to the goal conflicts.

6.4 Teachers' orientation towards goal conflicts

Having discussed the goal conflicts perceived by teachers, this section discusses each participant's orientation in relation to the goal conflicts.

6.4.1 Anya: attach equal importance to both form-focused instruction and CLT

From the analysis in section 6.1.1 & 6.3, it can be seen that: Anya has expressed a strong belief in the role of CLT activities in students' learning; she shows confidence in the prospect of NUEE reform in incorporating NEC principles; she feels the pressure to use CLT activities because of official discourse to promote CLT; and she states that she has the responsibility to set positive examples for others by using CLT approaches in her teaching. Therefore, Anya appears to show no hesitation in using CLT approaches in her teaching. She also states that communicative competence and cognitive development (e.g. the development of perception and thinking) is primarily important in her teaching (Interview, 16/10/2008).

However, Anya also has conflict at times. The first reason is that some students in one of the classes she teaches have shown less motivation for CLT activities. The second reason is that with the external pressure to have "immediate results", very often she has to place 'immediate results' ahead of long-term development, although she states a belief that the latter is more important (see 6.3.1). Therefore, her dilemma is the extent to which CLT is used. The weighing of the pros and cons of focusing on form-focused practice or using CLT activities is a recurrent theme in the data for Anya. Constructing her talk at different occasions, it seems that Anya's approach is to attach importance to both, for example, the talk that CLT is important (e.g. 6.1) and the talk that she has to value "immediate results" (e.g. 6.3).

6.4.2 Baijuan: Focus on form, use CLT at times to please students

As shown in the analysis in 6.1.2 & 6.3.1, Baijuan is less convinced of the effectiveness of CLT approaches in supporting learning and teaching, particularly due to the examination-oriented education system. She states that she does not see

much possibility that NEC principles are incorporated in NUEE. Additionally, she does not see the definite benefit of CLT activities for her students because she thinks many of them are struggling to enter universities and communicative competence is less useful if students cannot go to universities. Therefore, she thinks that it is more practical if she emphasizes on examination preparation because of the 'immediate needs' of her students to enter universities. She believes students can develop communicative competence in universities when they have time to do so. In such conditions, she has made a decision to focus on form-focused instruction. However, activities are sometimes used in order to please her students who think activities are fun (see 6.3.2).

Despite her belief that language development is most important, Baijuan places good learning habits as the primary focus. It is because she thinks it is particularly needed as her students lack such skills, and such skills are the foundation of learning. She also places emotional communication with students in her agenda because she believes a positive relationship between teachers and students is very important for students' learning (Interview, 29/05/2008). Although Baijuan seems to have shown no hesitation in focusing on form, interview data seem to suggest that she perceives such a choice as her sacrifice for 'students' good'. On one hand, CLT is promoted by the official discourse and not doing CLT seems to show she is not following a 'good practice'. On the other hand, she believes her English proficiency, particularly her spoken English, is helpful in her use of CLT activities, and she perceives doing CLT activities is an easier job than using form-focused instruction ("we want to do it. It's easy for me...") for her (Interview, 10/04/2008).

6.4.3 Caili: Link form and meaning in one activity

The discussion in section 6.3.1 shows that Caili believes examination preparation should be the focus in her teaching because of the students' immediate needs. Although she expresses certain level of confidence about the prospect of NUEE reform, she is not totally convinced of the effectiveness of CLT activities in supporting students' learning, particularly examination preparation. Additionally, she also feels that her English proficiency has limited her use of CLT approaches. However, Caili also feels the pressure to use CLT activities because of the official discourse in favour of CLT activities, the expectation for CLT being used in 'top classes', and some of her students' wishes and requests for CLT activities to be

used. In such a context, Caili says examination preparation is the top of her agenda, but she consciously creates the link between examination preparation and NEC teaching. She believes she has the ability to create such a link, as illustrated in Table 6.2. The data is based on interview on 12/05/2008.

Table 6.2: Caili's belief in the incorporation of examination preparation with teaching the NEC

Key areas of development identified in the NEC	Caili's Comments, Strategies & Rationales
Main objective: all-round ability to use English	"Examination preparation gives you the pressure (to learn and teach)...It definitely pushes you to work harder..."
Language Skills	"For example, in the examinations, there are a lot of questions about main ideas, the writers' intentions or structure analyses. I guide students to notice these areas when they are reading articles..." "When they are talking, they are developing their abilities to convince other people and structure ideas..."
Linguistic knowledge	"Vocabulary, definitely No. 1...I think the main aim of English learning is for students to learn more words through different articles." "If they know more about phonetics, they can spell words more correctly, for example, international, in-ter-na-tion-al...it's easier to remember words by phonetics. They don't need to memorize by rote".
Cultural awareness	"...use language in the process of obtaining information".
Emotional Attitudes	"Some students take forever to memorize an article...because they don't value English

	learning…In the process of listening to their reciting, I can guide them. And also, for the class I'm in charge of, I have more chances to have one to one interaction with my students. However, for the other class, I don't have many chances to have one to one interaction with them and I regard it a good chance to interact with them and communicate with them."
Learning strategies	"…it may not be the kind of approach you will use in this unit. It can be the approach that you can use in the future. For example, their self-learning habit can be developed through doing exercises (e.g. time management and independent thinking). This is beneficial to their whole life."

6.4.4 Denghua: focus on form

As the discussion in section 6.3 indicates, Denghua thinks all-round ability is an addition to those students who already have a high level of language development, for example, students from the 'top classes'. As an 'ordinary class' teacher, Denghua believes his main duty is to prepare students for examinations. He has two reasons. First of all, he thinks NUEE is the top priority for high school students and it decides their future. Everything else is subsidiary in comparison with the examination. Secondly, he believes that examination-focused instruction is preferred by students. Therefore, he would teach according to requirements set by examinations (Interview, 02/06/2008). Therefore, Denghua seems to see little need in developing communicative competence because this is not directly relevant to examination preparation. He also appears to show little interest in doing CLT activities. Based on his interpretation of the current examination system, he says the exclusive focus in his teaching is vocabulary and grammar, along with doing mock examination papers.

6.4.5 Enchu: focus on form

The analysis in section 6.1.5 & 6.3 shows that although Enchu thinks there is possibility that NEC principles will be incorporated in the NUEE, she is less confident about the prospect. However, she feels a certain obligation to use CLT activities due to her role as Head of the Grade two English Office. The feeling is not strong due to her identity as a teacher of arts classes because students in her classes have lower language proficiency and show less motivation in CLT activities. In addition, she is less convinced of the effectiveness of CLT activities because the difficulty of turning production skills into examination results. In this context, she has also developed an emphasis on form in her practice. She thinks language learning consists of three areas: vocabulary, grammar and information. Her teach of vocabulary includes lead students to read words because students in her classes are not able to pronounce many words without being taught; present words in sentences and passages because it creates situations for enhancing students' understanding. Her teach of grammar includes analysing grammar structures and creating opportunities for students to practise through translation. Her teach of information is primarily focused on materials in the textbook. At the time this study took place, Enchu's primary focus was on listening because listening examination for the NUEE was going to be held in September 2008. Her second focus was

reading because the score for reading is 60 out of 150 in the NUEE. The third focus was writing, which occupies 30 out of 150 in the NUEE, and speaking was least important because there was no speaking test in the NUEE. As can be seen in her position of the four skills in her teaching, her decision is largely guided by NUEE (Interview, 14/05/2008).

6.5 Two levels of thinking?

The previous sections have discussed participants' orientations towards the NEC, their new emotions associated with teaching the NEC, their perceived goal conflicts and responses in teaching the NEC. A certain level of tension is identified in teachers' thinking, as exemplified in Baijuan and Caili's comments:

> "A lesson will look good if there are a lot of activities, but for a lesson like that, how much can students learn?"…I know these are definitely good in the long run, but we need to see the immediate results…I know communicative competence is important, but my students are struggling to enter university. The examination is about grammar and vocabulary…If they can't go to university, they may be workers or shop owners…and they may never have the chance to use English…If they pass the examination, they still have the chance to develop spoken English in university…I think we have to choose at times." (Baijuan, Interview, 20/05/2008)

> "Students asked me: can you teach like Miss Fang? I know your teaching is good and enjoyed by students, but I can hardly do this…" (Caili, Interview, 20/03/2008)

The above comments have clearly illustrated tensions and dilemmas in Baijuan and Caili's thinking: Baijuan thinks CLT is "important" and "good in the long run". However, she chooses not to focus on CLT because "the examination is about grammar and vocabulary" and she needs "to see the immediate results". Caili thinks my teaching is "good and enjoyed by students", but she "can hardly do this". It can be identified that teachers have espoused two levels of thinking: what is 'good' [好] and what works, and there is conflict and tension between the two levels of thinking.

On one level of thinking, all teachers have a view of what is 'good'. This can be classified into two categories: good/ideal practices and desirable outcomes. Further examples are: demonstrated in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Teachers talking about what is 'good'

Areas	Exemplar Quotes
Good/Ideal practices	
To incorporate many activities in teaching	"A lesson will look good if there are a lot of activities…" (Baijuan, Interview, 20/05/2008)
To enlighten students	"I know your teaching is good and enjoyed by students…" (Caili, Interview, 20/03/2008)
To use role play	"If I have time, it is of course good to organise many activities, for example, role play, group work, discussion…" (Caili, Interview, 20/03/1008)
To use group work	"Group work is good for students' learning. Although I don't have time to organise such activities in class, I try to give them opportunities to work in teams in after-class projects, for example, designing and editing newspapers…" (Denghua, Interview, 02/06/2008)
To encourage students' self learning	"Students in the top class should have freedom with regard to time and space…They have different thinking and learning habit…But they are driven by teachers too…They are given so much homework and there's no time for self-reflection" (Caili, Interview, 25/03/2008)
Desirable outcomes	
Support the development of communicative proficiency	"The purpose of learning language is not just to acquire the language, but to use the language to do things. The latter should be the main aim." (Anya, Interview, 16/10/2007)
Support the development of cognition	"We often think this kind of study and teaching is not supportive for students' development. We should create opportunities for students to develop their communicative proficiency, cognition and affective communication. However, we have the examination system…" (Baijuan, Interview, 20/05/2008)
Support the development of affect	
Support students' skill development	"The great Chinese ancient philosopher Lao-Tzu said, Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. Therefore, developing students' skills to study is more important than pouring knowledge into them." (Anya, Interview, 09/04/2008)
Support long-term development	"Ms. He teaches very good lessons. Her lessons are beneficial for students in the long run…" (Denghua, Interview, 02/06/2008).

As can be seen from the table, teachers' views of what is 'good' are largely consistent with the NEC guidance and practices advocated by the official discourse: practices suggested by the NEC (e.g. CLT) are regarded by teachers as being good/ideal and the outcomes brought by it as being desirable. This means that the NEC is reflected in teacher thinking.

However, much thinking at the level of what is 'good' has not turned to practices. It is because there is another level of thinking in teacher cognition: what works. This level of thinking is more powerful in teacher cognition and it is this level of thinking that has a major influence on teachers' practices and even their perceptions towards the NEC. Further examples are:

Table 6.4: Teachers talking about 'what works'

Forces	Exemplar Quotes	Results
Workable practices		
Students' English proficiency	"Yeah, if students have better English level, I may teach differently. In stead of going through the vocabulary one by one, I may just tick out the few important phrases or words. I may use situation to set out. I may repeat these phrases or words whilst talking or writing on blackboard, not merely translate and explain. Now I normally use sentences. Students are busy taking notes. This is actually not good..." (Baijuan, Interview, 09/05/2008)	▪ To focus on form-focused activities ▪ To use less CLT activities
Students' motivation	"If you use activities, some students may not listen. Although students seem like activities, most students prefer grammar instruction. When we are doing activities, many students don't listen because they would think it's not relevant to examinations." (Interview, 02/06/2008)	
Teachers' own English proficiency	"And also, my ability as well...not able to express all this in a short time...If someone has better English, they can do it..." (Denghua, Interview, 19/06/2008)	

Tight syllabus	"I have to complete a unit in one week and a half, so I don't have enough time to do some more projects…" (Enchu, Interview, 03/05/2008)	
Large class	"…There is also the reality. We have about 60 students in one class. Even if I give each person 30 seconds to talk, half an hour is gone…" (Denghua, Interview, 19/06/2008)	
Needed/acceptable outcomes		
Examination oriented system	"Students have the requirements. They want to achieve high results in examinations and they want to go to top universities." (Anya, Telephone Conversation, 20/04/2009)	■ To focus on examination preparation ■ To emphasise form-focused practices
Parents' and students' expectation to achieve high examination results	"Most parents can not speak English. They do not know how well their children speak English, but they know the score. Score is a hard fact." (Enchu, Interview, 19/06/2008)	
The school evaluation system to value examination results	"Although the head teachers say ability is more important, they still look at students' examination scores. Salary is linked to students' scores…" (Mr. Wang, Informal Chat, 10/03/2008)	
Peers' views of good teaching	"Then there's face. Other people will say, you are trusted to teach 'top classes', but your students have such low scores…" (Anya, Telephone Conversation, 20/04/2009)	

While teachers' thinking on what is 'good' may be more ideal and has a sense of 'ought' (some kind of compulsion, perhaps more moral), their thinking on what works is very much context-bounded and pragmatic. Teachers are highly aware of the forces in the field. They understand what practices may work and what outcomes are more needed in order to maintain or improve their capital (also see 6.1 & 6.3) and they act according to the possibilities given in the context (also see 6.4).

The teachers' thinking can also be understood in terms of habitus (see 3.7.2) in Bourdieu's conceptual framework: (1) It is through this system that teachers judge, perceive and act. It is a state of mind (Bourdieu, 1992). (2) Teachers' thinking

system has integrated the contextual conditions (e.g. students' needs and the education system) and it is therefore the embodiment of social structures and the internalised social schemes (Bourdieu, 1998). (3) Habitus is pragmatic and context-bounded (Bourdieu, 1998). Teachers' thinking on what works is more context-bounded and pragmatic than their thinking on what is 'good' and it occupies a more central position in teachers' thinking system.

Habitus is produced by the field and also reproduces the field (Bourdieu, 1998). There are different forces in the field, for example, parents' expectations, students' needs and the school system of evaluating teaching and learning. Most of these forces seem to place examinations, particularly the NUEE, as the most important capital. The impact on teacher thinking and practices is that examination preparation and form-oriented practices are very much valued and focused (see 6.3 & 6.4).

The NEC and the discourse it promotes is a new force in the field. It is referred to as good practice by many teachers. The rationale may be various: (1) the NEC has had some influence on teachers and its principles have become a part of teacher thinking; (2) principles suggested in the NEC have reflected teacher thinking about good practices and ideal outcomes; (3) Since the NEC is promoted as good practice in the official discourse, teachers may need to talk the talk in order to sustain their impression management (see e.g. 6.1 & 6.3).

The NEC has very different characteristics from many other forces in the field. For example, the ideal environment for CLT is very different from the context teachers have: examination-oriented system, tight syllabus, large classes, students' limited English proficiency and non-native speaker English teachers. Therefore, although the NEC principles may be favourably regarded by teachers, they are difficult to be transferred to everyday practice. From another aspect, although other practices (e.g. form-focused practices) are regarded by teachers as less ideal, they are more frequently used because they are needed by the context. Furthermore, although teachers recognise that CLT can not be implemented in everyday practice due to contextual constraints, they have to use it on public occasions (e.g. demonstration lessons and public lectures) because it is promoted as good practice in the official discourse (e.g. 6.1.1). Teachers' habitus reflects the tensions: teachers are highly aware of the possibilities and constraints in their contexts. They may not be happy

about their existing practices, but they accept them, and they act within the given possibilities.

As illustrated in Figure 6.4, the boundaries between different levels of teacher cognition are blurred and the changes in the field may also bring changes to the cognition system. As discussed earlier, the level of thinking on what is 'good' is peripheral. The level of thinking on what works occupies a more central position in teacher cognition, and is most durable and persistent in teachers' habitus. Therefore, those changes more compatible with teacher thinking on what works may be more easily accepted by teachers.

There are three levels of habitus: individual, intersubjective and social. On the first level, habitus is unique and therefore teachers have different views, orientations and engagements towards the NEC. On the second level, individual habitus also bears the stamp of a group's collective story, due to the shared institutional and social context. Therefore, there are also shared habituses between teachers in the school and outside the school (Bourdieu, 1992; 1998). This explains why particular approaches are more accepted by teachers in the ELT field and there are norms and patterns in teachers' orientation and engagement (see 6.1).

Teachers occupy different positions in the field, due to the volume and composition of the capital they possess (Bourdieu, 1986). Teachers' habitus and the positions they take are closely related to the capital they have. This explains why 'top class' teachers are in a better position to teach according to the NEC guidance than 'ordinary class' teachers (see 6.1). The NEC principles are more compatible with the contextual conditions 'top class' teachers have. Therefore, the NEC has more impact on the habitus of 'top class' teachers and 'ordinary class' teachers feel more distant from the NEC principles.

Figure 6.4: The relationship between teacher cognition, habitus and the field

Agency/structure

| Habitus | ← | Position | ← | Capital |

- Prior learning experience
- Teacher education
- Classroom practices
- Evaluation of teaching and learning
- Other teachers' views of own teaching
- Other teachers' practices
- Students' needs (English proficiency, learning styles)
- Parents' expectations
- Official discourse
- NEC as a new force in the field
- …

Individuality

Intersubjectivity

Social

What works

What is good

Teacher cognition

Practices

(e.g. orientation, engagement, classroom practices)

Pragmatic

Bounded rationality (agency/structure)

6.6 Chinese teachers, Western approaches

A number of researchers argue that some CLT principles are in conflict with the Chinese culture of learning, due to the different assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning (Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996; Scollon, 1999). I have identified the notion of 'big culture' and 'small culture' in 2.2.1, it would be interesting to investigate these areas as identified to be contradictory to the Chinese learning culture with teachers' data, and compare to see the relationship with them.

6.6.1 Is the teacher's role to transmit knowledge or to facilitate learning?

The first area of investigation is the respective roles of teachers and students in the process of learning. In most literature about the Chinese culture of learning, teachers are described as authoritative figures who transmit knowledge to students (Hu, 2002; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). It is argued that such dispositions make it difficult for Chinese teachers to adapt to the facilitator role as suggested in CLT approaches (Hu, 2002). The NEC guidance (MOE, 2003:25) also seems to accept that such a discrepancy does exist by stating "teachers should change their perceptions in order to fit in with the NEC. The teacher-centred and textbook-centred transmission mode should be changed."

The first level of analysis of teachers' overtly stated beliefs seems to suggest that all five research participants position themselves in the role of facilitators (rather than transmitters), as exemplified in the following quote:

> "The great Chinese ancient philosopher Lao-Tzu said, Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. Therefore, developing students' skills to study is more important than pouring knowledge into them." (Anya, Interview, 09/04/2008)

> "I told students not to look to me as an authoritative figure. I said to them, 'teachers are no different from students. The curriculum is new to me as well. I just read the text before they did, checked the dictionary and books for explanation on words and grammar structures, to save their time. I'm here to facilitate their learning, not to guide their learning..." (Enchu, 23/05/2008)

Anya's comment shows that she believes facilitating learning is more important than transmitting knowledge, and such a belief has a historical source in Chinese culture (exemplified in Lao-Tzu's saying). Her reservations about knowledge transmission are also supported in a comment on another occasion "I can't talk too much. They

should be the managers of their own learning. I always believe they should learn by doing" (Informal Conversation, 28/11/2007). Enchu's comment shows that she does not accept herself as an authoritative figure. She places herself as a facilitator and helper of students' learning. However, a contradictory is also apparent in her comment. She states that her job is to check the dictionary and explain to students. This seems to suggest a notion of knowledge transmission. Such a tension is also noticed in Anya's comment at another occasion: "I cannot do too much, but I will try to make at least half of the lesson meaningful, for example, give students opportunities to talk and discuss" (Interview, 16/10/2007). In this comment, Anya tries to support her argument as a facilitator of students' learning. However, the wording "I cannot do too much, but I will try..." seems to imply that opportunities to talk do not form part of the dominant method in her instruction, because she has to consciously incorporate such strategies in her teaching. Similar tensions are also noticed with all other research participants. All of them state an overt belief in teachers as facilitators through comments such as "learning by doing" (Baijuan, Interview, 06/05/2008) and "students are the masters of their own learning" (Caili, Interview, 08/01/2008). However, their illustrations on their teaching methods seem to suggest that the notion of knowledge transmission is implicit in their beliefs. This is highlighted in their discussion on the need to "cover the syllabus" (6.3.1). Based on the above discussion, two comments can be made:

- Although not all teachers state this overtly, their positioning of themselves as both transmitters of knowledge and facilitators of learning is identifiable with all participants.
- Teachers tend to state an overt belief in teachers as facilitator of learning. However, the notion of knowledge transmission is also apparent in their words, although they may or may not be aware of it. Additionally, their emphasis on knowledge transmission is obvious.

The apparent tension between teachers' dispositions leads to further investigation in literature. Marton et al. (1993) propose six stages of learning in the Chinese culture: increasing one's knowledge (from books or experts, is true and unquestionable), memorizing and reproducing, applying, understanding, seeing something in a different way and changing as a person. Therefore, knowledge accumulation is a prerequisite for reflection, creativity and deep understanding. Gardner (1989) also

comments that the idea of one right way (e.g. to produce a product of an acceptable and recognized standard) makes the Chinese believe in skill development first after which there is something to be creative with. Therefore, in order to direct their students towards the right way, Chinese educators tend to 'hold students by the hand'. Using the literature discussion to analyze the apparent tension, some possible explanations are suggested:

- The roles of facilitator and transmitter may not be as contradictory as they appear to be. Teachers in this study may present themselves as both transmitters of knowledge and facilitators of the learning process (skill development).

- Teachers may perceive knowledge transmission as a part of their role as facilitator of learning, given the assumption that skill is developed out of the accumulation of knowledge.

- In Chinese culture, teachers' roles normally extend outside classrooms (e.g. as a moral guide) (Cheng and Wong, 1996). Teachers in this study may have seen their overall roles as the facilitator of learning, but their classroom roles as the transmitter of knowledge.

- The previous two explanations offer interpretations for the difference between teachers' stated beliefs and the beliefs constructed from their talking about teaching. The other possible explanation is that the promotion of teachers as facilitators (not transmitters) of knowledge in the official discourse may have caused teachers to overtly state their perception of teachers as facilitators of learning. This is implied in Enchu's objection of the authoritative role.

6.6.2 What is the language to be taught?

In comparison with the previous topic on teachers' roles, the language to be taught seems to be a less investigated area in studies of the Chinese culture of learning. However, this theme recurs in the data. In ELT literature, there is much discussion of the language to be taught, represented in Howatt and Widdowson's (2004) discussion on whether to conform to native-speaker norms or to use English as appropriate to context (e.g. lingua franca uses of English). Traditional Chinese culture must favour the former because the notion of true knowledge is dominant in Confucian culture (Watkins and Biggs, 1996). Knowledge is regarded as monolithic and therefore no approximation to understanding is tolerated. This is illustrated by a

quote in the Analects of Confucius "say yes, when you know; say no when you don't" [知之为知之，不知为不知].

The current debate about ELT is represented in the variety of writing styles added to the NEC textbooks, for example, informal writing and the variety of accents added to listening tasks. However, many teachers seem not to be receptive to the change. This is represented in the data on teachers' complaints about the NEC, as shown in Baijuan's comment:

> "Their purpose is to expose students to various writing styles, formal and informal. In this unit, there's an article about informal writing[27]. However, I don't think students should be exposed to it before they reach a certain level of language proficiency. Otherwise, they will be confused as to what is the correct way of writing. I know it's alright to say this in everyday life in English countries, but students need to take examinations and they should know the standard way of writing..." (Baijuan, Interview, 20/05/2008)

It can be inferred from Baijuan's comments that:

- Baijuan shows understanding of the choice made by the textbook writers. Therefore, she is very likely to be aware of the current debate about varieties of language;

- She believes there is one correct type of language which is not informal writing;

- She thinks that correct way is the standard way. However, it can not be inferred from her comment what she means by the correct way of language, whether it is the language used for examinations or it is the 'real' language (see Widdowson, 2003, discussion on real language and genuine language);

- She thinks students should learn genuine language because of examination needs, but it can not be inferred whether she thinks students should learn other varieties of language if there was no examination;

- She understands that informal language is the genuine language, but she may think it is not real language;

- She thinks students should first learn the correct type of English. After they learn the correct type of English, they can be exposed to other varieties.

The last inference relates to the previous discussion of the sequence of learning (e.g. sequential accumulation of knowledge). The teacher selects points of knowledge from authoritative sources, interprets, analyses and elaborates on these

---

[27] The text used an informal letter and example of sentence is: Dear Dad, arrived in California, enjoyed it...

points for the students, helps them connect the new points of knowledge with old knowledge, and delivers a carefully sequenced and optimally mediated dose of knowledge for the students to memorize, repeat and understand (On, 1996). It is believed that "learners must first master the basics and only when this is accomplished are they in a position to use what they have mastered in a creative manner" (Brick, 1991:154).

In the inferences above, Baijuan's monolithic view of language is apparent. However, a few points are still ambiguous (e.g. her definition of the correct language). The following field note shows some other teachers' efforts to find correct or acceptable English seems to support this discussion.

> There is one sentence in the new text: "It would be many years until the Australians learned to respect the aboriginals". Teachers think this sentence is wrong because the word "until" should be replaced by "before".
> Ms Wang: "What shall we teach then? Shall we tell the students the textbook is wrong or leave it here?"
> Ms Tao: "I asked a foreign teacher just now and she said both before and until are OK".
> Ms. Liu: "Foreigners are often confused about grammar points themselves. Andy (an American teacher) did an NUEE examination paper last time and he got many answers wrong. There's no point asking him. Ask Miss Fang, she's a PhD[28]."
> Ms. Liu said and walked to me with the textbook.
> Researcher: "If you ask me to write the sentence, I would perhaps use before, but I have no idea whether until is right or wrong."
> After this, I searched on google and got a detailed comparison between before and until in a Chinese website forum. The answer seems to be "before" according to the analysis. I showed this to Ms. Liu. She said: "That's right. The textbook is compiled by Americans. American English is often less formal. This kind of problem will be found less in the books compiled by the British." (Fieldnotes, 10/09/2007)

The fieldnotes reveal teachers' views of the language to be taught. It can be seen that they have a view that there is only one correct type of language and they are very persistent in the pursuit of the 'one correct way ' to speak and write. Ms. Liu's comment in the last sentence connects with the discussion on standards and norms of language (see 4.2.1). The view of native speaker norms as standard is obvious. However, her comment also shows the power and competition of American norms and British norms in ELT. As discussed, the language promoted by official discourse was rather monolithic in the 1980s and 1990s. British norms seems to have fostered

---

[28] PhD (rather than PhD student) is used here to show teachers' reference as in China, a PhD student is often regarded interchangeably as someone who has a PhD (see 3.5.3).

the discipline of ELT in China through organizations such as British Council, television programmes such as *Follow me*, textbooks such as *New Concept English*. However, since the late 1990s, official discourse seems to promote a variety of language by introducing American English into teaching, for example, pronunciation is presented in both American and English. It is difficult to say whether the recent introduction of American English in textbooks is the result of an emphasis on varieties of language or the influence of American expansion. Although American English is included in the NEC, British norms still seems better accepted by teachers.

In addition the influence of traditional Culture that leads to teachers' monolithic view of language, another possible reason is the examination-oriented system, as mentioned by quite a number of teachers. Widdowson (2003) states that the purpose of language learning is largely influential in learners' perception of the language to be learnt. For example, a learner wishing to live in an English speaking country may be interested in 'real' language. However, if the purpose of learning language is only to pass examinations recognized by the educational system, the learner may be more focused on the styles promoted by the examinations, rather than those promoted in the ELT discourse.

6.6.3 Do learner activities promote learning?

In addition to the great importance given to education, the Confucian tradition has placed strong emphasis on the significance of effort in the process of learning (Zhu, 1992). Stories are told about grinding an iron bar into a needle [只要功夫深，铁棒也能磨成针] or a famous scholar who supported his head on a beam or stuck an awl in his leg when he fell asleep during reading [头悬梁，椎刺骨] to encourage learners to be diligent and persevering (On, 1996). Such ideology predisposes Chinese teachers and students to regard education as a serious undertaking that requires deep commitment and painstaking effort but is unlikely to be associated with enjoyment (Hu, 2002). Rao (1996) finds in his study that 'the Chinese tend to associate games and communicative activities in class with entertainment exclusively and are skeptical of their use as learning tools' (Rao, 1996: 467).

Rao's study echoes findings in this investigation. It seems that many students and teachers underestimate the role of activities in providing opportunities for learning. This is highlighted in Baijuan and Caili's doubt in 6.3.1 "how much can students learn?" Although teachers have expressed a wish to 'make learning fun'. They seem not to see the direct effect of enjoyable activities for learning, rather than as something that helps learners to concentrate.

6.6.4 Do CLT activities pose disciplinary challenges?

Challenges to the maintenance of discipline seem to be another area of discussion in applying CLT approaches in the Chinese culture of learning. For example, Carless (2004:656) claims in his study that teachers in Hong Kong find that "concerns over noise and discipline inhibited task-based teaching". Li (1998:691) quotes a South Korean teacher in his study commenting that with large classes, "it is very difficult for classroom management if we use the communicative method for example, when everyone starts to talk, the class can be very noisy". Linking to CHC, Cheng and Wong (1996) states that discipline is a fundamental part of education in China. It is not a mere training for obedience and keeping class order. Instead, it is regarded as an important training for compliance to collective norms.

In this study, no conflict between discipline and noise is discovered. Teachers seem to have displayed little concern about discipline (e.g. the noise generated by talking). Teachers are very tolerant in terms of the noise and seem to appreciate the noise. When there is a demonstration lesson, people can hear the noise and it is taken as a sign for good and active class. The only problem seems to be the control of voice, for example, how to make the students sitting in the back to hear the discussion (also see 7.4.1). Teachers do not see CLT or loud student discussion as the discipline problem. Rather, it is taken as an active sign of students' participation.

6.7 Teacher development

Another theme arising from the data is the developmental history of teachers. This is particularly recurrent in Baijuan and Denghua's accounts. In Borg's (2003) review of teacher cognition, he identifies a need to investigate the process through which language teachers have transformed their cognitions and practices. Therefore, this area is further investigated and discussed in this thesis. I will first present two cases:

Baijuan and Denghua's accounts. Secondly, I will draw on Baijuan and Denghua's data, refer to other research participants' experiences and compare these with areas of influence (e.g. schooling, professional coursework and classroom practice) as identified in Borg's framework.

6.7.1 Case 1: Baijuan's changing perceptions and practices

As shown in 5.5.2, Baijuan has experienced three main phases of teaching. She states that she has also experienced a number of changes in her perceptions and practices of teaching. This section discusses the changes from Baijuan's perspective.

Baijuan states there is one belief that is persistent in her teaching, which is to "make learning fun". She says this belief is very much influenced by her own learning experience in high school, particularly her experience of learning geography. She declares this belief is deep in her mind and most influential:

> "Er…the one who has influenced me on teaching…My geography teacher in the high school? He used to work in the National Geographical Investigation team and had plenty of practical experience. His teaching was so different from other teachers. For example, when we were learning an ore, he would tell us his own experience (e.g. the first time he saw an ore) and he would show us pictures of an ore. At that time this kind of teaching practice was rarely seen. I used to hate geography. Since he became our teacher, I became interested in geography and my knowledge improved rapidly …This experience had great influence me. Whether it comes to example sentences or language situations, I often try to choose those that may arouse students' interest and resonance (e.g. things closely relate to them or newly happened)…" (Interview, 05/05/2008)

However, Baijuan thinks her effort to make learning fun was limited at the beginning of her career, due to her insufficient knowledge and confined understanding of teaching. Although her major at university was English Teaching, she thinks she has benefited little from the training on teaching pedagogy because she has not "thought about teaching" and the focus was placed on learning English either by the university or by herself. At the beginning of her teaching career she relied heavily on the way she was taught, that is, what Lortie (1975) referred to as the "apprenticeship of observation". In order to make learning fun, she applied strategies that were used by her geography teacher, for example, told stories and made jokes with students. However, Baijuan believes she made some changes in her first year of teaching,

particularly due to the influence of Ms. He, one of the 'expert teachers' in the school. CHS encourages an apprenticeship system through which experienced teachers are expected to share knowledge and experience with their junior colleagues. Baijuan was assigned to be Ms He's mentee and the Academic Affairs Division intentionally timetabled their teaching hours so that Baijuan could have time to observe Ms. He's teaching every day. Baijuan observed Ms. He's teaching for one year between September 1998 and July 1999 and she classifies her change in this year into three stages:

- The first stage: incorporating interesting lead-in topics. Baijuan first noticed from observing Ms. He's teaching that a good lead-in could greatly enhance students' learning interest and participation. Therefore, she paid much attention to the design of lead-in topics. Recalling that experience, Baijuan says she paid too much attention to lead-ins that she neglected many other aspects of teaching whilst planning, for example, she did not consider how a new word could be better explained and she relied so heavily on lead-in topics that she could not plan her teaching unless ideas about lead-in were ready.

- The second stage: increasing the diversity of classroom organisations and activities. Baijuan says she gradually noticed the various strategies Ms. He used for her teaching, for example, Ms. He often taught language in situations, used activities such as role play and group discussion and she encouraged students to teach the class. Baijuan thought these activities were effective in motivating students and she gradually incorporated these activities into her teaching in order to increase the diversity of classroom organisation and better engage students' interest. For example, she frequently borrowed Ms. He's ideas of vocabulary explanation, grammar illustration and text introduction and she used role plays in her class. However, recalling this period of experience, Baijuan thinks her learning from Ms. He at this stage was more mechanical imitation than systematic reflection. One example is that she often copied Ms. He's language situations without considering the relevance to her class and the motives behind Ms. He's situation design.

- The third stage: becoming a reflective observer. Baijuan recalls the first and the second stages of change to be micro (e.g. different organisation of a particular

191

activity), fragmented (e.g. there was no systematic link between different changes) and superficial (e.g. without reflecting on the applicability of change). She believes the third stage of change is more critical in comparison with the previous two stages. First, she says rather than mechanical imitation, she started to adapt Ms. He's activities and classroom organisations according to her students' needs. Secondly, she started to think about the logic of a lesson and the connection between different elements, for example, from simple to difficult and from input to output. Thirdly, she started to link different scenarios in Ms. He's teaching and investigate the underlying principles, for example, learning by doing and involving students. Three reasons might have contributed to these changes. The first reason was students' complaint. When I asked Baijuan to recall the most unforgettable experience in her career, she mentioned a comment made by a student in 1999 that her teaching was "useless". Heartbroken to hear this, Baijuan started to critically assess her teaching. She also attributes the reason to her experience of participating in LQ City County A's teaching competition, during which, she actively tried to raise her teaching to a higher theoretical level and tried to teach with her own style. The third reason was her growing understanding of teaching. She says she found some activities did not fit well in her class and she felt a need to develop these activities. These reasons led Baijuan to change from passively receiving Ms. He's information to actively reflecting on her observations and practices. As she concludes, "the more I observed, the stronger I felt I was such a bad observer in the beginning."

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980, in Tsui, 2003:10-12) propose a five-stage model of skill acquisition: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert. Although my intention is not to judge the proficiency of Baijuan's teaching, it can be seen from her account how she has developed her knowledge and skill, how she has moved from simply guided by rules to combining rules with situations and how she has progressed from a passive recipient to a reflective observer. Baijuan believes that she was more reflective at the end of the 1998 academic year than she was when she started teaching. Her classroom organisations were more diverse and coherent. She still believed that learning should be fun and relaxed. She used more activities in her teaching and she still thought explaining language points was old-fashioned, but she made efforts in perfecting her knowledge of grammar for fear of being questioned by students (she was embarrassed on a few occasions when she failed

to explain and clarify answers to some exercises). Although her students' examination scores were low, Baijuan thought her teaching style benefited her students' "ability development" because of the opportunities she created for students to use English. Although changes continued to take place in the following years, Baijuan attributed the second critical point of change to her teaching experience in the bilingual school.

In September 2004, Baijuan was assigned to work in the bilingual school attached to CHS. As introduced previously, the bilingual school accommodates students with much lower academic performance than those in CHS. Baijuan discovered that her strategy did not work well in the bilingual school:

> "The students in the bilingual school have very low English levels. They wouldn't be able to talk too much. Therefore, I started to use less classroom activities and paid more attention to the details of the reading passages. For example, I would explain texts sentence by sentence and introduce vocabulary one by one." (Interview, 05/05/2008)

This teaching approach would perhaps have seemed old-fashioned to Baijuan a few years earlier, but now she started to appreciate the value of methods like grammar-translation:

> "In the past, I paid too much attention to the splendid aspects of teaching and I ignored foundation building. I tried to incorporate loads of activities to make lesson look good, but I ignored whether students really like these and whether they benefited from this." (Interview, 05/05/2008)

Her change was initially involuntary as a consequence of "students' poor English". However, at a later stage, the focus on grammar seemed to become her motivated action because her practice was confirmed by students' high performance in the examinations:

> "They achieved No. 4 in the city, although they were admitted with very low academic performance. I am very happy. It shows my strategy works. Although the teaching approaches are not modern, but it works..." (Interview, 05/05/2008)

Although Baijuan does not say, another reason to have confirmed her existing practice might be her awareness of the relationship between student examination scores and institutional positions (see 5.4.1). She was assigned to work in the bilingual school when her students had low examination scores. In September 2007 she was assigned to return to CHS because her students achieved high scores.

Baijuan attributed the third critical point of change to her experience of participating in LQ City's teaching competition in November 2007. She attributed the main trigger to be the discussion with Anya in terms of lesson planning:

> "...After the discussion I started to realize my problems in teaching...She enabled me to think language teaching and ability development are not two separate points in a pole...There's chance that we can smoothly connect these two together. Every time I make improvement it was through other people's guidance..." (Interview, 05/05/2008)

In this stage, although she may not perceive a change in her practice, she perceives a change in her perception, that is, language development and ability development can be integrated. Baijuan's changing perceptions and practices are illustrated in Figure 6.5. As can be noticed, apart from the three breakthroughs (in her word 'critical changes'), most changes are gradual and minor (e.g. the steady increase of activities and a better way of explaining a particular grammar point). Main factors leading to changes include peer influence (working with Ms. He and discussions with Anya), students' feedback (students' criticism), students' learning effectiveness (examination scores) and teaching plan competitions. However, Baijuan thinks the NEC had little influence on her. The next sub-section discusses Denghua's changing perceptions and practices.

Figure 6.5. Baijuan's changing perceptions and practices

Grammar-translation method ← ······ Insufficient knowledge of teaching

First change

Over-emphasise lead-in topics ← ······ Mechanical imitation

Copy classroom organisation and activities ······→ Students' dissatisfaction

\+

Own improvement
Teaching competition

Ms. He's influence

Devise teaching according to own needs ← ······ Reflection

Second change

Focus on form ← ······ Students' poor English

Involuntary Compromise

Motivated action

Trial practice confirmed

Students' good scores

Work in bilingual school

Third change

Focus on form ← ······ Judgers' positive comments

Integrate form & meaning ← ······ Discussion with Anya

Confirms

Winning competition

Participate in teaching competition

→ Next stage   ······→ Lead to   ·····⌐→ Confirms   [ ] Stimulus

195

6.7.2 Case 2: Denghua's changing perceptions and practices

Having discussed Baijuan's developmental history, this section explores the process in which Denghua develops his perceptions and practices. Comparing the two teachers, a number of similarities are found. When asked about the influential factors in his teaching, Denghua also states that his own classroom experience and interaction with colleagues are the two main sources that have influenced his teaching. He also acknowledges the influence of his high school teachers. When he was studying in CHS, he had two English teachers: Mr. Pan and Mr. Li. The latter was better liked by students because of his approachable self presentation and his interesting classroom presentation style:

> "Mr. Li's classes are very interesting. Now I don't remember clearly how he taught, but I remember that the class environment was very good. Students all liked his class and we listened attentively. Maybe their teaching approaches were more or less the same? They placed emphasis on form and asked us to do a lot of underlines? Anyway, I learnt from their experiences that a positive teacher-learner relationship helps teaching." (Interview, 02/06/2008)

He states that the experience he drew from Mr. Li has become the core principle in his teaching. That is, learning should be fun and teachers should try to establish a positive relationship with students. Denghua says during his six years of teaching, he has questioned his teaching approaches, but he has never doubted his self presentation. Similar to Baijuan, Denghua also seems to devalue university education.

> Researcher: What about your university education? How does it help your teaching?
> Denghua: I don't think it helps much…No.
> Researcher: Why?
> Denghua: You also studied in a normal university. You should know. Most of the subjects are language-related…I didn't study hard enough for courses on teaching pedagogy as well, though. It was offered in the final year and everybody was looking for teaching practice and jobs.
> (Interview, 02/06/2008)

Like Baijuan, Denghua also voices changes of perceptions in his teaching:

> Researcher: So the experience you have now…or I should say your conception of teaching right now, where are they from?
>
> Denghua: …Maybe the conclusion drawn from my teaching…or I should say lessons learnt from that.
>
> Researcher: So what are the lessons? Or what is your conclusion? In these six

years of teaching, did you change your teaching method at all? What are the changes?

Denghua: I think I teach differently at different stages. In the first round, I focus more on students' all-round skills. For example, I give them a lot of opportunities to talk and I tell them my own stories. In the second round, I focus more on language practice, grammar, vocabulary...Now I'm adjusting my teaching approaches again...(Interview, 02/06/2008)

Denghua's changing perceptions and practices are illustrated in Figure 6.6. As can be seen from the figure, there are mainly four stages of development. When he started teaching in September 2002, Denghua says he had no systematic understanding as to how teaching should be delivered due to his lack of training and experience. Therefore, he struggled to fulfill his tasks and he was also eager to learn either from books or from others. His assigned mentor was Mr. Wang, who is a firm believer and implementer of grammar-translation method. However, Denghua constantly observed Ms. He's classes because her lessons were "more interesting with a lot of activities". Reflecting on that period of time, Denghua states that his teaching was very much the mechanical imitation of others' approaches that lacked critical reflection and understanding:

"When I saw something interesting in Ms. He's class, I copied them. When I saw something good in others' classes, I might copy them too. Everyday I searched desperately on the Internet and in the school library for new activities in order to get students' interest." (Interview, 02/06/2008)

In the first half of the semester, Denghua was content with his teaching because students seemed to like his teaching. There was active class participation and the learning atmosphere appeared to be good. He used various activities to support his teaching, which he believed at that time was "more advanced" than his colleagues'.

The first point of change happened after mid-semester examination in November 2002. His students ranked one of the lowest in the grade. Surprised as he was, Denghua began to question his practice, particularly the effectiveness of his "CLT approach". In his reflection a scenario came into his mind which probably never occurred to him in the past:

"In the university, the Intensive Reading class used Rich Teaching Method...I think this approach was perhaps developed in my university. It is a CLT approach. It uses a lot of group work and presentation. It emphasizes passages and sentences and there was little detailed analysis of words (for example, identify the differences between two words). Three to four students in my class didn't pass

197

This scenario, along with his students' poor performance, made Denghua suspect the validity of CLT approaches and search for new teaching approaches. Meanwhile, Denghua noticed that his mentor Mr. Wang had excellent student achievements in the examinations. As introduced earlier, Mr. Wang implements grammar-translation method in his teaching. This further supported Denghua's assumption of the ineffectiveness of CLT approaches. After the mid-semester examination, Denghua began to increase his observations of Mr. Wang's classes. He also made gradual changes in his teaching. For example, he started to use Chinese as the instruction language and he started to use less group discussion. Additionally, he spent longer time teaching grammar structures and identifying the differences between words. In the end-of-semester examination, his students raised their ranks in the grade. This further confirmed Denghua's assumption that the grammar-translation method worked better for his students, and led to the change from the second stage in which he used grammar-translation with hesitation to the third stage in which the effectiveness of the grammar-translation method for his teaching was confirmed. In the NUEE in 2005, Denghua's students ranked one of the highest in the grade and he was assigned to teach another 'round' of grade 3 (see 5.5.4). The student examination scores further confirmed his practice and provided the rationale for his continued use of grammar-translation when the new 'round' started in September 2006.

In September 2006, Denghua was admitted to study an MA in Education at the university where he received his BA degree. During his MA study, Denghua learnt a lot of educational theories, including modern research on ELT. Books he studied include the Chinese translation of *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) and The Learner-centred Curriculum (Nunan, 1989). Denghua began to realise that his previous perception of CLT was perhaps too narrow:

"I began to think, maybe it wasn't CLT's fault? I think my actions at that time were more or less the mechanical imitation of Ms. He's teaching and strategies introduced in my reading. My approaches lacked coherence and logic, plus I didn't explain many ideas clearly..."(Interview, 02/06/2008)

Continued knowledge and reflection resulting from his CPD made Denghua more receptive towards different teaching approaches. He began to reevaluate methods he considered to be ineffective and these included CLT approaches. Additionally, Anya's influence in the group also exposed Denghua to CLT approaches, for example, hearing the discussions on CLT around him and using materials developed by Anya. He says he began to raise his trust of CLT (Section 6.1.4 also shows his attitude towards CLT approaches and that the NEC is not critical). However, he says he still thinks grammar-translation is more effective in supporting students' examination preparation. Additionally, he thinks his students are more used to grammar-translation and their low English proficiency has also constrained the use of CLT activities. Therefore, grammar-translation is still the main method for his teaching until he sees further changes in the NUEE system (Interview, 02/06/2008; 19/06/2008).

Reviewing Denghua's accounts, a few factors are particularly influential in his change of perceptions. The most influential factor seems to be students' academic performance. The reflection and change from stage 1 to stage 2 and from stage 2 to stage 3 is triggered by students' academic performance. Students' poor academic performance triggered his change and their good academic performance confirmed his assumption. Secondly, peer influence is also a main factor in his change (e.g. Ms. He's in stage 1, Mr. Wang's in stage 2 and 3, and Anya's in stage 4). Thirdly, his CPD also promotes him to reflect on his perception and practice. These factors are further examined in the next section.

Figure 6:6: Denghua's changing perceptions and practices

Official discourse + self reading

Mechanically copy CLT activities	Grammar-translation method still used

CLT is the best

Stage 1

CLT used by most prestigious teacher

Students' poor academic performance

Recall classmates' failure in examination + Colleague's 'successes' in using grammar translation method

Suspect CLT

Stage 2

Uses (in hesitation) grammar-translation method

CPD (MA Education)

Students' good scores

Enhanced knowledge of teaching

Grammar-translation method works better

Stage 3

Uses (without hesitation) Grammar-translation method

Reflection

Re-evaluate understanding of teaching methodologies

■ Each approach has advantages, use according to own needs
■ Less critical towards CLT

Anya's influence

Stage 4

Concern for examinations	Perceived Students' learning habit

Stick to Grammar-translation

┈┈┈▶ The result of   ──▶ Next stage   ┄┄▶ Confirm | | Stimulus

200

6.7.3 Main factors in teacher cognition development

The previous two sections examined Baijuan and Denghua's developmental history. As can be seen from the discussion, a number of factors come into play in their development, for example, classroom practices and the influence of their colleagues. This section draws findings from the previous chapters and from other research participants, and compares these with areas of influence as identified in Borg's (2003) framework.

Teacher cognition and prior learning experience

In his review, Borg (2003) identifies prior language learning experience as an influential factor in teachers' cognition development and he claims that such influence may be persistent throughout teachers' professional lives. Baijuan and Denghua's accounts support the view that prior learning experience is related to teaching. Both of them voice the influence of their teachers on their teaching. Similarly, all other research participants acknowledge the role of their teachers on their practices, as summarised in Table 6.4.

Table 6.5: The influence of teachers

Research Participants	Source of Influence
Anya	English teacher in college
Baijuan	Geography teacher in high school
Caili	English teacher in high school
Denghua	English teacher in high school
Enchu	English teacher in college

It can be seen from the table, three participants mention the influence of high school teachers and four participants mention the influence of English teachers. Interestingly, all research participants attribute the influence to the teacher's personality and their relationship with students. Two participants (Anya and Caili) attribute the most influential aspect to personality (Anya: "nice and sincere"; Caili: "friendly"). Caili also identifies the self presentation of the teacher ("approachable" "not strict"). Three participants (Baijuan, Denghua and Enchu) recognise their classroom strategies (e.g. Baijuan: "make learning fun"; Denghua: "telling jokes";

Enchu, "funny, make students laugh"). My findings resonate with the study of Bailey et al. (1996) who finds that affective factors are often reported by teachers as more influential than methodologies.

Teacher cognition and pre-service teacher education

The influence of pre-service education on teacher cognition has been controversial, although most researchers tend to think that teacher education has an impact on teacher cognition (Borg, 2003).

As the accounts show, both Baijuan and Denghua think the influence of their pre-service education is minimal. The other three research participants also think their university education has had no influence on their teaching skills, apart from the improvement of their English. Caili is the only person who has expressed a positive view, but her reason is still limited to English improvement: "Now that I have improved my English, I have the confidence to teach and I can put many things into practice. For example, I can explain grammar points very clearly." (Interview, 08/01/2008).

Borg's (2005) review shows that many researchers agree that the effect of pre-service teacher education on teacher cognition varies between programmes and trainees. Denghua's comment may explain the reason to some extent (1) Lack of methodological training (in training non-native speakers of English to become English teachers, most Chinese normal universities have emphasised subject knowledge rather than teaching skills in their teacher training); (2) Delayed teaching practice: In contrast to the provision of teaching practice being integral to teacher education courses in UK universities, teaching practices are usually offered in the last year in most Chinese normal universities.

Admittedly, although all teachers argue that university education had no influence on their teaching, they may have not recognised such an influence. For example, both Baijuan and Denghua deliberately chose to follow a CLT approach at the beginning of their teaching and this might be the influence of their university education because these were the strategies taught in the university.

202

Cognition and classroom practice

The relationship between cognition and classroom practice is another area discussed in Borg's (2003) work. In Borg's framework, classroom practice is used to include both classroom experience and the factors that may relate to classroom experience. Findings in this study confirm the well-documented assertion that classroom practice is influential for teachers' cognitive development. As evidenced in Baijuan and Denghua's developmental history, their classroom experience is the main factor contributing to their development, for example, Baijuan chose to focus on form because of students' low English proficiency. Later, her focus on form was confirmed by students' high English scores. In terms of Denghua, students' poor academic performance triggered his first change, and students' good academic performance led to the third stage of his teaching when he uses (without hesitation) the grammar-translation method. As for other research participants, students' influence on teachers' decision making is evident throughout the discussion in previous sections, for example, Baijuan's decision to use CLT activities to please students (see 6.4.2) and Enchu's decision not to focus on affective factors (see 6.4.5). Based on the previous discussion of Baijuan and Denghua' experiences, the following inferences can be made:

(1) There are two types of change: change in terms of pedagogical principles[29] and in terms of pedagogical techniques. Teachers may constantly add new ideas to their repertoire of pedagogical techniques either by teaching, discussing with colleagues or observing others' practices. The change may happen gradually, in fragmented fashion and on a daily basis (see Baijuan's change). However, teachers may revise their pedagogical principles when there are significant changes, particularly those in relation to students' learning outcomes (see the changes for both Baijuan and Denghua).

(2) Students' learning outcomes in terms of examination scores are very influential in triggering change (see both Baijuan and Denghua);

(3) Failed experience is more influential than successful experience in triggering change, particularly as regards pedagogical principles. Positive feedback may serve as reassurance and confirmation, but may not help teachers to take a critical look at their work (see both Baijuan and Denghua);

---

[29] The term 'pedagogical principle' was borrowed from Breen et al. (2000) to mean principles shaped and generated by underlying and more abstract beliefs to serve to mediate between beliefs and on-going decision making in particular instruction contexts.

(4) Peers are influential in triggering change (see both Baijuan and Denghua).

(5) The findings support Borg's (2006) view that cognitive change and behavioural change may not happen consistently. For example, cognitive change may not accompany behaviour change, and vice versa (see Denghua's last stage of change).

(6) The findings also support Tsui's (2003) argument that while external factors may affect teachers' professional development, it is the way they respond to these external factors that shapes their development (see Baijuan and Denghua).

It seems to me from the discussion that teachers' belief system is a moving mosaic[30] which is fluid, dynamic and messy. By moving mosaic I mean teachers are constantly changing their belief system. Very often it is not a breakthrough, rather a fragmented change. They may bring in new ideas into their belief system everyday. Some of them are central and others are peripheral. This is highlighted in 6.7.1 on the discussion about Baijuan's change. By fluid, dynamic and messy I mean teachers have accommodated so many different dimensions of beliefs and some of them seem in contradictory with each other, but they seem to exist in harmony with each other in teachers' belief system. A piece of evidence is the discussion on the role of teachers in 6.6.1.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the NEC experience from the five research participants' views: it has introduced teachers' general orientation and engagement with the NEC; discussed teachers' new emotions associated with teaching the NEC; analysed goal conflicts perceived by teachers and different forces in teachers' use of the NEC; discussed each participant's orientation in response to the goal conflicts; analysed teachers' two different levels of thinking; compared participants' cultural orientations in comparison with the literature on Chinese learning culture; investigated the developmental history of teacher cognition and practices; and discussed factors in relation to the development. The next chapter analyses teachers' classroom practices and out of classroom practices based on observational data.

---

[30] The term moving mosaic is borrowed from Hargreaves (1994) to mean blurred boundaries, overlapping categories and membership, flexible and dynamic.

CHAPTER 7: OBSERVING TEACHERS IN PRACTICE

Chapter 6 mainly explored the NEC implementation from teachers' perspectives and this section turns to my observation of teachers in practice. The motivations for writing this section are: (1) it is often reminded in the literature about teacher cognition that there may be discrepancies between teachers' statements and their everyday practices. For example, they may state what they would like to believe rather than what they actually believe (Woods, 1996). Therefore, it is necessary for researchers to collect different aspects of data in order to construct a more valid view of the participants. (2) As insiders for practice, teachers' perceptions may be restricted due to their taken-for-granted knowledge (Bourdieu, 1998). It is important to observe and understand the situation from outside in order to think the unthinkable and question the unquestionable perceptions and practices of teachers.

Various aspects of the teachers' implementation process are included in the analysis. As a participant observer, I was able to collect data on many occasions (e.g. teaching in classrooms, teaching for demonstration, preparing lessons and staff office discussions). Transcripts of classroom observations are kept in the participants' original words if it was English. The main purpose is neither to examine teachers' classroom decisions nor to defend (or disprove) views or arguments made in the previous chapter. The aim is to gain a holistic view of teachers' work and further the understanding of teachers' thinking and practices through data from different sources. The presentation structure of chapter 7 is outlined in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Scope of chapter 7

7.1 Use of NEC principles

7.2 High emphasis on form

7.3 Difference between teaching for external observers and teaching for students

7.4 Different levels of student participation

    7.4.1 Managing large classes

    7.4.2 Teaching differently in different classes

7.1 Use of NEC principles

Chapter 6 discusses teachers' different positions regarding the NEC: Anya expresses the most positive orientation and highest engagement with the NEC; Caili comments that being a 'top class' teacher, she feels the pressure to use NEC principles in her teaching and she also states that she can incorporate NEC principles with examination preparation. Enchu voices a positive orientation towards the NEC, but a less active engagement with the NEC. Baijuan and Denghua seem to be less positive towards the NEC and their engagement also appears to be less active. Observational data shows that in spite of their different positions, all participants have used the NEC to a greater or lesser extent.

The first manifestation of teaching the NEC is the use of TBLT, as exemplified in an observational transcript of Baijuan's class.

Table 7.2: Observational transcript: The World's Most Useful Gift Catalogue (15/05/2008 at 8:25-9:10am)

Line No.	
	Baijuan: What is the page about?
	S1: useful things for poor people.
	Baijuan: These are a list of practical gifts. How are the gifts listed?
	S2: according to price.
5	Baijuan: The gift is listed in the order of the price, from cheapest to the dearest. How much is the cheapest and the dearest?
	S3: 5 dollars and 1350 dollars.

10	Baijuan: Why is the price of the gift vary?
	S4: They are useful in normal life.
	Baijuan: Any other reasons?
	S5: People have different incomes.
	Baijuan: According to the gift giver's purchasing ability. Therefore, we can make sure every one makes a contribution. What of the gift matters? Price?
15	Ss: No.
	S6: Whether they bring hope for the people in need.
	Baijuan: So it's not the price, but the act and willingness to share and help that matters…Why are these gifts most useful?
	Ss…
20	Baijuan: Look at the list together…We have food, clothes, education… These are what?
	Ss: basics.
	Baijuan: Basic problems waiting to be solved…They are essentials…Are gifts like this a good idea? Why? Use the following structures, 2 minutes to
25	prepare.
	PPT: As is known to all, as far as I'm concerned, firstly, secondly…
	Baijuan reminds Ss to discuss with their partners. She walks around, answers Qs at times, corrects mistakes when identified, intervenes when off-task activities are observed.
30	Discussion finishes. Baijuan selects a few Ss to read their sentences.
	Baijuan: The destructive earthquake stroke Sichuan Province recently. A lot of people lost their homes and they are in great need of help. What kind of things do you think are needed for people in Sichuan? Shall we create a
35	gift catalogue for them?
	Baijuan: Work in groups of 4 and create a gift catalogue. You need to explain what and why. 5 Minutes to prepare.
	Ss work in groups of 4 or 5, Baijuan walks around…
40	
	Baijuan: OK, report your catalogues.
	S7: We'd like to add tent, clothes and water for people in Sichuan…

	S8: Do I need to think about money?
	Baijuan: You just put the things here for others to buy. No need to think
45	about money.
	S8: I'd like to add a clinic because…
	S9: I want to put CHS in Sichuan because children are in great need of
	education.
	Baijuan: Are you going to use magic weapon to move CHS?
50	Ss laugh
	S10: I'd like to add Panda…
	Baijuan: Why?
	S10: attract tourists.
	S11:…
	(As she listens, Baijuan corrects language mistakes occasionally)
	Baijuan: Today's homework is writing. You need to put your catalogue and
	explain the reasons using the sentence structures in PPT.
	PPT: Firstly, I'd like to add…for…; Secondly, I think it's better to put…as…;
	Last but not least, …is also necessary for…Finally…

(See conventions for transcription)

In the transcript, the main activity is to choose what to donate to survivors of the earthquake. This is classified as a task according to HSECS (MOE, 2003) in that there is a purpose, a process and a product. Additionally, the task has real life resonance (the Sichuan Earthquake was a recent event and there were nationwide donations at the time) and involves English use. Baijuan's frequent classroom use of tasks is also supported by a transcript from the previous class in which students are asked to design a slogan for promoting tourism in Papua New Guinea. Apart from reflecting principles from the curriculum guidance, Baijuan's use of tasks seems to have also incorporated strategies suggested in some major TBLT literature. For example, she applies Willis' (1996) stages of pre-task (line 1-26, brainstorming and learning from a similar experience), the task cycle (line 28-47, task, planning and report) and post-task (line 48-53, analysis and practice). The focus is on meaning and more controlled practice is provided in the post-task cycle. Her students seem to be primarily engaged in meaning production (e.g. line 38 "Do I need to think about money?").

Observational data from Anya and Caili's classes also suggest that their use of CLT approaches is consistent with the NEC guidance and reflect many principles suggested in the literature. Comparing the five research participants, Anya has used CLT activities most frequently in her teaching, followed by Caili and Baijuan. Denghua and Enchu, however, seem to have barely used CLT activities during my observations, apart from one occasion when Denghua used role play, because his students were sleepy and he used role play as a strategy to enliven his class (Observation, 12/06/2008). A discrepancy is noted here between Baijuan's stated engagement and her practice. There are perhaps three reasons: (1) although Baijuan expresses a less positive view towards CLT approaches in supporting learning, she argues that she has to use them at times in order to please students who think activities are fun (6.3.2); (2) Baijuan seems to have a confused understanding of different teaching approaches (see 6.1.2), so that she may not be aware that she is implementing the NEC principles; (3) Baijuan often shares Anya and Caili's teaching materials and she may have used TBLT without realising it.

In terms of other areas suggested by the NEC (MOE, 2003, see 4.3), a wide range of principles are applied by teachers in their practices. Referring back to Baijuan's classroom practice (Table 7.2), her efforts to develop students' all-round development have been identified. The transcript suggests that Baijuan actively involves students in the lesson: the transcript contains many examples of student answers in English (e.g. lines 4, 7, 9, 11). In the extract, Baijuan uses some famous people's sayings to demonstrate the value of sharing. She also leads students to perceive donation in a more positive way (e.g. in lines 13-16, "So it's not the amount of price, but the act and willingness to share and help that matters..."). She designs tasks for students to learn English through doing. Overall, Baijuan has integrated a range of NEC principles (see 4.3) in her teaching. A few patterns are observed:

- All teachers have used a wide range of NEC principles in their teaching;
- Anya and Caili have applied NEC principles to the greatest extent;
- Anya, Baijuan and Caili have more frequently applied the NEC principles in their classroom practices than Denghua and Enchu, for example, use of TBLT.
- Although Denghua and Enchu rarely use CLT activities in their classroom practices, they have used a range of NEC principles outside the classroom, for example, encouraging students to produce an English newspaper in order to promote information exploration; encouraging students to take part in the

school's 'English corner' [31] in order to promote students' communicative competence by talking to American teachers.

- In spite of teachers' use of the NEC principles, a very high emphasis on form is identified for each participant. This is discussed in the next section.

7.2 High emphasis on form

The discussion in chapter 6 shows that Baijuan, Caili, Denghua and Enchu have in interviews given more priority to form than meaning. Anya believes that CLT activities are valuable for students. However, she has reservations about using CLT all the time. She therefore decides to place emphasis on both form and CLT activities. Observational data also shows that all teachers have placed very high emphasis on form. Denghua and Enchu hardly used any CLT activities in teaching during my observations. Although CLT activities are used by Anya, Baijuan and Caili, the focus on form is obvious: the main form of teaching is teacher-led controlled practice of grammar or vocabulary, for example, exercise explanations. This is exemplified by following Anya's teaching for two weeks (Table 7.3: Anya's teaching arrangement). As is shown in the table, among the 11 class hours in the two weeks, at least 6 class hours (class hour 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9) are largely form-focused. In other classes, both CLT activities and form-focused instruction are used.

Table 7.3: Anya's teaching arrangement between 10/03/2008 and 21/03/2008

Class hour	Date	Content
1	10/03/2008	Book 7 Unit 2: Robots Warming up and reading text 1
2	11/03/2008	Reading text 1
3	12/03/2008	Language study: using words and vocabulary (check answers of the post-text exercises on words and vocabulary)
4	13/03/2008	Explain papers of the monthly examination
5	14/03/2008:	Explain papers of the monthly examination
6	15/03/2008	The 2nd reading text
7	17/03/2008	Language study: grammar

---

[31] See glossary.

8	18/03/2008	Explain questions in *Student Times*
9	19/03/2008	Explain self-compiled exercise papers, grammar points and language in the textbooks, the 3rd reading text
10	20/03/2008	the 3rd reading text, Student project: Robot Press Conference
11	21/03/2008	Book 7 Unit 3: Under the Sea Warming up and reading text 1

However, compared with other teachers, Anya's teaching of form is less frequent. With data collected from both classroom observations and entry logs, I am able to make a comparison between Anya, Baijuan and Caili's teaching of the same unit:

- In class hour 1, both Anya and Caili spend 10 minutes on whole class discussion for warming up. The rest of the time is spent on form-focused instruction. However, Baijuan's main focus is on teaching new words in the unit, for example, she teaches students how to pronounce the new words and reminds them of the spelling.

- In class hour 2, both Anya and Caili spend about 15 minutes on group discussion before reading text 1. Baijuan spends about 10 minutes on group discussion for teaching reading text 1. The rest of the time is spent on form-focused instruction.

- In class hour 6, Anya spends about 10 minutes on whole class discussion of a topic related to the reading passage. Both Baijuan and Caili devote the hour to teaching form.

- In class hour 10, Anya organises a Robot Press Conference for students to role play characters in the text and she spends about 30 minutes on the activities. Caili uses an interview for students to role play and she spends about 15 minutes on the activity. Baijuan does not use any CLT activity at this stage because she explains grammar points in the textbook.

- In class hour 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9, both Baijuan and Caili devote the time to form.

Referring to Table 7.2, although Baijuan's use of tasks seems to prioritize meaning, her teaching of form appears to be more important than what is suggested in major TBLT literature. For example, most TBLT writers suggest free practice during the task cycle (e.g. Willis, 1996; Nunan, 2004), but Baijuan specifies words and

structures for utterance production, which she justifies by saying that her students' low English proficiency has pushed her to focus on form (e.g. 6.1.2). For example, her students often do not have the knowledge to follow up reading passages without prior explanation of new words and grammar structures (Anya and Caili comment that most of their students are competent to pronounce words according to spelling). Therefore, she has to spend much time teaching pronunciation, spelling and explaining grammar structures. Similar concerns have also been expressed by Denghua and Enchu (see 6.1.4 & 6.1.5). As is exemplified in an observational transcript of Denghua's class (Table 7.4), he has almost exclusively focused on vocabulary and grammar practice in the class:

Table 7.4 Observational Transcript of Denghua's Class
(10/06/2008 at 7:30am-8:15am)

- Denghua introduces the task: word dictation
- Denghua reads 15 words (e.g. *slavery, majority, immigrant and aircraft*) [奴隶制,大多数,移民,航空器]

  Students write answers on the dictation book
- PPT shows 12 sentences with cloze; Denghua selects 12 students to answer questions by filling the blanks with new words
- PPT shows a passage with cloze of 20 blanks; Denghua selects 20 students to answer questions by filling the blanks with new words
- Denghua leads students to read the passage
- PPT shows some phrases in Chinese; Denghua asks students to find these phrases in the text and underline them
- Denghua explains these phrases one by one, an example is:
  - ➢ PPT shows: 3rd largest state

    the +ordinal number + superlative degree + noun
  - ➢ Denghua selects a student to translate the sentence: *The yellow river is the longest river in China* [黄河是中国最长的河流]
  - ➢ Denghua selects a student to translate the sentence: *Hangzhou is the most beautiful city in China* [杭州是中国最漂亮的城市]

Denghua's emphasis on form is exemplified in the transcript. Another theme observed in the field is that teachers seem to teach differently in teaching for

external observers and teaching for students. This is further discussed in the following section.

7.3 Difference between teaching for external observers and teaching for students

In section 6.1.2, Baijuan voices the opinion that teachers may wear two pairs of shoes: they use NEC principles in teaching for external observers and they focus on form-focused instruction when teaching for students. Her statement is supported by observational data.

There are three main occasions when teachers need to give demonstration lessons for observers, either in CHS or outside CHS.

- Demonstration lessons:
  - ➢ According to regulations in the English department, each teacher needs to demonstrate teaching to all other English teachers in the same team at least once per semester in order to provide opportunities for mutual exchange and development. During the school year I observed 18 demonstration lessons given by teachers in the English Department in CHS, including teachers from all grades.
  - ➢ Experienced teachers demonstrate teaching to less experienced teachers from the same school or other schools. I observed 3 demonstration lessons organized by County A Education Committee and 2 demonstration lessons organized by LQ Education Bureau.
- Teaching competitions: there are on average two to three teaching competitions per year organised by either LQ Education Bureau or County A Education Committee. On these occasions, Anya assigns one or two teachers to participate. I observed 15 teaching competitions organised by County A Education Committee.
- Teaching plan competitions: LQ Education Bureau organises teaching plan competitions once each semester. On these occasions, teachers from each school work in a team to produce Powerpoint presentations illustrating their plans for teaching the new units. I collected 19 Powerpoint presentations for the teaching plan competitions.

Analysing observational fieldnotes and teachers' Powerpoint presentations shows that:

- In all Powerpoint presentations for the teaching plan competitions (see Appendix 7 for an example), the emphasis on CLT activities is obvious and a wide range of activities are designed for each unit.

- In teaching competitions, CLT activities seem to be predominant. Form-focused activities are rarely used.

- In demonstration lessons organised by LQ City Education Bureau and County A Education Committee, the emphasis on CLT activities is also obvious. Form-focused activities are rarely used.

- In in-school demonstration lessons, most teachers (apart from two) have predominantly used CLT activities. For the two exceptional cases, on one occasion, the teacher doing demonstration lessons forgot about her demonstration lesson and the lesson focused on grammar practice. On another occasion, the demonstration lesson was organised after the monthly examination and the teacher decided to explain the examination papers. She warned the other teachers that she would focus on form-focused instruction, and that there was no need to observe her lesson (It is apparent in her notification that she views CLT as 'good practice' that is worth observing).

Similar experience of front stage and back stage difference is also reported in the ELT literature. In the investigation of the implementation of a CLT approach in a Japanese secondary school, Sakui (2004) finds that teachers were "wearing two pairs of shoes". They used CLT approaches when observers were present and they returned to the grammar-translation method when there was no observer.

As Baijuan comments in section 6.1.2, incorporating CLT activities is a requirement of the City Education Bureau and County Education Committee in teaching competitions. This may offer a possible explanation for teachers' conscious incorporation of CLT activities in demonstration lessons and competitions. The other explanation is Goffman's (1959) impression management theory. According to Goffman, on the front stage, performers carefully present themselves in ways that are expected for their roles. However, backstage where the audience are absent, the performers can step out of character without fear of disrupting the performance. Applying Goffman's theory to teachers' practices, demonstration lessons and teaching competitions are the front stage; and everyday classroom teaching is the back stage. The audience, therefore, are 'experts' and teachers who observe or

judge the class. Teachers' use of CLT activities in front stage clearly shows that CLT activities are received as 'good practice' and teachers consciously use CLT in order to present a favourable impression of themselves to other colleagues and authorities.

In these circumstances, it is difficult to say during my research, whether teachers have presented their front stage performance or back stage behaviour (e.g. whether I was treated as an audience or part of the scene). Anya, Baijuan and Caili all admit that in the first stage of my observation, they taught differently when I was present and they spent longer time preparing lessons in order to perform a 'good lesson'. However, Anya told me at a later stage that there was not much difference whether I was present or not because I was there almost every day (Informal Conversation, 25/06/2008). While it is possible that Anya may have become used to having me in the classroom, the extent to which she switched from front stage performance to back stage behaviour is still hard to say.

7.4 Different levels of student participation

Although Anya, Baijuan and Caili have organised CLT activities in their teaching and created opportunities for students to speak and present their ideas in classroom, not all students seem to be willing to participate in these activities. This is exemplified in the following two fieldnotes. The first fieldnotes was taken in Anya's class when two students were doing a presentation on the platform and many other students showed low engagement in listening to the presentation. The second example of fieldnotes was taken in Caili's class. She was covering sick leave for an arts class teacher and the fieldnotes documented the difficulty she met when she was trying to deliver an activity that required student participation and performance.

> Two students are talking on the stage as interviewer and interviewee. Their voices are small and I can hardly hear…Some students are listening, but some other students seem not to be listening. Lintao is doing exercises on the *Student Times*, Liying is looking at the vocabulary list…(Fieldnote, 20/03/2008)

> …Caili asks for student volunteers to participate. However, there is no volunteer. Caili chooses three students and asks them to go to the stage. She gives the first instruction to the student, the student acquiesces. She gives the instruction to another student, the student stands there, face flushed…Caili has to ask the student to go back to her seat (Fieldnote, 27/02/2008)

Observational data demonstrate that there are different levels of student participation in different classes, and among students in the same class. Two reasons may have contributed to this: large classes and varying class culture. These are discussed in the following sections.

7.4.1 Managing large classes

As previously mentioned, there are on average 55 to 60 students in each class in CHS. Therefore, classrooms are often large and overcrowded (see Figure 7.1: Layout of a typical classroom in CHS). In the literature, large classes are reported by many researchers as a main obstacle to the use of CLT (Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007).

Figure 7.1: Layout of a typical classroom in CHS
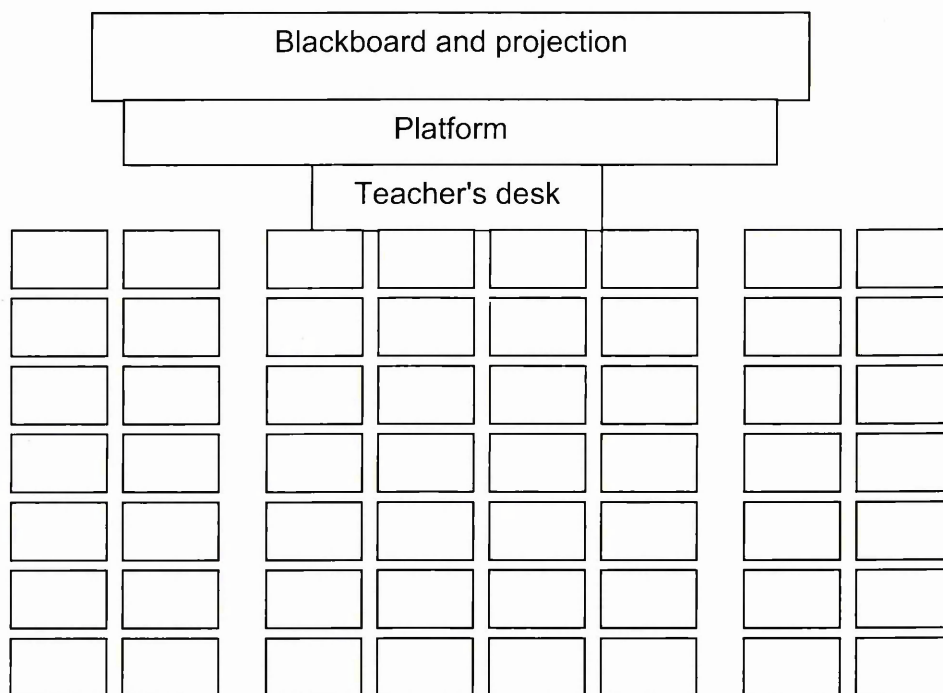
As represented in the figure, there are normally seven or eight rows of seven or eight pairs of desks in each classroom. The gang ways, often between the second and third rows and between the sixth and seventh rows, are narrow. Therefore, teachers usually conduct their classes from the platform, which is in the centre at the front of the classroom. For one thing, there is more space on the platform than in the gangways; for another thing, from this position teachers have easy access to the blackboard and their computers. If CLT activities are organised (e.g. role play or students' presentations), students are often asked to give their talks or perform role plays on the platform. Teachers are aware that the opportunity for each student to

talk is limited, due to the large number of students they have. However, Anya (Interview, 16/10/2007) and the expert teacher Ms. He (Informal conversation, 08/12/2007) argue that listening to other students' presentations is an important way for students to pick up language from their peers. However, the reality seems less desirable than teachers' predictions. For example, students in the back rows attend less than students in the front rows during students' presentations. In her research of Pakistani secondary schools, Shamim (1996) notices similar reactions. She writes of the front of the classroom as the surveillance zone of the teacher and the back of the classroom as outside the teacher's attention zone. As Shamim (ibid) explains, more engaged students may prefer to sit in the front and less engaged students may prefer to sit in the back in order to be outside the attention zone and hide from the teacher. Data arising from my observations suggest that the distance between the back row and the platform and the lack of voice projection by students presenting seem to be the main reason for student in the back not to be engaged. Students in the back often complain that they cannot hear the presentations: as one student claimed: "their voices are like honey bee. I can't hear what they say at all, so I'd rather look at the vocabulary." (Informal conversation,18/06/2008). During my observations, I myself was often not able to hear students from where I sat in the back. The concern that some students may not be able to hear the talk reduces teachers' use of students' presentations, as exemplified in Baijuan's comment:

> Researcher: "In class 12, when the students gave you the assignments, why did you read the compositions yourself instead of asking students to read?"
>
> Baijuan: "I have a little bit concern in doing this kind of tasks. There must be mistakes in students' writing. If I read it, I can correct the mistakes when I'm reading. Additionally, students have this or that sort of problems in reading, for example, one of the students I asked today has accent in reading and the other one has very low voice... It may also take too long for them to finish reading. In order to safe time, I decided to read it myself."
>
> (Interview, 28/03/2008)

In addition, due to the small size of the classrooms, the use of group work is also limited. It is difficult to get students to move around to do group work. Therefore, most teachers choose to ask students to work in groups of four in their seats, instead of arranging groups according to students' language levels. The groups normally stay the same and students' language levels are different in the group. It is observed that in many groups there are often one or two dominant students who do most of the talk and others are less active. Thus, a 'virtuous' circle for the front row students and students with a higher language level is identified; and a 'vicious' circle

217

for the back row students and students with lower language level is observed.

7.4.2 Teaching differently in different classes

Another difference noted is the difference between different classes. In chapter 6, both Anya and Baijuan state that they teach differently in different classes. Anya is concerned that students in one of the classes she teaches are less motivated by CLT activities while students in another class have shown more interest in CLT. Similarly, Baijuan also states that she teaches differently in different classes. They have given two reasons: students' language proficiency and students' attitudes. This is exemplified by Caili's experience when she was asked to cover sick leave for an 'ordinary class' teacher.

The topic was on Living Together of Module 7 Unit 1. For the warming up, Caili planned a guessing game for students to learn new words: ask some students to act according to instructions and the rest of the class to guess the word according to the performance. Examples are:
- Instruction: Go back to your seat quickly with your eyes closed; answer: blind.
- Instruction: go around the class with one leg; answer: crippled.
- Instruction: Use your body language to express that you want to have lunch with your friend; answer: dumb.

Caili used this activity in her own classes and students performed according to the instructions. There was active participation from her students. However, the activity was less successful in the arts class. As shown in the transcript above, students were shy and did not want to participate. Caili commented on a later occasion that she was not going to use activities in arts classes

A number of reasons may have contributed to this:

(1) Students' English proficiency, for example, students in the 'ordinary class' may not know the word 'crippled' or 'dumb'.

(2) Students' attitudes towards learning, for example, students in the arts class may have less desire to speak in English. I discovered this in my role as a teacher for both 'top classes' and arts classes.

(3) Class culture: Ms. He, the expert teacher, argues at one point that other teachers may be able to use CLT approaches in her classes, but she may not be

able to use these strategies in other classes because of the different class culture, and she believes class culture is most important for teaching (Informal Conversation, 15/03/2008). A Similar view is also expressed by Anya (Informal Conversation, 06/04/2008). They argue that through their use of CLT activities, students have formed the habit of talking and participating in classroom activities and accept it as an important part of English learning. Therefore, they are more willing to participate in CLT activities. They believe this is the most important factor in their use of CLT and they are very conscious of working to form a positive class culture at the start of the 'round'. Baijuan's effort on developing student habits (see 6.4.2) may also support their views. As a participant observer, I also felt that in a later stage of my teaching, students in arts classes were more accustomed to being asked to do activities in my class, perhaps because they had accepted talking and discussion as a norm in my class.

Caili's experience of teaching an arts class is illustrative of class culture: on one hand, teachers bring culture to classes; on the other hand, they bring cultures out of classes through the interaction with students (e.g. Caili's decision not to use CLT at a later stage).

7.5 Different ways of involvement?

As discussed in the previous section, large classes may have affected students' participation in classroom activities, for example, the challenge to arouse and maintain students' attention, concentration, listening, interest and also to enable as many individuals as possible to speak. Similar concerns are also expressed by Cortazzi and Jin (2001). However, during the observations teachers revealed a range of strategies to organise the participation of learners.

As discussed previously, there are generally two patterns of teaching among the five research participants. Anya, Baijuan and Caili use CLT activities to a greater or lesser extent. On the other hand, Denghua and Enchu have barely used CLT activity during my observations (see 7.1). Table 7.5 and Table 7.6 summarize the two patterns of commonly employed interaction patterns. The former is used more often by Anya and Caili and the latter is used more often by Denghua and Enchu. Baijuan's practice seems to lie in between the two patterns.

Table 7.5: Anya and Caili's handling of texts

(exemplified by Table 7.7)

- The teacher poses questions in relation to the topic, selects students or students volunteer to answer questions;

- The teacher asks questions about information in the text (e.g. the main idea), gives students a few minutes to read through the text, selects students to answer questions;

- The teacher explains the text (e.g. content information, organization, vocabulary and grammar) and selects students to answer questions in relation to the explanation;

- The teacher asks questions about information derived from the text (e.g. inferences based on the text), gives students a few minutes to discuss (normally in groups of 4), selects students to report the findings of the discussion to the whole class;

- The teacher presents Power point presentation of clozes (to review the information, words or grammar structures in the text), and selects students to fill in the blanks with new words;

- The whole class read the cloze in chorus (or selected students read).

Table 7.6: Denghua and Enchu's handling of texts

(exemplified by Table 7.4)

- The teacher presents new language points (e.g. phrases and sentence structures) with a Power point presentation;

- The teacher uses the cassette recorder to play the reading passage, students underline language points in the text;

- The teacher explains language points one by one (selects students to give the points they have underlined, explains the rules/phrases, selects students to practise the language points often by translating);

- The teacher presents a Power point presentation of clozes (to review the information, words or grammatical structures in the text), selects students to fill in the blanks with new words;

- The whole class read the cloze in chorus (or selected students read).

Whether it is in form-focused practice (Table 7.6) or CLT activities (Table 7.5), a high frequency of student participation is identified. In addition to the transcripts shown in this thesis, an observation transcript in Baijuan's data suggests that in one lesson alone (45 minutes), she has involved all students and over half of the students are given more than two turns (observation transcript, 07/05/2008). An observation transcript in Denghua's data suggests that for explaining and practising one grammar structure alone, he has involved over twenty students (observation transcript, 10/06/2008). A popular strategy often used by teachers is "Ride the train" (开火车), in which students answer questions one after another according to their seats (normally from front to back or from back to front). Teachers state that this strategy takes less time while a larger number of students can be involved in speaking. Other strategies include calling students by their student numbers and selecting students from left to right, or from right to left.

7.6 Economic use of class hours

Another theme identified in teachers' practices is that all teachers seem to be very economic in the use of class hours. This is exemplified by a transcript from Caili's classes (Table 7.7).

Table 7.7 Observation Transcript of Caili's Class

Line No.	
1	The researcher enters classroom Five students are writing sentences on the blackboard
5	Caili announces the start of class, students stand up, greet teacher and teacher greets students, students sit down
	Analyzes sentences on the blackboard: error correction, structure analysis, explanation of words
10	Explains questions in the exercise book, Caili picks S1 to answer Q1 S1: to have issued Caili: Why? S1:... Caili explains the different usage of "to have issued" and "to issue"
15	Caili: S2, Q2 S2: be sure of Caili: What preposition can also come after "be sure"? Ss: be sure to

20	Caili explains the difference between "be sure of" and "be sure to" Caili: S3, Q3 S3: Strike Caili: We mentioned this word last time. Now take out a piece of paper and let's do some dictation: (1) Strike while the iron is hot.
25	(2) Clock strike the hours. (3) She struck the match. (4) An idea suddenly struck me. (5) The area was struck by an outbreak of cholera. PPT shows the answers, Caili asks students to refer to the answers
30	and make self corrections Picks 5 Ss to translate the above sentences Caili explains the different meanings and tenses of "strike" Ss read all sentences together Caili (in Chinese): The reason why I asked you to do this is that I want
35	you to link the new knowledge with knowledge you learnt before. In that case, you can deepen your understanding. …In total, 15 exercises are explained…
40	Explains reading comprehension in the exercise book Picks Ss to sum up the main meaning, analyze structure, and asks Qs about content of the text, e.g. how to treat junk emails?
45	PPT shows some words, e.g. politeness, knowledgeable... Caili: Some of you told me questions on the Student Times is difficult because they don't understand some words. I picked out some new words. Let's have a look. Politeness is similar to a word? S1: Polite Caili: So what does it mean? With "ness" in the end? S2: It means…
50	… Caili: Actually many new words are not new. You have to pay attention to their formation and word out their meanings according to rules of word formation.
55	Refers to Workbook p. 55 Using words and expressions Put words in their proper forms in the cloze Picks Ss to answer, spell words, introduces similar words, explains grammatical structures at times, Ss read cloze together.
60	PPT shows a cloze, picks 4 students to do the cloze
	PPT shows another cloze, picks 2 students to complete Ss read the completed cloze
65	Caili: The second cloze tells you a story about robot. What opinion do you want to give to this robot? S1:…I advise… Caili: If you want to give opinions, what words would you use? PPT shows: I think, I advise, in my opinion/view, as far as I'm
70	concerned, personally speaking…

	Caili: Now work with your groupmates and introduce your opinions. Use the given structures and at least five new words in the unit. ...

As is shown in the table, the 45-minute lesson involves a variety of activities, for example, the explanation of exercises in *Student Times* and *the Workbook*, dictation and group discussion. Caili has paid particular attention to the structure of her lesson, for example, linking different activities in order to save time. Another example is that Caili arrives at classroom five minutes before the class starts and asks five students to write sentences on the blackboard while others are still having a break. Therefore, she can start sentence explanation as soon as the class starts (line 1-9).

Saving time and being economic in using class hours seems to be an important concern for all teachers. Other strategies include: extending class hours and teaching out of class hours.

Extending class hours: all research participants have the habit of extending class hours. For example, out of the 15 lessons that I observed, Anya extended class 14 times. The longest one was 9 minutes (out of 10 minutes' interval between two classes). The class finished when the teacher for the next class was waiting outside the classroom. Using another example, out of the 10 classes I observed, Denghua extended class 10 times. Leaving aside the research participants, extending class seems a common practice in the school and I was once kept waiting outside the classroom until five minutes after the time for start of class (Fieldnotes, 20/03/2008).

Teaching outside regular class hours: Many teaching activities are arranged outside class hours, for example, listening. Evening readings normally starts at 6:20pm (see 5.2). However, Anya and Caili request their students to be in class 20 minutes earlier than the scheduled time. Therefore, they can use 6pm to 6:20pm for listening practice, which is organised every day. Additionally, vocabulary pronunciation is often taught during morning readings. Reciting is often done during lunch breaks. Films are often shown during evening studies or break time. The NEC suggests that ELT should include not only language learning but also information acquisition and skills building. Supplementary information is expected to be taught in conjunction with the texts (MOE, 2003). For example, it is suggested that teachers should play the film *Artificial Intelligence* when teaching the Unit *Robot*. Most of these films are

shown outside regular class hours. All teachers state that they cannot afford to do too many CLT activities during regular class hours because they need to complete the syllabus.

Teachers' economic use of class hours and out of class hours for teaching seems to indicate their orientation to transmission of knowledge because they want to use as much time as possible to transmit more information and knowledge to students (see 6.5.1). Such a perceived need may be more strongly felt with the NEC when teachers feel there is 'more knowledge' to be communicated to students following the increased difficulty level of the texts and more words being included in the new textbook. Another example of the pressure brought by the NEC may be the extra hours worked by the teachers.

7.7 Teachers working long hours

As discussed in 5.3, the school requirement is that teachers have to be in the school between 8am and 5pm, with about 2 hours' lunch break (as shown in Table 5.3). However, most English teachers work much longer hours. Based on the observational data, a timetable based on their actual work can be constructed for grade two English teachers.

Table 7.8: Timetable for Grade Two English Teachers

Time/Period	Activities
7:00am – 7:25am	Supervise morning reading (three mornings per week)
7:30am-11:20am	Teach two classes, mark assignments collected from students
11:20am-1:30pm	Go to the classroom: Hand out students' assignments; Maintain discipline (ensure students keep quiet); Ask students to recite texts from memory one by one; Answer students' questions.
1:30pm-5:25pm	Prepare lessons/Mark assignments
6:00pm-6:20pm	Listening practice for 'top classes'
6:20pm-9:15pm	Supervise evening reading (once a week) Prepare lessons/marking assignments

| 10:30pm-11:00pm | monitor students' sleep (to ensure every student sleeps on time) |

Most English teachers state that they work over 15 hours per day, which seems to be a common scenario in CHS. Many teachers leave office after 10pm and go back home after 11pm. Anya even works in spite of a tumour. Admittedly, the school regulations may be one of the reasons why teachers work overtime, particularly monitoring students' sleep at night (the purpose was to ensure that students sleep on time in order to have energy for the next day's teaching). The introduction of the NEC might also have worsened the situation. As discussed in 6.2.1, there have been frequent changes of textbooks in the past ten years and therefore teachers are first-time users of the textbooks every time they start a new round. As discussed in chapter 6, all teachers state in interviews that one main change brought by the NEC is the additional time spent on planning lessons, due to the increased difficulty level in the texts and their unfamiliarity with the textbooks. Observational data suggests that on average teachers spend 4 to 5 hours planning lessons every day. Most teachers often stay in the office until after 10pm. It seems that the following reasons my have contributed to the large amount of time they spend on lesson preparation: (1) the pressure to incorporate new methodologies in teaching: For example, Anya often discusses with colleagues about activities arrangements and during my study, she often comes to talk to me or the expert teacher Ms. He about her plan on activities arrangement; (2) the pressure to use IT in teaching: the design of powerpoint presentation seems to take much time for all teachers with an aim to make powerpoint more interesting. It seems that they have spent a long time in designing the animation and finding pictures from the Internet.

Additionally, some other practices may have also contributed to teachers working overtime, for example, their insistence on each student reciting texts from memory to them and marking every student's assignment. These are introduced in the following sections.

7.7.1 Marking every assignment

Another recurrent teachers' practice is the heavy homework load given to students and their insistence on marking every assignment. Every day, students' homework

includes: an A4 sheet of grammar and vocabulary exercises designed by teachers; an A4 exercise on the *Student Times*, one or two A4 exercises from the *General Practice* section of the textbook; and about one A4 size exercise from the textbook, and one composition per week. All five research participants spend at least three to four hours every day marking students' homework. However, all teachers acknowledge that the work is mechanical, constraining students' higher-level development on one hand and taking their own time away from preparing lessons on the other hand. However, all teachers still continue the approach. This is apparent in the following conversation with Baijuan.

Researcher: "Do you have to mark all the homework?"

Baijuan: "Last night I stayed with students when they were doing homework. I waited until they finished the assignment. They did really well. If I hadn't been in the classroom, they might not do my homework, because the chemistry teacher would definitely go there…I shouldn't have given them so much homework because they really need time to think, but if I don't give them homework, physics teacher may give them more homework…"

Researcher: "You mark each assignment mainly to ensure students finish their homework?"

Baijuan: "Yeah, and also to see the rate of correctness. I talked about vocabulary and the exercises and I want to see how well they know this. For example, I taught the phrase "comment on", but many students write "comment for". If many students make the same mistake, I will make sure I explain it again and emphasize it later. Also, if I don't mark assignment and check answers one by one, some students may fool me because they may just write some "A, B, C and D" on the homework without actually looking at the questions…This group of students are like this… you have to supervise them all the time and watch them, just like they are studying for teachers. If you don't watch them, they may not study…"

(Interview, 29/05/2008)

Baijuan gives two reasons for giving students a heavy homework load: pressure from other teachers (to use students' self-learning hours) and the low motivation of her students. Such concerns are also voiced by Anya and Caili. In Anya's class, the mathematics teacher often goes to classrooms outside regular class hours (to ensure students are learning mathematics) and in Caili's class, the physics teacher often gives a lot of assignments. Anya and Caili believe that they have to give students paper-based homework in order to keep them working.

"Students in the 'top class' should have freedom with regard to time and space…They have different thinking and learning habits…But they are driven by teachers too…They are given so much homework and there's no time for self-reflection…If I don't give them paper-based homework, they are not going

to do it because they have too much homework..." (Caili, Interview, 06/05/2008)

In addition to the influence of teachers of other subjects, Baijuan also thinks the relatively prosperous economic situation in LQ has also affected students' motivation to learn and she uses a heavy homework load to ensure students are learning.

> "When I was in high school, one effective strategy for teachers to motivate students was to tell stories about the beautiful outside world, particularly the power of education in changing people's lives. For students from less developed areas, they have to study hard if they want to have better lives because for many people, education is perhaps the only way to have better lives. However, this strategy may not work so effectively in this city. Students won't think they need to study harder in order to live better, because they all live very comfortably..."

(Interview, 29/05/2008)

7.7.2 Reciting from memory

In CHS, nearly all English teachers require their students to memorize texts and insist on each student reciting texts from memory to them. During morning readings, evening readings or lunch breaks, teachers often go to classrooms and ask students to go to the corridor (in order not to disturb students in the classrooms) one by one and recite texts to them. There are three texts in each unit. Normally one text is selected for memorization. Text recitation takes considerable time for both teachers and students. Each teacher has about 110 to 120 students and each student takes about 5 minutes to recite one text. Therefore, in each unit, teachers have to spend at least 9 or 10 hours to check students' recitation. Some teachers say that their "ears are roaring" after hearing so many students' recitation and other teachers say that they feel freezing in winter standing in the corridor. On the other hand, text memorization is considered by some researchers as 'rote learning' and 'mechanical learning' that has constrained students' 'deep learning'. The approach also appears to contradict the NEC guidance that students should be encouraged to be reflective thinkers and questioners (HSECS, 2003).

Many teachers attribute the use of text recitation to a tradition in CHS. When the expert teacher Ms. He was a student in CHS in late 1970s, her English teacher Mr. Pan, then Head of the English department, requested students to memorize every text in the textbook. Mr. Pan became Anya's mentor when the latter started teaching in CHS and he suggested Anya take the same approach. Caili and Denghua, being

former students of CHS, also had the experience of reciting texts to their teachers.

In the literature, there is much discussion about text memorization in the Chinese culture (Biggs, 1996; Ding, 2006; Marton et al., 1996). Biggs and Moore (1993) make a difference between 'rote' learning: a mechanical way without thought of meaning, and repetitive learning which uses repetition as a means of ensuring accurate recall. The former is a surface approach and the latter is a deep approach. They argue that the Chinese approach to text memorization may not be a surface approach as is often perceived. Citing Confucius, they claim that text memorization may be used as an approach to deepen understanding and reflection.

On (1996) claims that memorization, understanding, reflecting and questioning are the basic components of learning in the Chinese culture. Memory, understanding what is in books, and incorporating what one gets from books into one's own experience are the three significant aspects of learning. In CHS, it is frequently found that teachers use memorized texts as the source for CLT activities, for example, role play or debate based on the text. Text memorization may have been taken by teachers as a strategy for teachers to conduct explorative learning and reflective thinking. This also shows a respect for knowledge and a belief that thinking can only be developed after mastering knowledge (see 6.6.2).

Anya and Enchu state that reciting from memory helps students borrow 'beautiful sentences' for writing and speech. Caili says it helps students to develop a habit of attending to the details of language. However, all teachers state a belief that reciting by memorization gives students "a better feel for English " [语感] by helping students to subconsciously acquire language. With "a better feel for English", students may know the correct answers for the questions in the examinations, although they may not know the reasons.

Secondly, teachers who choose text memorization may not be using a surface approach but making a strategic choice in the examination context, because of the assessment systems in use and the life choices hanging on the results (Biggs, 1996). Before the curriculum changes started, most examination questions were directly from the textbook, for example, content information (e.g. fill in the blanks according to the right words in the texts). In such circumstances, text memorization

has to take place if a satisfactory examination score is desired. After the NEC was implemented, administrators from the Provincial Department of Education communicated the information that no direct question from the textbook would be used in the examination. The need seems less apparent for teachers. However, many teachers still take this approach. It is partly because of the reason of "playing safe". As argued previously, policy on NUEE is still not clear and teachers are uncertain about the prospects for examination change. Another aspect of "playing safe" is that, since text recitation is regarded as a tradition in CHS and all other teachers use the same approach, there is a concern that there may be blame from students if text recitation is not used and high student examination scores are not achieved (see 6.2.1).

Another reason is the pragmatic approach, or a "resort" to ensure students learn. As Baijuan states:

> "Text memorization is taken as a strategy to ensure students study actually. As long as they really read, it may not be necessary for them to recite. It achieves the same purpose. Anyway, text content information will not be included in the examinations. However, if I don't ask them to recite, they may not read at all. It is a strategy for me to check whether students are learning." (Interview, 29/05/2008)

7.8 Conclusion

Chapter 7 investigated teachers' classroom practices and out of class practices., discussed norms and patterns in their practices, and the reasons for similarities and differences. It is shown in the discussion that all teachers have implemented NEC principles to a greater or lesser extent in their teaching, although three of them have stated a low-level engagement with the NEC. Teachers have used more NEC principles in teaching for external observers, but their everyday classroom practices are more form-focused. There are different levels of student engagement with CLT in different classes or among students in the same class. The discussion has shown that large classes may have brought challenges for the use of CLT, and that class culture is important in teaching. It is also illustrated in this chapter the energy teachers commit to teaching, for example, they spend long hours planning lessons, extend class hours and engage in some time-consuming activities to support students' learning. In addition to school regulations, the introduction of the NEC has brought additional pressure to teachers, for example, the challenges brought by the

increased length and difficulty level of the texts and the effort to incorporate more NEC principles while form-focused practice and some other existing practices (e.g. reciting from memory) are still maintained. The next chapter compares and concludes findings reported in chapter 4 to 7.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Having discussed the educational context of China and the context in which the NEC was initiated and developed in chapter four, examined the school context for this ethnographic study in chapter five, explored the NEC implementation from the five main research participants' perspectives in chapter six and investigated the five research participants' practices in chapter seven, this chapter tries to connect findings presented in the previous chapters and summarises points made in the study.

The three research questions addressed are:

- What are teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC?
- What is the role of teacher cognition in teachers' practices?
- What is the role of social context in teachers' practices?

This chapter summarizes findings to these questions. The presentation structure of this chapter is illustrated in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Scope of chapter 8

8.1 Teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC

8.2 Teacher cognition and teachers' practices

8.3 Social context and teachers' practices

8.4 Conclusion

8.1 Teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC

The main purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experience of five grade two English teachers in a Chinese high school in their implementation of a new English curriculum (NEC). This enquiry is the centre of discussion in chapter 6 and chapter 7. Chapter 6 explores teacher orientation and engagement with the NEC, teachers' new emotions associated with teaching the NEC, their perceived goal conflicts and their decisions in response to the goal conflicts, along with their cultural orientations. Chapter 7 examines teachers' classroom practices and out of class practices based on observational data.

Although the NEC is described as a 'radical change' (see 4.4.2), teachers do not seem to see such change as 'radical'. Both Anya and Caili state that they have been using such strategies long before the NEC was implemented (Anya says that she started using CLT activities in the early 1980s and she has been using such strategies throughout her career). The other three participants all state that they have used NEC procedures to a greater or lesser degree before the NEC was introduced (see 6.1). One teacher in fact claims that the NEC is only "old wine in a new bottle" because it only changes the name rather than the approach (see 6.1.2, analysis of Baijuan).

Despite the different levels of the teachers' orientation and engagement with the NEC, principles suggested in the NEC seem to be generally accepted by all five research participants as 'good practice' or 'received practice' (see 6.1). However, curriculum change seems to have also led to some new emotions among teachers, particularly insecurity, uncertainty and ambivalence. For example, a lack of clarity in the agenda for change has brought insecurity and uncertainty to teachers, the frequent change of textbooks has brought insecurity to teachers and the perceived goal conflicts has brought a certain ambivalence to teachers (see 6.2 and 6.3).

The complexity of curriculum implementation is well illustrated throughout the discussion. Some issues discussed by earlier studies of TBLT implementation in China and other Asian countries (Butler, 2004; Carless, 2003, 2004; Li, 2003) are also identified in this study, for example, an examination-oriented education system, large classes, English teachers' self perceived deficiencies in communicative

competence and students' motivation. However, through extensive and in-depth teachers' accounts and the participant observer field notes, this study has examined how these issues are locally experienced by teachers, for example, how the NUEE is seen as a potential constraint as well as a possible impetus for teaching the NEC and how students' motivation works both as a pull force and push force in teachers' use of CLT activities. Some frequently reported constraints on CLT application in China, for example, lack of resources (Hu, 2005), are not identified in this study. This is perhaps due to the highly developed economic situation in LQ city along with its considerable investment in education. However, its highly developed economy also seems to work as a constraint at times, for example, difficulties in motivating students (see 6.3 and 7.7.1).

Discussion shows that there are possibilities as well as constraints for the NEC implementation. Decision making for teachers is not always straightforward. Often they have to make decisions out of conflicting situations, negotiations and compromises (see 6.3 and 6.4). Four factors may have pushed teachers to implement the NEC: the possibility of incorporating NEC principles in their teaching for the NUEE, the belief in the importance of CLT in facilitating learning, the demand of some students for the use of NEC principles and the official discourse advocating CLT as an 'advanced' approach (see 6.3.2). In contrast, the following factors are identified as the main obstacles for the NEC implementation: suspicion of the efficiency and effectiveness[32] of the NEC, examinations and the need to see most immediate results, English teachers' perceived insufficient competence in English, the difficulty of turning production skills into examination scores and some students' limited English proficiency and their low motivation in engaging with CLT activities (see 6.3.1). It is interesting to see how some forces act both as constraint as well as possibility for all teachers, and how a force may act as constraint for one teacher, but may serve as possibility for another teacher (see 6.3 and 6.4).

Among all of the forces, NUEE seems to be the most influential in teachers' decision making (see discussion throughout chapter 6). Analysis shows that the NUEE has largely or exclusively guided Denghua, Baijuan, Caili and Enchu's decision making. It may not be a 'guiding baton' for Anya, but clearly the NUEE is one of the important

---

[32]As previously discussed, effectiveness is used to mean whether CLT promotes learning and efficiency is used to mean whether teachers can complete the syllabus economically (i.e. in shorter time).

considerations in her decision making (e.g. 6.3.1 and 6.4.1). The 'washback' of the NUEE is largely perceived as negative (e.g. 6.3.1), despite the call of the NEC guidance (MOE, 2003) for the initiation of an assessment shift from summative to formative, and from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced (see 4.3). Denghua states that he does not see the link between teaching the NEC and preparing for the NUEE and he also expresses his doubt about the prospect of NUEE reform (see 6.1.4). Baijuan, Caili and Enchu are also not convinced of the effectiveness of using NEC principles in preparing for the NUEE (e.g. 6.3.1), although Caili argues on another occasion that she can find links between preparing for the NUEE and teaching the NEC (see 6.4.3). Anya seems to be the most positive about the incorporation of the NEC principles in the NUEE. However, the need to cope with other examinations (e.g. unit examinations and end-of-semester examinations) and produce more immediate results also seems to be a pulling force against Anya's NEC implementation (see 6.3.1 and 6.4.1).

The study supports Ramanthan and Morgan (2007) and Ball's (1994) arguments about teacher agency in curriculum implementation. It also confirms previous assertions that teachers are knowing decision makers (Elbaz, 1983; Borg, 2006). It is obvious from the discussion that all five research participants' decisions around the use of the NEC are not simply because it is prescribed by education authorities or because they are told by their managers to implement the NEC. They have knowledge about a wide range of issues in relation to their jobs, for example, subject matter, their students, their contexts of teaching and themselves. They are also aware of the possibilities and constraints around their work (see 6.3). The decisions on whether to engage with the NEC or the extent to which they are going to engage with the NEC are the result of their reflection, particularly hinging on whether they can see themselves or their students benefiting from teaching the NEC (e.g. whether their decisions can be carried out and whether students can achieve high examination scores). In this sense, all five participants are pragmatists (e.g. 6.1 and 6.4). Not to engage with the NEC does not mean teachers have no knowledge about the NEC nor imply that they do not know how to implement these strategies. Rather, they have knowledge and beliefs about when and where which approaches may be accepted and they teach according to what they believe is the best for the situations they find themselves in. For example, they may teach differently in front of different student groups. They may also use CLT activities more often for demonstration

lessons while they tend to use grammar-translation method more often when there is no external observer (see 7.3).

The interpretation also shows the power of discourse in teachers' experience of implementing the NEC. Although there may be complex ways in which the NEC can be encoded and decoded (e.g. 4.4, 6.1 and 6.2.1), the possibilities teachers have for thinking and responding to the NEC are clearly influenced by the effect of the NEC (Ball, 1994). For example, CLT is promoted by the official discourse as an 'advanced approach' (e.g. 4.4). Therefore, criticism of CLT on public occasions may seem impossible (e.g. 6.1.1), not using CLT in demonstration lessons may be unacceptable (e.g. 6.1.2 and 7.3) and questioning CLT as 'advanced' may be unthinkable (e.g. 6.1). In this process, teachers have also participated in shaping the discourse. This is particularly evident in Anya's experience. She actively promotes NEC principles in her group of teachers and this brings higher pressure for her to teach the NEC because CLT is recognized as a 'received practice' and she has to use CLT in order to preserve her authority (see 6.3.2).

We have also identified norms and patterns in teachers' thinking and practices along with their individualized thinking and practices. The relationship between institutional position and curriculum implementation is clearly illustrated in the discussion. This is revealed in the difference between 'top class' teachers and 'ordinary class' teachers. 'Ordinary class' teachers have experienced more contextual difficulties than 'top class' teachers, particularly in terms of their students' English proficiency and low motivation for CLT activities. 'Top class' teachers on the other hand are positioned by their roles in a place where obvious NEC implementation seems to be more needed than for 'ordinary class' teachers (e.g. 6.1.1 and 6.1.3). In this context, the two 'top class' teachers both choose to engage actively with the NEC. Their students, who are accustomed to such a teaching style, also show a higher degree of participation (see 7.4.2). Thus, for teaching according to NEC principles a 'virtuous circle' is identified with 'top class' teachers (e.g. 6.1.1) and a 'vicious circle' is identified with 'ordinary class' teachers (e.g. 6.1.4). However, there are also differences between teachers with similar positions. For example, Baijuan has taught more NEC principles than the other two 'ordinary class' teachers, although she has shown similar orientation towards the NEC to the other 'ordinary class' teacher Denghua. Therefore, it can be seen how a similar position or

orientation may lead to different practices and how similar practice can also be the result of different orientations.

The discussion in 7.7 also shows the energy teachers commit to teaching. Most of them work over 15 hours per day, often above and beyond their job requirements. They spend long hours planning lessons, tightly structure phases of the lesson, extend class hours and commit themselves to some very time-consuming activities to support students' learning (e.g. marking every assignment and checking every student's memorization of texts). One of the participants, Anya, even continuous working in spite of diagnosis of a tumour (see 7.7). Their pressure may result from considerations about maintaining or improving their capital and institutional positions through the improvement of student performance (e.g. 6.1). It may also be the result of pressure from the school management to outperform their competitors (e.g. 4.1.3). Clearly one of the reasons is that the introduction of the NEC has brought additional pressure to teachers, for example, the challenge due to the increased length and difficulty level of the texts (e.g. 6.2) and the effort to incorporate more NEC principles while form-focused practice and some other existing practices (e.g. reciting from memory) are still maintained (see chapter 7). Another factor may be the cultural expectation of teachers' responsibility for student learning (e.g. 5.6). Culture of teaching is discussed in 8.3, after the discussion of teacher cognition.

8.2 Teacher cognition and teachers' practices

Data in this study also shed light on the investigation of teacher cognition. Findings confirm the literature on the importance of teacher cognition in teacher practices (Borg, 2005; Pajares, 1992; Richards, 2001). It is evident throughout the discussion (especially chapter 6) that teachers are actively making their decisions about their teaching and their beliefs are very influential in their practices. It can also be seen from the discussion that different dimensions of teacher cognition come into play in their teaching, for example, their knowledge of areas in relation to their teaching, their beliefs in good practices or their orientations towards the NEC. In 6.7.3, I have also examined some areas that are identified by Borg (2006) as worth investigation in his review of teacher cognition in language teaching, for example, the developmental history of language teacher cognition and the patterns of thinking

among teachers. Data show that there is a close relationship between teacher cognition and prior learning experience. All research participants acknowledge the influence of their previous teachers, particularly high school teachers and English teachers. All of them attribute the influence to affective communication with students (e.g. personality and the relationship with students) rather than pedagogical issues. In terms of pre-service education, all five research participants in this study state that the pedagogical elements in their university education have had no influence on their teaching. Apart from giving as a possible reason that teachers may have not recognized such an influence, the interpretation also suggests that the lack of pedagogical training for pre-service language teachers and the delayed teaching practice opportunities in China's teacher education system may have limited the effect of pre-service education (see 6.7).

In 6.5 and 6.7, I see a teacher's cognition system as a moving mosaic which is fluid, dynamic, messy with blurred boundaries and overlapping categories. I also conceptualise teacher thinking into two levels: what is 'good' and what works, and I link the discussion of teacher cognition to Bourdieu's theory of habitus. In contrast with existing teacher cognition literature (e.g. Borg, 2003), which often sees contextual constraints as preventing teachers from applying their thinking in practice, the discussion in this study shows that teachers are highly aware of the possibilities and constraints in their context, which are reflected in teachers' thinking systems. This indicates that context is not just a constraint for teachers' application of their thinking, but embodied in their thinking. Although teachers may not be able to use their ideal practices in teaching due to the contextual constraints, they have another level of thinking on what works, which has integrated the contextual conditions and is most powerful in teachers' decision making.

It can be seen from the discussion in chapter 7 that teachers have a number of pedagogical principles to guide their teaching (e.g. emphasizing form-focused activities) and they also have a repertoire of pedagogical techniques (e.g. drill and inductive practice) to realize/maximize their pedagogical principles. Pedagogical principles and pedagogical techniques are largely consistent (e.g. Anya uses group work to support CLT), but there may also be conflict (e.g. Denghua does not favour a CLT approach, but he used role play one afternoon as a strategy to enliven a sleepy class). Comparing chapter 6 with chapter 7, it can be seen that teachers'

pedagogical principles and pedagogical techniques are developed from their two levels of thinking. Habitus leads teachers to hold particular pedagogical principles and use particular techniques. Some of these may act beyond the level of consciousness (e.g. some practices may be taken as granted, and very often teachers do not think on the spot). Teachers' pedagogical principles are more consistent with their thinking on what works. Although the level of thinking on what is 'good' is less central, due to the discourse in the field in which practices such as CLT are promoted, teachers may consciously incorporate certain new pedagogical techniques in their teaching (e.g. use group work and role play), particularly on occasions such as demonstration lessons where there is more pressure to use CLT techniques (e.g 7.3). These pedagogical techniques that work well may become teachers' pedagogical principles and become more central in teachers' habitus (illustrated in Figure 8.1).

Teachers may have conflict and struggle in their decision making (e.g. 6.4). However, it seems that most of the struggles are about pedagogical principles rather than pedagogical techniques, for example, the extent to which CLT activities are used in their classes (e.g. 6.4.1). Teachers may borrow (e.g. from others and books), develop and expand their pedagogical techniques at any time, perhaps without conscious awareness. However, the formulation of pedagogical principles appears to happen after reflection and careful thought (e.g. 6.7.1 discussion on Baijuan's developmental history).

Figure 8.1: The relationship between teacher cognition, habitus and the field (summary)
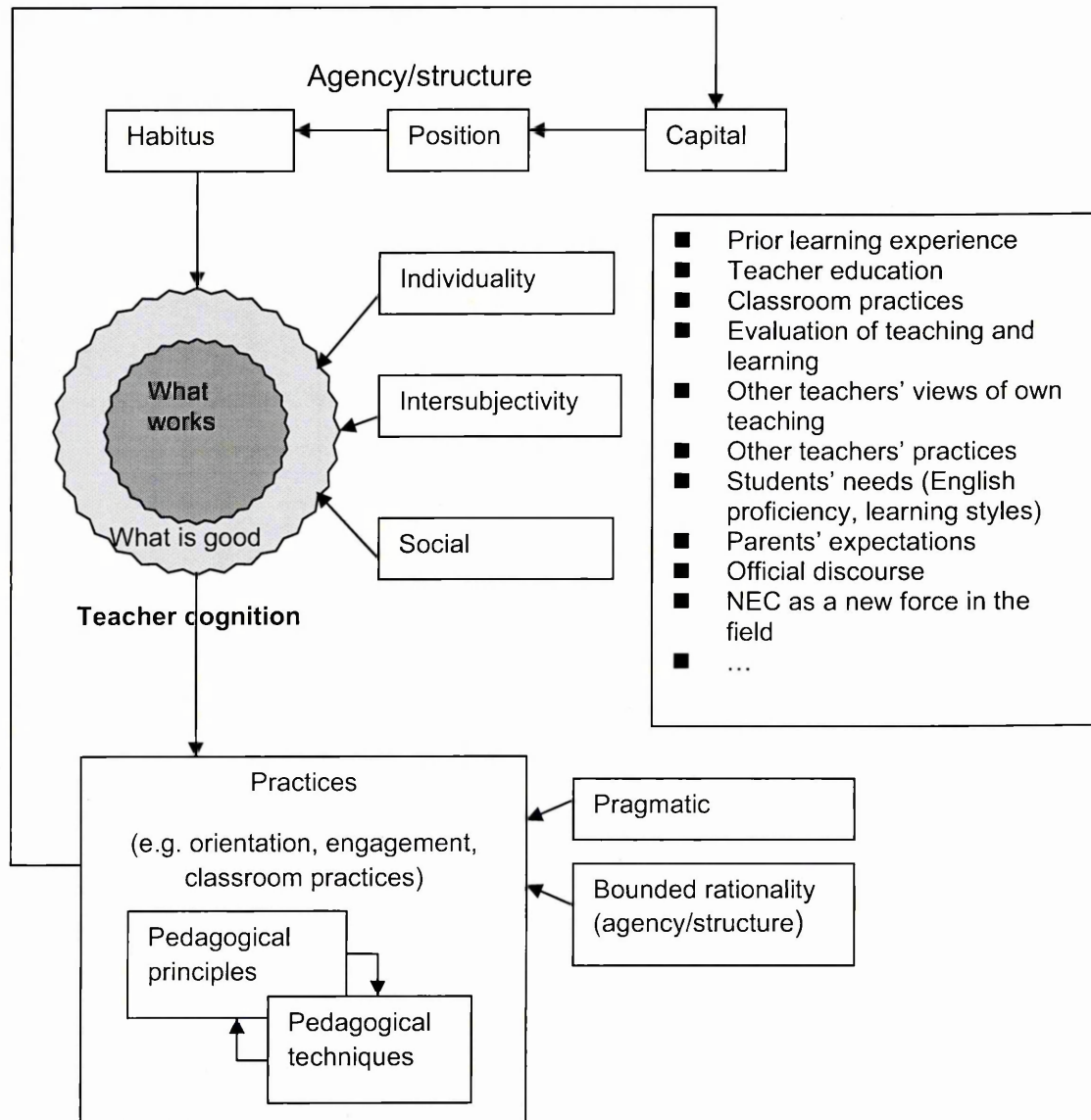
Additionally, data also confirms the statement of the 'symbiotic relationship' between cognition and classroom practice (Foss and Kleinsasser, 1996). As discussed above, teachers' classroom practices are largely influenced by their pedagogical principles and pedagogical techniques. Furthermore, the data also suggest that classroom practices are particularly influential on teachers' cognition development and future classroom practices. This is highlighted in Baijuan and Denghua's developmental history (see 6.7), along with the discussion on classroom culture (see 7.4.2).

Comparing the discussion in chapter 6 and chapter 7, a number of conclusions about teacher cognition can be made:

- The concept of teacher cognition can be understood in terms of habitus in Bourdieu's theoretical framework.

- Teachers have two levels of thinking: what is 'good' and what 'works'. Having internalised contextual conditions, the level of thinking on what works is more central in teacher cognition, more durable and persistent in their habitus, and more influential on teachers' practices. This shows that teacher cognition is pragmatic and context-bounded: teachers' practices are pragmatically oriented towards the maintenance and improvement of capital (see 6.4) and their rationality is bounded with the possibilities and constraints given in the field (see 6.3).

- Teachers' thinking system is fluid, dynamic, messy with blurred boundaries and overlapping categories. Through habitus teachers perceive the NEC and other forces in the field. The NEC and the discourse it shapes, on the other hand, feed into teachers' thinking system and their habitus. Those principles that are more consistent with teachers' habitus are more easily accepted by teachers.

- The NEC has influenced different positioned people differently. It has had more impact on 'top class' teachers and teachers with higher institutional positions (e.g. Anya and Caili), who also have higher pressure and are more concerned to incorporate the NEC principles in their teaching. The NEC has less impact on 'ordinary class' teachers, who also have less pressure to incorporate it in their practices and have expressed less emotional conflict in determining the level of incorporation of NEC principles.

- Teachers have shared habituses as well as individual habitus. Therefore, although teachers' orientation and engagement towards the NEC differs, certain thinking and practices are shared between teachers due to their shared context of teaching.

- Different from the literature, this study argues that context is not a constraint on teachers' application of their thinking, but embodied in teacher thinking and subsequently reflected in their decision making.

8.3 Social context and teachers' practices

Data in this study also confirms the importance of social context in teachers' cognition and practices (Burns, 1996; Fullan, 2007; Holliday, 1994). I have identified the difference between macro context and micro context (Holliday, 1994) (2.2.1). The focus of the investigation is the influence of the macro context on teachers' cognition and practices.

Chapter 4 focuses on the investigation of the social context in China, particularly features that are believed to be closely related to the development and implementation of the NEC. In China, education is highly valued (4.1.1), the education system is highly hierarchical (4.1.2), the education environment is highly competitive (4.1.3), high school schooling is crucial and the NUEE is considered as a life-changing endeavour (4.1.4), the NEC is seen as a part of the political agenda in China's modernisation and globalisation (4.2.1) and a response to the critique of China's education system (4.2.2). The investigation also shows that the NEC is promoted as an 'advanced' approach by the official discourse (4.4.2).

Chapter 5 emphasises the institutional context of CHS. Apart from introducing the norms and routines in CHS, the discussion also shows that the organisation of teachers and students in CHS is highly hierarchical (5.1 and 5.4). Four forms of capital are defined to be of high importance and reproductivity for teachers: institutional positions, teachers' teaching skills particularly manifested in students' examination scores, 'face' and 'social connections', and seniority in terms of age and years of working. The local context of CHS is also discussed, along with the opportunities and challenges faced by CHS (e.g. opportunities as a key school and challenges brought by the competition between schools in LQ, and the pressure to cover the cost of the school construction) (see 5.1).

The discussion in chapter 6 and 7 clearly shows that teachers' decision making and practices are related to their social contexts (e.g. 6.3). As is also discussed in 8.1, teachers have high awareness of the broader social and institutional context and their decisions are made in relation to their considerations of the possibilities and constraints in the contexts. Section 8.2 also discusses that teachers have two levels of thinking on what is 'good' and what 'works'. The latter, largely guides teachers'

practices, is highly contextual bounded (also see 6.5).

An important element in social context is culture (Boyd, 1992) (see 2.2.1). I have distinguished 'small culture' from 'big culture' (Holliday, 1999) and have discussed dimensions of both cultures (national culture in 5.5 and classroom culture in 7.4.2). The interplay of culture with teacher cognition, practices and other elements of the social context is recurrent throughout the discussion, a piece of evidence of which is the discussion of class culture (7.4.2). It can be seen from the discussion that teachers can bring cultures to the classroom and the classroom interactions may also influence teachers' subsequent practices. In teachers' interaction with each other, they bring cultures to the team (e.g. Anya's promotion of the NEC) and the team culture also influences their thinking and practices (e.g. the value placed on reciting from memory and the collegiality between teachers), which in Bourdieu's terms, built into teachers' habitus (Webb et al., 2002). Therefore, although teachers differ from each other in terms of their practices and their orientation and engagement with the NEC, certain thinking and practices are shared between them (e.g. 6.1 & 7.2).

The interaction and competition between different dimensions of culture are also evident in the discussion. There are existing cultures in the Grade Two English Team manifested in the norms of teachers' practices and their shared thinking. Such culture may be the influence of the national culture (e.g. teacher as role model), of the professional-academic culture (e.g. grammar-translation) or of the institutional culture. However, the NEC has brought new cultures to CHS (e.g. the increased value given to CLT and the emphasis on teachers as facilitators of learning) and may redefine the relationship between different elements of culture, for example, the perception of teachers as facilitators may outperform the perception of teachers as transmitter, and the competition between CLT and form-focused practices. It can be seen from the discussion how teachers keep their existing practices, and incorporate new practices, how their perception is influenced by both national culture, professional-academic culture and school culture.

The importance of national culture for teachers' thinking and practice is evident. Discussion shows that what those teachers consider as most influential on their teaching (e.g. teacher as moral guide) are characteristics of Chinese culture.

Discussion in 6.5 shows that teachers' perception of knowledge (e.g. a monolithic view of language and their persistence in the pursuit of the 'one correct way' to speak and write) and the nature of learning (e.g. learning is a serious undertaking) is consistent with the literature in describing the Chinese culture of learning (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996). However, discussion also shows that there is a discrepancy between my research participants' perceptions of their roles in learning (teachers as both facilitator and transmitter) and the description in the literature (Chinese teachers only as transmitter) (6.5.1). Additionally, the discussion also shows that teachers' monolithic views can be a result of examination needs, rather than cultural factors (6.5.2). Therefore, 'big cultures' may have implications for understanding teachers' thinking and practices, however, over reliance on this may cause stereotypes and prevent the achievement of in-depth understanding. 'Small culture' is needed in understanding the complexity of teachers' thinking and work.

A few key points are made in this sub-section:

- Teachers' cognition and practices are largely situated and contextually bounded. Their decisions are made out of the possibilities and constraints in the contexts.
- There is an interwoven relationship between cognition, culture and practice. Teachers share with each other some similar cognition and practices due to their similar context of living (an important part of which is culture), and they also have their individualised thinking and practice.
- The group culture is the result of the interplay between different dimensions of culture. The NEC has brought new cultures to CHS, increased the dynamics of the culture in CHS, and offered more possibilities (and constraints) for thinking and practices.
- There are often blurred boundaries and overlapping categories with regard to different dimensions of culture. Similar behaviour is often shared by different cultures, although they may occupy different levels of importance in the system.
- Behaviour is influenced by the interplay of different dimensions of culture. Although it is too dangerous to jump conclusions about 'big cultures', 'big cultures' do have some effects on behaviour. Therefore, researchers need to draw on a macro-micro methodology, acknowledging the influence of 'big culture' while questioning it, and understanding the complexity of the situation though the investigation of 'small culture'.

8.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have summarised the five research participants' experiences of teaching the NEC. I have shown the situated experiences of these teachers, for example, the possibilities and constraints of the NEC implementation posed by their local contexts, and how some characteristics that are believed to be shared by other contexts are locally experienced by teachers (see 8.1). Structure and teacher agency are highlighted in the discussion. Teachers are making decisions in response to the situation, which has also limited possibilities for their thinking and responses (see 8.1). I have also examined teacher cognition, classroom practices and social context. I have shown in the discussion that teachers have two levels of thinking: perception of what is 'good' and what 'works'. The latter, largely guides teachers' practices, is highly contextually bounded (see 8.2). I have also discussed that teachers may share similar patterns of thinking and practices due to their shared contexts, explored different dimensions of 'big cultures' and 'small cultures' and their impact on teachers' thinking and practices. My discussion shows that 'big cultures' may have implications for teachers, but over reliance on this may produce stereotypes. My writing highlights the importance of using a macro-micro approach in understanding culture and practice. Having discussed and summarised findings from this study, in the next chapter I will review the whole research process and discuss its potential significance and limitations.

CHAPTER 9: REFLECTION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this last chapter, my purpose is to reflect on the whole research process and research product, to evaluate whether I have achieved my agenda, and to reflect on potential implications and limitations. The presentation structure of this chapter is illustrated in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Scope of chapter 9

9.1 The research journey

9.2 Reflection on the methodology

9.3 Significance of the study

9.4 Practical implications

    9.4.1 Implications for curriculum developers

    9.4.2 Implications for teacher educators

    9.4.3 Directions for future research

9.5 Final remarks

9.1 The research journey

I embarked on this study with an agenda: I wanted to know how Chinese teachers of English were teaching the New English Curriculum (NEC). Following my master's study, I decided to follow a qualitative research methodology because I believed it was more appropriate for exploring real-life situations and experiences (Punch, 1998). Reflecting back, my perspective at an early stage was more or less the fidelity perspective (see 2.3.1): my initial purpose was to investigate the extent to which teachers have implemented the NEC and possible constraints on their implementation.

I started the investigation with reading on a range of topics. Examples are second language acquisition (e.g. Ellis, 1984, 1990, 1992); cultural awareness (e.g. Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hinkel, 1999; Holliday, 1994, 2004); teacher cognition (e.g. Borg, 1998, 2003; Woods, 1996); curriculum implementation (e.g. Bailey and Nunan, 1996; Richards, 2001); research methods in language teaching (Nunan, 1992; Richards, 2003) and teaching pedagogy (e.g. Nunan, 1989; Richards and Rogers, 2001). During the process, I became interested in Borg (1998, 2003) and Woods' (1996) discussion of teacher cognition. I was also persuaded by Holliday's (1994) arguments about culture. I began to see teachers as active decision makers and I was interested to see how their teaching practices may be related to their thinking. I also started to see the dynamic of culture and the necessity of in-depth understanding.

The pilot study (see 3.2), along with reading Woods (1996) and Holliday (1994), led me to use ethnography as my research methodology, in an effort to investigate the insider's perspective and to gain an in-depth understanding.

On one hand, I started reading many works in relation to research methodology, for example, Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2005), Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Silverman (2000; 2001). On the other hand, my interest in teacher cognition led to my further reading of work such as Elbaz (1983), the interest in ethnography led to readings such as Acker (1999), and the focus on teacher research in a Chinese context led to readings such as Tsui (2003). In this process, I began to be interested in concepts such as 'knowledge-in-action' (Schön, 1983), 'situated knowledge' (Leinhardt, 1988) and phenomenology (Becks, 1992). I became interested in Goffman (1969) and Mead's (1934) theories and was interested in how teachers in a particular setting work, live and relate to each other, how their behaviour is influenced and on the other hand influences the setting. These theories added more perspectives to my previous understanding of culture and teacher cognition.

The ethnographic field work was carried out between September 2007 and July 2008. I worked as a participant observer in CHS teaching English along with doing my field research. Ethnography proved to be an effective approach for answering my research question. Taking a part-time post as an English teacher also enabled me to experience the situation from within. Additionally, my prolonged engagement

in the setting also enabled a firm research rapport to be established and research reactivity to be reduced. Therefore, I was able to gain more insights into the participants and collect rich data. Additionally, through day-to-day living with participants and other teachers, I was able to collect much information from other sources (e.g. field notes of staffroom talk) in order to triangulate the data. This served well in my efforts to understand what teachers think and do, and how they relate to each other in their context of living.

During the ethnographic field work, I began to understand the richness of teachers' work and the complexity of investigation. Their work confirmed my previous thinking that teachers are making active decisions and I also saw how teachers relate to each other in their context of living. I started seeing their lives as full of possibilities and constraints and I saw how they find space out of possibilities and constraints to make their decisions. I also saw how their work is affected by the macro-context and this led me to go back to Holliday's (1994) cultural model and take a macro-micro perspective in investigation. Seeing teachers as having agency but working in a social structure also led me to read Bourdieu (1992, 1986, 1998) and draw on his theory for my analysis, along with Ball's (1994) policy model. In order to answer questions arising from the data, I have taken a wide range of areas (e.g. policy implementation, social theory, cultural theory, pedagogy and applied linguistics) for my analysis. With the assistance of these theories, I was able to deepen my understanding of teachers and their work.

9.2 Reflection on the methodology

I see my research as largely successful. My study has provided material corresponding to my initial research questions through the collection of rich data and use of a wide range of theories to understand teachers and their experience of teaching the NEC.

The first point of reflection is in terms of the generalisability of the research findings. This study aims to seek 'depth' of understanding, rather than 'width' of information (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). I believe the findings are 'transferable' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) to some extent due to the similar features and contexts shared by other schools to that of CHS. Examples are:

- The influence of the NUEE affects teachers throughout China;
- Competition between schools and the need for teachers to produce short-term results in the forms of student grades affects teachers throughout China;
- The impact of the Chinese culture may affect all Chinese teachers;
- Features such as teachers' English language proficiency and confidence in speaking English may also be shared by many other non-native speakers of English.

However, this study has a specific context: a key school in an economically developed region. The experience may be different in a non-key school and in a less economically developed area. Therefore, the results of this study may be only seen as providing possible interpretations for these settings.

The second point of reflection is to do with my role in relation to the research construct. In a qualitative study, the researchers' insights are a key instrument of analysis, described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the 'human as instrument'. I realize I am unavoidably implicated in the study. The collection and interpretation of data are dependent on my knowledge, experience, skill and understanding. My purpose has been to represent a picture as faithful as possible to the participants' life and I have used various strategies to reduce the effect of researcher bias, for example, triangulation of data collection, participant validation, multiple theories to triangulate my understanding and discussion with supervisors to 'make the familiar strange' (3.9.1), yet the possibility of researcher biases still exists, for example, the interview transcripts are translated by me from Chinese and my interpretation may be affected by my translation. Additionally, my empathy with teachers through living with them and doing the same work may also be implicated in the discussion. As for my participants, I sought teachers' permission to participate in the study after a rapport was developed (3.4.2). However, their free will may have been affected because of the 'rapport'. Additionally, during the validation process, some research participants might have chosen to agree with what I had described and written in order to support me with my PhD research (also see 3.9.2).

The third point of reflection is to do with my research benefiting the research participants. I had a constant concern during the research process about how my study was helping or might help my research participants, due to the time they gave to my research (also see 3.9.2). As the research and writing proceeded, I started to

see more benefits. Although I was particularly careful to avoid influencing the interview data by offering my views on their teaching, I gave constant advice on other issues, for example, assisting research participants in marking assignments, covering absence for participants and offering support on English language usages. Research participants also commented that the experience of being observed allowed them to develop confidence in being observed and this helped their performance in demonstration lessons. Two of them said that talking to me allowed them to make some implicit thinking explicit and my questions enabled them to see and question some taken-for-granted practices which had not been the subject of reflection.

Having reflected on the research process, the following sections discuss the significance of the study and some practical implications for curriculum developers, teacher educators and researchers.

9.3 Significance of the study

This research has contributed to knowledge in at least three ways: the findings of this study has added to the literature of new curriculum implementation, teacher cognition and situated practices; the construct of the teacher belief system has furthered theories on teacher cognition research; and the use of sociological theory in understanding teacher cognition has broadened research perspectives.

9.3.1 Findings

This study has explored various issues in relation to teachers' experiences of teaching the NEC, for example, their orientations, engagements, classroom practices and new emotions associated with teaching the NEC. It examines the reasons underpinning teachers' thinking and practices and relates it to the broader institutional and social context. The study has provided important empirical data for curriculum developers and education managers in China in managing the change, particularly because the NEC is still at its experimentation stage (e.g. see 9.4.1. for implications for curriculum developers). Furthermore, it is also a valuable addition to the literature of language policy, for example, the analysis of teachers' position taking is important for understanding discrepancy between new policy planning and

implementation; and understanding different forces in association with teachers' decision making in their NEC implementation is important in understanding lack of CLT implementation.

9.3.2 Theoretical contributions

In this study, I have proposed a construct of teacher beliefs, in which Bourdieu's sociological terms (e.g. habitus and position taking) are used to explain the cognitive world. This study has also provided more insights into the interplay of teacher cognition with teachers' classroom practices and their context of living, into norms and patterns of teacher cognition and their practices, and into the developmental process of teacher cognition and their practices.

9.3.3 Methodological contributions

Additionally, my methodological strategy may be illuminating for future research. In this study, I have used Bourdieu's sociological framework to understand teacher cognition, which is a fresh way to understand teacher cognition. In addition, I have also drawn on a wide range of theories (e.g. sociology, policy analysis, teacher cognition and cultural theory) for investigation and analysis, which present an alternative to traditional research. My enquiry offers possibilities and perspectives for the use of different areas of theory in one study to deepen understanding and may broaden the horizon and insights for future research.

9.4 Practical implications

In terms of the implications of the research study, I find the following to be worthy of consideration by curriculum developers, teacher educators and researchers.

9.4.1 Implications for curriculum developers

(1) **A more positive link between NEC implementation and the evaluation of teachers and students could be built:** as is shown in the discussion, one of the main forces pulling teachers against implementing the NEC is because they can not see themselves and their students benefiting from teaching the NEC. For example, the 'washback' of the NUEE is perceived by teachers as negative

in teaching for the NEC and the evaluation of teachers is not related to whether the NEC is taught (see e.g. 6.3.1).

The implication is that in order to support change, policy developers could consider establishing a more positive link between curriculum implementation and the evaluation of teachers and students. Teachers need to see the benefits of following the curriculum.

(2) **Change and the agenda of change needs to be clearer to teachers:** In 4.4, I identify the promotion of the NEC in official discourse as a 'radical change', I also recognise that educational changes in China are often characterized by an official discourse to justify new curricula by criticising previous curricula for being 'out of date' or 'backward' and promoting the new curriculum as being 'advanced' or 'modern'. In 6.2, I have claimed that such official discourse seems to have brought emotional insecurity to teachers because they cannot see continuity in prescribed practices. Furthermore, some teachers seem to see the frequent curriculum changes as a sign of a government lack of long-term strategy (e.g. Mr. Yang's comment in 6.2.2 that "the curriculum is going to change again"). Teachers may also perceive the new curriculum as being only symbolic (e.g. Baijuan's comment in 6.1.2). Additionally, a lack of clarity in the agenda of change has also brought emotional uncertainty to teachers (6.2.1).

The implication is that change and the agenda of change needs to be clearer to teachers. Rather than criticising the previous curricula, curriculum developers may consider finding strategies for teachers to recognise the links (along with differences) between different curricula in order to draw a physical and psychological proximity to teachers. New curricula should acknowledge teachers' past experiences in order to gain their commitment for a new reform agenda.

(3) **More practical support for the NEC implementation could be introduced:** as is shown in the discussion, although support is provided to teachers for the implementation of the NEC (e.g. 'expert talk'), teachers seem to be sceptical about the benefits of these experiences for their teaching. They perceive these as propaganda (e.g. 6.1.2) or express view that discussion that address their

contextual difficulties and situated experiences (e.g. how to handle a particular class) is more supportive because it can be immediately applied to solving their own problems with teaching (e.g. 6.1.3).

The implication is that instead of advocating change (e.g. 4.4.2), practical support for implementation should be increased if the NEC is really to be accepted and synthesized into teachers' practices. Rather than trying to justify change by only providing positive information, a diversity of information with points and counterpoints should be provided in the official discourse for teachers to evaluate. This may also help increase teachers' trust in the official discourse. Additionally, more opportunities for one to one communication on practical issues could be created where possible. Communication could be focused on issues that are directly relevant to teachers' practices. Learning from the experience of the research participants, discussion among teachers should be encouraged for them to reflect on each other's experience.

9.4.2 Implications for teacher educators:

As is shown in the discussion, the effect of pre-service education is devalued by teachers, which they attribute to the lack of training about teaching pedagogies and delayed teaching practice (e.g. 6.7).

The implication is that teaching practice opportunities should be offered at an early stage in order to create opportunities for students to reflect on their beliefs and motivate them to explore new approaches for teaching. Such a view is also expressed by Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000, cited in Borg, 2003:90) who propose that opportunities early in the teacher education programme for student teachers to confront their pre-existing beliefs are important. With regard to increasing pedagogical training, there may be potential difficulties due to the needs of non-native speakers of English (Ms. Ren, Personal Communication, 10/12/2008). My proposal is that pedagogical training could be integrated with language training, for example, the introduction of English writing on methodological issues (e.g. Works such as Willis, 1996; Nunan, 2004).

9.4.3 Directions for future research

In this section, I would like to consider some possible directions for future research. Some of them are issues that I was not able to cover in this investigation. Others are issues that have arisen during my research and warrant further investigation.

(1) I have investigated the experience of a group of teachers in a key-school in Southeast China. Although some of the findings may have implications for other schools and other teachers, it would be interesting to investigate how my methods can be used in other settings. Examples are teachers in non-key schools and teachers in less economically developed areas of China, or teachers in other countries.

(2) Although my data include discussions or conversations with the head teacher, education administrators, parents and students, the focus of the investigation is the experience of teachers. It would be interesting to examine the NEC experience from the perspectives of other groups of people. For example, in 6.2.3, I have examined teachers' ambivalence brought about by the redefinition of the teacher-student relationship and it would be interesting to see how parents and students perceive such a change. Also, I have described the insecurity and uncertainty brought to teachers due to a perceived lack of clarity in the policy agenda and it would be interesting to investigate the experience of education administrators and to understand the possibilities and constraints around their work.

(3) This study also raises some interesting issues about research methodology. As previously discussed, I have discussed how 'face' and 'social connections' may have impacted on my research and I have discussed some ethical issues (e.g. 3.9.2). It would be interesting to investigate further the culture of research, for example, how is the research process influenced by the culture of both researchers and research participants and how may the ethnographic process be experienced in a different culture?

9.5 Final remarks

As the journey through the research and writing ends, I increasingly realise how interesting and meaningful this journey has been. My study has covered some exciting areas of research: curriculum implementation, teacher cognition, culture, ethnography and sociology. It has investigated the curriculum implementation from

teachers' perspectives and provided an opportunity for their voices to be better heard. It has extended and deepened knowledge and understanding in my chosen areas of research and it has also offered some practical implications for curriculum developers and teacher educators. Importantly, through this journey, I have also developed my thinking and research skills. The investigation of multiple theories and areas of research has opened multiple possibilities for my future research.

References

Abbot, K. A. (1970). *Harmony and Individualism*. Taipei: Orient Cultural Service.

Acker, S. (1999). *The Realities of Teachers' Work: Never a Dull Moment*. London: Cassell.

Adler, P. A. & Adler, P. (2003). The Reluctant Respondent. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (eds.), *Inside Interviewing: New Lenses, New Concern* (pp. 153-173). California: Sage Publications Inc.

Alexander, L. G. (1967). *New Concept English*. London: Longman.

Apple, M. W. (1988). *Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bailey, K. M. (1996). The Best Laid Plans: Teachers' In-class Decisions to Depart from Their Lesson Plans. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (eds.), *Voices From the Language Classroom* (pp. 15-40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ball, D. L. & Cohen, D. K. (1996). Reform by the Book: What Is: Or Might Be: The Role of Curriculum Materials in Teacher Learning and Instructional Reform. *Educational Researcher*, 25 (9), 6-14.

Ball, S. J. (1994). *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-structural Approach*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Ball, S. J. (2008). *The Education Debate*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Bax, S. (2003). The end of CLT: A context approach to language teaching. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 57, 278–287.

Beach, D. (2003). The Politics, Policy and Ideology of School Mathematics. In G. Walford (ed.), *Investigating Educational Policy Through Ethnography* (pp. 14-46). Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.

Becker, C. S. (1992) *Living and Relating: an Introduction to Phenomenology*. London: Sage.

Best, S. (2003). *A Beginner's Guide to Social Theory*. London: Sage.

Biggs, J. (1996). Western Misperceptions of the Confucian-Heritage Learning Culture. In D. A. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (eds.), *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences* (pp. 45-67). Hong Kong: CERC & ACER

Borg, M. (2001). Key Concepts in ELT: Teachers' Beliefs. *ELT Journal*, 55, 186-188.

Borg, S. (1998). *Teacher Cognition in Second Language Grammar Teaching*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Exeter, Exeter, UK.

Borg, S. (2001). Self Perception and Practices in Teaching Grammar. *ELT Journal*, 55, 21-29.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching: A Review of Research on What Language Teachers Think, Know, Believe, and Do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109.

Borg, S. (2005). Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching. In K. Johnson (ed.), *Expertise in Second Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 190-209). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice.* London: Continuum.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1992). *The Logic of Practice.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical Reason.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boyd, V., (1992). *School context: Bridge or barrier for change.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Lab.

Boyd, W. L. (1979). The Politics of Curriculum Change and Stability. *Educational Researcher*, 8 (2), 12-18.

Breen, M.P. (1986). The Social Context of Language Learning-a Neglected Situation. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 7, 135-158.

Breen, M. P. (1991). Understanding the language teacher. In R. Phillipson, E. Kellerman, L. Selinker, M. Sharwood Smith & M. Swain (Eds.), *Foreign/Second Language Pedagogy Research* (pp. 213-233). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Brewer, J. D. (2000). Ethnography. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brousseau, B. A., Book, C. and Byers, J. L. (1988). Teacher Beliefs and the Cultures of Teaching, *Journal of Teacher Education,* 39, 33-39.

Brown, H. G. (1991). TESOL at Twenty-Five: What Are the Issues? *TESOL Quarterly*, 25 (2), 245-260.

Brown, H. D. (2002). English Language Teaching in the "Post-method" Era: towards Better Diagnosis, Treatment, and Assessment. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in Language Teaching* (9–18). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, J. D. & Rodgers, T. S. (2002). *Doing Second Language Research*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, K. (1995). World Englishes: to Teach? Or Not to Teach? *World Englishes*, 14(2), 233-245.

Bruce, B. & Rubin, A. (1992). *Electronic Quills: A Situated Evaluation of Using Computers for Writing in Classrooms*. Shillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bruton, A. (2002). From Tasking Purposes to Purposing Tasks. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 56 (3), 280−88.

Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

British Sociological Association (2002). *Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association*. Retrieved 10th December 2008, from http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm

Buck, G. (1988). Testing Listening Comprehension in Japanese University Entrance Examinations. *JALT Journal*, 10,12-42.

Burgess, R.G. (1984). *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Burnaby, B. & Sun, Y. (1989). Chinese Teachers' Views of Western Language Teaching: Context Informs Paradigms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23 (2), 219-238.

Burns, A. (1996). Starting All Over Again: From Teaching Adults to Teaching Beginners. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (eds.), *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching* (pp. 154−77). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Y. G. & M. Iino (2005). Current Japanese reforms in English language education: The 2003 'Action Plan'. *Language Policy,* 4 (1), 25–45.

Butler, Y.G. (2004). What Level of English Proficiency Do Elementary School Teachers Need to Attain in Order to Teach EFL? Case Studies from Korea, Taiwan and Japan. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(2), 245–278.

Bygate, M. (2005). Oral Second Language Abilities as Expertise. In Johnston, K (ed.), *Expertise in Second Language Learning and Teaching* (pp.104-127), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bygate, M., Skehan, P. & Swain, M. (2001). (Eds.). *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second Language Learning, Teaching, and Testing*. London: Longman.

Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Canagarajah, A. S. (ed.). (2005). *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Carless, D. (2001). *Curriculum Innovation in the Primary EFL Classroom: Case Studies of Three Teachers Implementing Hong Kong's Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC)*. Unpublished Thesis. University of Warwick, Warwick, UK.

Carless, D. (2003). Factors in the Implementation of Task-based Teaching in Primary Schools. *System,* 31, 485–500.

Carless, D. (2004). Issues in Teachers' Reinterpretation of a Task-Based Innovation in Primary Schools. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38 (4), 639–662.

Carless, D. (2007). The Suitability of Task-based Approaches for Secondary Schools: Perspectives from Hong Kong, *System*, 35, 595–608.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 509-536). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Charmaz, K. (2003). Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis. In Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (eds.), *Inside Interviewing: New Lenses, New Concern* (pp.311-330). California: Sage Publications Inc.

Charmaz, K. (2005) Grounded Theory in the 21st Century: A Qualitative Method for Advancing Social Justice. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd edition, pp.507-535).*Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second Language Classroom: Research on Teaching and Learning.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cheng, K. M. & Wong, K. C. (1996). School Effectiveness in East Asia: Concepts, Origins and Implications. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 34 (5), 32-49.

Cheng, K.M. (2000). Understanding Basic Education Policies in China: An Ethnographic Approach. In J. Liu, H.A. Ross and D.P. Kelly (eds), *The Ethnographic Eye: Interpretive Studies of Education in China* (pp. 29–50). New York: Palmer.

Chow, A. W. K. & Mok-Cheung, A. H. M. (2004). English Language Teaching in Hong Kong: Tradition, Transition and Transformation. In W. K. Ho & R. Y. L. Wong (eds.), *English Language Teaching in East Asia Today* (pp. 150–177). Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Clark, J. (1987). *Curriculum Renewal in School Foreign Language Learning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clarke, M. (2007). English Language Policy and Teacher Education in the United Arab Emirates. *TESOL Quarterly,* 41 (3), *583-591.*

Codd, J. (1988). The Construction and Deconstruction of Educational Policy Documents, *Journal of Education Policy*, 3 (5), 235-248.

Cohen, D. K., & Ball, D. L. (1990). Relations between Policy and Practice: A Commentary. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12(3), 331–338.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education* (5th edition). London: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th edition). London: Rutledge.

Corbetta, P. (2003). *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13 (1), 3-20.

Cortazzi, M. & Jin, L. (1996). English Teaching and Learning in China. *Language Teaching*, 29 (1), 61-80.

Cortazzi, M. & Jin, L. (1999). Cultural Mirrors: Materials and Methods in the EFL Classroom. In E. Hinkel (ed.), *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning (pp. 149-176)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cortazzi, M. & Jin, L. (2001). Large Classes in China: 'Good' Teachers and Interaction. In D. Watkins & J. Biggs (eds.), *Teaching the Chinese Learner: Psychological and Pedagogical Perspectives* (pp. 115-134). Hong Kong: CERC.

Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crang, M. & Cook, I. (2007). *Doing Ethnographies*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2nd edition*)*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Crystal, D. (1985). How Many Millions? The Statistics of English Today. *English Today*, 1, 7-9.

Delamont, S. (1981). All Too Familiar? A Decade of Classroom Research. *Educational Analysis*, 3(1), 69-83.

Denzin, N. K. (1996). The Epistemological Crisis in the Human Disciplines: Letting the Old Do the Work of the New. In R. Jessor, A. Colby & R. A. Shweder (Eds.), *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry* (pp. 127-152). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dreyfus, H.L. & Dreyfus, S. E. (1980). *A Five-stage Model of the Mental Activities Involved in Directed Skill Acquisition*, Unpublished Report Supported by the Air Force Office of Science Research (AFSC), USAF, University of California at Berkley.

Economics and Social Research Council (2005). *ESRC Research Ethical Framework*. Retrieved 10th December 2007, from http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11 291.pdf.

Elbaz, F. (1983). *Teacher Thinking: A Study of Practical Knowledge.* London: Croom Helm.

Ellis, R. (1984). *Classroom Second Language Development: A Study of Classroom Interaction and Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Ellis, R. (1990). *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Learning in the Classroom*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ellis, R. (1992). *Second Language Acquisition and Language Pedagogy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Ellis, R. (2000). Task-based research and language pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research*, 4 (3), 193–220.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Estaire, S. and J. Zanon. (1994). *Planning Classwork: A Task Based Approach*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Routledge.

Fang, X. (2009a). *Teacher Thinking and TBLT Implementation: An Ethnographic Study in a Chinese High School*, paper presented at the 3rd International Task Based Language Conference, Lancaster, UK, September 2009.

Fang, X. (2009b). *Making Ethnography Known to Research Participants*, paper presented at the 2nd UK Linguistic Ethnography Conference, Birmingham, UK, September 2009.

Fang, X. (forthcoming). Teaching the New English Curriculum in a Chinese High School: An Ethnography Study, in T. Muller and S. Herden (eds.), *Innovating ELT in Context: Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing: The Art of Science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 361-376). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Foss,D . H., & Kleinsasser,R . C. (1996). Preservice Elementary Teachers' Views of Pedagogical and Mathematical Content Knowledge. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 12(4), 429-442.

Foster , P. (1999). Task-Based Learning and Pedagogy. *ELT Journal,* 53, 69-70.

Fotos, S. & Ellis, R. (1991). Communicating about Grammar: A Task-Based Approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, 605–28.

Foucault, M. (1977). *The Archeology of Knowledge.* London: Tavistock.

Fullan, M. & Pomfret, A. (1977). Research on Curriculum and Instruction Implementation. *Review of Educational Research*, 5 (47), 335-397.

Fullan, M. (1992). *Successful School Improvement.* Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Fullan, M. (2007). *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (4th edition). New York: Teachers College Press.

Gardner, H. (1989). *To Open Minds: Chinese Clues to the Dilemma of Contemporary Education.* New York: Basic Books.

Garland, P. (2001). *Further Education Lecturers' Perceptions of the Impact of GNVQ.* Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Leeds, Leeds, UK.

Garland, P. (2007). *Operationalising Habermas in Educational Research.* Unpublished paper.

Gass, S.M. (2003). Input and Interaction. In C. J. Doughty and M. H. Long (eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp.224-255). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* London: Penguin.

Guariento, W. & Morley, J. (2001).Text and Task Authenticity in the EFL Classroom. *ELT Journal,* 55(4), 347-353.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N.K. Denzin & Y. S., Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp.105-117). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S., Lincoln (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,* (3rd edition, pp.191-216). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Guo, Y. J. (2008). *Gao Zhong Ying Yu Xin Ke Cheng Gao Xiao Chuang Xin Jiao Xue Fa, [Efficient Teaching for the High School New English Curriculum],* Wuhan: Wuhan University Press.

Guo, C. (2001). "Chong 'Liang Re' Kan Zhong Guo" (Looking at China from Two Hot Issues). *People's Daily Overseas Edition.* 13th August

Ha, P. L. (2004). University Classrooms in Vietnam: Contesting the Stereotypes. *ELT Journal,* 58 (1), 50-57

Hall, G. E. & Hord, S. M. (1987). *Change in Schools: Facilitating the process.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (2nd edition). London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (3rd edition). London: Routledge.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teacher's Work and Culture.* London: Cassell.

Heron, J. & Reason, P. (1997). A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 3, 274-294.

Hinkel, E. (ed.) (1999). *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ho, D. Y. (1976). "On the Concept of Face". *American Journal of Sociology*, 81 (4), 867–884.

Ho, W. K. (2004). English Language Teaching in East Asia Today: An Overview. In W. K. Ho & R. Y. L. Wong (eds.), *English Language Teaching in East Asia Today* (pp.1-32). Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Holliday, A. (1991). *Dealing with Tissue Rejection in EFL Projects: the Role of an Ethnographic Mean Analysis.* Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Lancaster, Lancaster, UK.

Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate Methodology and Social Context.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holliday, A. (1999). Small Cultures, Applied Linguistics. *ProQuest Education Journals,* 20 (2), 237-264.

Holliday, A., Hyde, M. & Kullman, J. (2004). *Intercultural Communication: an Advanced Resource Book.* London: Routledge.

Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). *The Active Interview.* California: Sage Publications.

Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (2005). Interpretive Practice and Social Action, in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 483-506), Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Hopkins, D. (2001). *Improving School for Real.* New York: Routledge.

Howatt, A.P.R. & Widdowson, H. G. (2004). *A History of English Language Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hu, G. W. (2002). Potential Cultural Resistance to Pedagogical Imports: The Case of Communicative Language Teaching in China. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum,* 15 (2), 93-105.

Hu, G. W. (2005). Contextual Influences on Instructional Practices: A Chinese Case for an Ecological Approach to ELT. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39 (4), 635–660.

Hu, H. C. (1944). The Chinese Concept of "Face". *American Anthropology*, 46, 45-64.

Hwang, K. K. (1987).Face and Favour: The Chinese Power Game. *The American Journal of Sociology*. 92 (4), 944-974.

Jenkins, R. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

Jin, L. X. & Cortazzi, M. (2002). English Language Teaching in China: A Bridge to the Future. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 22 (2), 53-64.

Johnston, K. E. (1994). The Emerging Beliefs and Instructional Practices of Preservice English as a Second Language Teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10, 439-52.

Junker (1960). *Field Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Klapper, J. (2003). Taking Communication to Task? A Critical Review of Recent Trends in Language Teaching. *Language Learning Journal*, 27(1), 33-42.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (1993). The Name of the Task and the Task of Naming: Methodological Aspects of Task-based Pedagogy. In G. Crookes & S. Gass (eds.), *Tasks in A Pedagogical Context* (pp. 69–96). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The Postmethod Condition: (E) merging Strategies for Second/foreign Language Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28, 27–48.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (1999). Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33, 453–484.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). Problematizing Cultural Stereotypes in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37 (4), 709-719

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). TESOL Methods: Changing Tracks, Challenging Trends. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40 (1), 59-81.

Lantolf, J. (2000). *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lee, S. M. (2005). The Pros and Cons of Task-based Instruction in Elementary English Classes. *English Teaching,* 60 (2), 185–205.

Leinhardt, G. (1988). Situated Knowledge and Expertise in Teaching. In J. Calderhead (ed.), *Teachers' Professional Learning* (pp. 146-168). London: Falmer Press.

Li, D. F. (1998). 'It's Always More Difficult than You Plan and Imagine': Teachers' Perceived Difficulties in Introducing the Communicative Approach in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly,* 32 (4), 677–703.

Li, C. Y. (2003). A Study of In-Service Teachers' Beliefs, Difficulties And Problems In Current Teacher Development Programs. *HKBU Papers in Applied Language Studies*, 7, 64–85

Li, Lianning (2001). Tan Xiao Xue Kai She Ying Yu Ke Cheng De Jue Ding Yu Gong Zuo Bu Shu. [On the Decision to Teach English in Primary Schools and Work Plans.] *Zhong Xiao Xue Ying Yu Huo Ye Wen Xuan [Selected Readings on Primary and Secondary School English]*, (8), 1–3.

Liao, X. (2004). The Need for Communicative Language Teaching in China. *ELT Journal* 58 (3), 270-273.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Littlewood, W. (2000). Do Asian Students Really Want to Listen and Obey? *ELT Journal,* 54(1), 31-36.

Littlewood, W. (2004). The task-based Approach: Some Questions and Suggestions. *ELT Journal,* 58(4), 319–326.

Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and Task-Based Language Teaching in East Asian Classrooms. *Language Teaching*, 40, 243–249.

Liu, D. Y. (1993). *Senior English for China.* Beijing: People's Education Press.

Liu, D. Y. (2006, 2007). *New Senior English for China.* Beijing: People's Education Press.

Liu, D.Y. (2008a). San Shi Nian: Zhong Xiao Xue Ying Yu Ke Heng Yan Yi "He Ping Ge Ming" [Thirty Years: The 'Peaceful Revolution' of Primary and Secondary English Curriculum]. *Zhong Guo Jiao Yu Bao [China Education Daily]*, 8th August, p. 5.

Liu, D. Y. (2008b). *Wo Can Yu Bian Xie De Ying Yu Jiao Cai [My Experience of Editing English Textbooks]*, 10th November, 2008, Jinghua Daily.

Long, M. (1983). Native Speaker/non-native Speaker Conversation and the Negotiation of Comprehensible Input. *Applied Linguistics.* 4 (2), 126−41.

Long, M. (1985). A Role for Instruction in Second Language Acquisition: Task-Based Language Teaching, in K. Hyltenstam, & M. Pienemann (eds.) *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Long, M. H. (2005). A Rationale for Learner Needs Analysis. In M. H. Long (ed.), *Second Language Needs Analysis* (pp. 1-16). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lu, Z. W. (2007). Gao zhong ying yu xin ke gai "xin" zai he chu [What Is New about the New English Curriculum?], Ershiyi Shiji Yingyu Jiaoyu Zhoukan [21st Century English Education Weekly], 11th Sptember.

Marcus, G. E. (1998). *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Marton, F., Dall'Alba, G. and Beatty, E. (1993). Conceptions of Learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*,19, 277-300.

Marton, F., Dall'Alba, G. & Kun, T. L. (1996). Memorizing and Understanding: The Key to The Paradox? In D. A. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (eds.), *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual influences* (pp.69-83). Hong Kong: CERC & ACER

Maso, I. (2001). Phenomenology and Ethnography. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 136-144). London: Sage.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching* (2nd edition). London: Sage Publications.

May, T. (1997). *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process* (2nd edition). Buckingham: Open University Press.

McDonough, K. (2004). Learner-Learner Interaction during Pair and Small Group Activities in A Thai EFL Context. *System*, 32, 207–224.

McGinley, K. (2006). The 'Test of Interactive English'-From Conception to Implementation. *ELT Journal,* 60 (4), 374-381.

Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ministry of Education of China (1998). *Mian Xiang Er Shi Yi Shi Ji Jiao Yu Xing Dong Zhen Xing Ji Hua [Plan for Boosting Education in the 21st Century]*, 24th, December, 1998 Retrieved on 10th November 2007 from http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/level3.jsp?tablename=208&infoid=3337

Ministry of Education of China (2003). *High School English Curriculum Standard*. Beijing: People's Education Press.

Mitchell, J. C. (1983). Case and Situation Analysis, *Sociological Review*, 31: 186-211.

Moore, H. (2007). Non-Language Policies and ESL: Some Connections. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41 (3), 573-583.

Murray, R. (2002). *How to Write a Thesis* (2nd edition). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

National Bureau of Statistics of China (2009) *Tong Ji Gong Bao [Statistics Bulletin]* Retrieved on 1st September 2009 from http://www.stats.gov.cn/.

Nespor, J. (1987). The Role of Beliefs in the Practice of Teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. 19(4), 317-328.

Nunan, D. (1988). *The Leaner Centred Curriculum.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Nunan, D. (2003). The Impact of English as a Global Language on Educational Policies and Practices in the Asia-Pacific Region. *TESOL Quarterly,* 37 (4), 589-613.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

On, L.W. (1996). The Cultural Context for Chinese Learners: Conceptions of Learning in the Confucian Tradition, in D. A. Watkins, J. B. Biggs (eds), *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences* (pp.25-41). Hong Kong: CERC & ACER

Ozga, J. (1990). Policy Research and Policy Theory: A Comment on Fitz and Halpin. *Journal of Education Policy,* 5 (4), 359-362.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning Up a Messy Construct. *Review of Educational Research,* 62(3), 307-332.

Parmenter, L. K. (1997). *Becoming International in a Japanese High School: An Ethnographic Study.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, Durham, UK.

Pennycook, A. D. (1989). The Concept of Method, Interested Knowledge, and The Politics of Language. *TESOL Quarterly,* 23, 589–618.

Pennycook, A.D. (2006). Postmodernism in Language Policy. In T. Ricento (eds), *An Introduction to Language Policy* (pp. 60-76). Oxford: Blackwell.

Phillips, D.C. (1987). Validity in Qualitative Research: Why The Worry about Warrant Will Not Wane. *Education and Urban Society,* 20, 9-24.

Piaget, J. (1967). *Biology and knowledge.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Polanyi, M. (1966). *The Tacit Dimension.* Reprinted by Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1983.

Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prabhu, N. S. (1990). There is No Best Method—Why? *TESOL Quarterly,* 24 (2), 161-176.

Punch, K. F. (1998). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative & Qualitative Approaches.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Ramanathan, V. & Morgan, B. (2007). TESOL and Policy Enactments: Perspectives from Practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41 (3), 447-463.

Rao, Z.H. (1996). Reconciling Communicative Approaches to the Teaching of English with Traditional Chinese Methods. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 30, 458–471.

Ricento, T. K. & Hornberger, N.H. (1996). Unpeeling the Onion: Language Planning and Policy and the ELT Professional. *TESOL Quaterly*, 30 (3), 401-427.

Richards, J. C. (1996). Teachers' Maxims in Language Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*. 30(2), 281-296.

Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Richards, L. (2005). *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide.* London: Sage.

Riley, K. (2000). Leadership, Learning, and Systemic Reform. *Journal of Educational Change,* 1(1), 29–55.

Riseborough, G. (1992). Primary Headship, State Policy and the Challenge of the 1990s. *Journal of Education Policy*, 8 (2), 123-142.

Rizvi, F. and Kemmis, S. (1987). *Dilemma of Reform.* Geelong: Deakin Institute for Studies in Education.

Robinson, P. (2001). Task Complexity, Cognitive Load, and Syllabus Design. In P. Robinson (ed.), *Cognition and Second Language Instruction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robrecht, L. (1995). Grounded Theory: Evolving Methods. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5, 169–177.

Robson, C. (1993). *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research* (2nd edition). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Rock, P. (2001). Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnography. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 26-38). London: Sage.

Ross, H. (1992). Foreign Language Education as a Barometer of Modernization. In R. Hayhoe (ed.), *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience (pp.239-254).* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Rundell, M. (2001). *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English,* London: Longman.

Sakui, K. (2004) Wearing Two Pairs of Shoes: Language Teaching in Japan. *ELT Journal,* 58 (2), 155-163.

Samimy, K. K. & C. Kobayashi (2004). Toward the Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence: Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications for Japanese English Teachers. *JALT Journal,* 26 (2), 245–261.

Sampson, G. P. (1984). Exporting Language Teaching Methods from Canada to China. *TESL Canada Journal,* 1(1), 19-31.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action.* London: Temple Smith.

Schutz (1967). *The phenomenology of the social world (G. Walsh & F. Lehnert, Trans.).* Evanston, IL: North Western University Press.

Schutz, A. (1972). *The Phenomenology of the Social World,* London: Heinemann.

Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 118-137). London: Sage.

Scollon, S. (1999) Not to Waste Words or Students: Confucian and Socratic Discourse in the Tertiary Classroom. In E. Hinkel (ed.), *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 13–27). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seidlhofer, B. (1999). Double Standards: Teacher Education in the Expanding Circle. *World Englishes,* 18 (2), 233-245

Senior, R. (2006). *The Experience of Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shamim, F. (1996). In or Out of the Action Zone: Location as A Feature of Interaction in Large ESL Classes in Pakistan. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (eds),*Voices from the Language Classroom* (pp.123-144). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shavelson, R. J. & Stern, P. (1981). Research on Teachers' Pedagogical Thoughts, Judgments, Decisions and Behavior. *Review of Educational Research,* 51, 455-498.

Sheen, R. (1994). A Critical Analysis of the Advocacy of the Task-Based Syllabus. *TESOL Quarterly,* 28 (1),127–151.

Shim, R. J. & M. J. Baik (2004). English Education in South Korea. In W. K. Ho & R. Y. L. Wong (eds.), *English Language Teaching in East Asia Today* (pp. 241–261). Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage Publications.

Silverman, D. (2001) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction* (2nd edition). London: Sage Publications.

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction* (3rd edition). London: Sage.

Skehan, P. (1996). A Framework for the Implementation of Task-based Instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, 17, 38–62.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Skehan, P. (2003). Task-Based Instruction. *Language Teaching*, 36,1–14.

Skehan, P., & Foster, P. (2001). Cognition and Tasks. In P. Robinson (ed.), *Cognition and Second Language Instruction* (pp. 183-205). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Snyder, J., Bolin, F. & Zumwalt, K. (1992). Curriculum Implementation. In P. W. Jackson (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Curriculum* (pp.402-435). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant Observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Social Research Association (2003). *Ethical Guidelines*, Retrieved on 10th December, 2008 from http://www.the-sra.org.uk/ethical.htm

Stenhouse, L. (1975). *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*. London, Heinemann.

Stern, H. H. (1992). *Issues and Options in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. London: Sage.

Swan, M. (2005). Legislation by Hypothesis. Applied Linguistics, 26 (3), 376-401.

Tedlock, B. (2000). Ethnography and Tthnographic Representation. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 455–486). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Thomas, G. & James, D. (2006). Reinventing Grounded Theory: Some Questions about Theory, Ground and Discovery. *British Education Research Journal,* 32(6), 767-795.

Tsui, A.B.M. (2003). *Understanding Expertise in Teaching: Case Studies of Second Language Teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vaus, D. E. (2001). *Research Design in Social Research.* London: Sage.

Walford, G. (2003). *Investigating Educational Policy through Ethnography.* Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.

Waters, A. (2007). Ideology, Reality, and False Consciousness. *ELT Journal*, 61(4), 367-368.

Waters, M. (1994). *Modern Sociological Theory.* London: Sage Publications.

Watkins, D. A. & Biggs, J.B. (eds.) (1996). *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, psychological and Contextual Influence.* Hong Kong: CERC & ACER.

Watkins, D.A. & Biggs, J.B. (Eds.) (2001). *Teaching the Chinese Learner: Psychological and Pedagogical Perspectives.* Hong Kong: CERC & CERC & ACER.

Webb, J., Schirato, T. & Danaher, G. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu.* London: Sage Publications.

Wheatley, K. F. (2002). The Potential Benefits of Teacher Efficacy Doubts for Educational Reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*,18, 5-22.

Widdowson H. G. (1994). The Ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 377-389.

Widdowson, H. G. (2003). *Defining Issues in English Language Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, M. (2000). Interpretivism and Generalisation, *Sociology*, 34: 209-224.

Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning.* Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching: Beliefs, Decision Making and Classroom Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yu, L.M. (2001). Communicative Language Teaching in China: Progress and Resistance. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35 (1), 194-198.

Yu, L. & Suen, H. K. (2005). Historical and Contemporary Exam-driven Education Fever in China. *KEDI Journal of Educational Policy*, 2 (1), 17-33.

Zhu, B. X. (1982). Further Comments on English Education in China. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16 (2), 273-277.

Zhu, W.Z. (1992). Confucius and Traditional Chinese Education: An Assessment. In R. Hayhoe (ed.) *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience* (pp. 3–22). Oxford: Pergamon.

APPENDICES:

Table of Contents of Appendices

Appendix 1: Gaining access

Extract 1: How did you know my telephone number?

Researcher: Hello, is that head teacher xxx?

Head teacher: He's busy at the moment. Who's that? Why do you look for him?

Researcher: I'm calling from the UK. I'm a PhD student in education. I want to …

Head teacher: I'm the head teacher…How did you know my school/my telephone number?

(30/05/2007)

My reflection/comment: It was easy to get the telephone numbers of the school switchboard or administration office, but it required great effort to get the head teacher's numbers, which are rarely publicized. As a matter of fact, these teachers worked as filters for the head teachers and a lot of questions must be asked before the number was given.

Obtaining the telephone number was only the start of the long march. I needed to make endless calls in order to get hold of the head teachers because they were often away from the office, due to teaching or endless meetings. In fact, I also discovered that some head teachers intentionally switched off the telephones in order not to be disturbed by countless calls.

Finally, when I was lucky enough to get hold of any of them, a number of them withheld their real identities in the beginning and was surprised to know how I knew the schools and their telephone numbers.

Extract 2. Why do you want to work in a high school?

Head teacher: Do you want to tell me more about yourself?

Researcher: I graduated from *** university, I had a master in Education from *** University, now I'm doing PhD Education in *** university in UK.

Head teacher: Why do you want to come to my school?

Researcher: I want to study how teachers teach…

Head teacher: It sounds very strange to me. You are a PhD. You should have a good knowledge about teaching. Why do you want to work in a high school and study the teachers?

Researcher: My methodology is ethnography and I…

Head teacher: Very interesting. May be you can call some other schools?

<div align="right">(01/06/2007)</div>

My reflection/comment: as a Chinese saying goes, "to be found in the books are golden mansions, beautiful wives and tons of corns [书有自有黄金屋，书中自有颜如玉，书中自有千钟栗]", to many people further education means gateway to more money and higher positions. It might be difficult for the head teacher to understand that a PhD student would like to teach in a high school, plus this PhD student comes from a UK university!

Extract 3: Everything is so common! What is there to see?

"Don't work in a high school! It is really tiring to work here. Everything is routinized. Everything is so common. What is there to see? I don't think there's anything worth studying. You have been studying in a Chinese high school. I'm sure you know all about it. It is waste of time for you to work here. If you have any question, just ask me, I can tell you everything…"

<div align="right">(06/06/2007)</div>

My reflection/comment: Li Tao, team leader of the English Department in a high school, tried to be helpful. Some other people expressed the same concern. It seemed hard for them to imagine that a PhD student who must have known a lot about teaching would like to work in a high school. What is there to see?

Extract 4: Do you want to do some teacher training here?

"Well, I don't think you should teach students here. It's waste of talent really. You are a PhD from UK, I'm sure you know a lot about teaching. Do you want to do some teacher training here so that you can introduce the advanced teaching methods to teachers?"

<div align="right">(08/06/2007)</div>

My reflection/comment: A number of head teachers suggested that I should do teacher training in order not to waste my "expertise knowledge". Some other head teachers expressed the concern that students might experience difficulty in transition when I left for the UK one year after because "students may be unhappy with other teachers because it would be difficult for other teachers to reach your level of teaching".

Of course, I would not accept a position as a teacher trainer: if teachers were told the "proper" ways of teaching, of course they would respond with the "proper" answers during the interview. My study would definitely lose sight.

Appendix 2: Research Agenda with Anya

September 2007:	1 public speech: How to Teach Vocabulary (05/09/2007, keynote speaker of the city's teaching plan competition)
October 2007:	5 observations (between 08/10/2007 and 12/10/2007)
	1 semi-structured interview (16/10/2007)
	1 unstructured interview (11/10/2007)
February 2008:	5 observations (between 19/02/2008 and 02/26/2007)
	1 semi-structured interview (25/02/2008)
	2 unstructured interviews (20/02/2008, 24/02/2008)
	1 public speech: Guidance on Teaching Module 8 (22/02/2008, keynote speaker of the city's teaching plan competition)
March 2008:	5 observations and 5 entry logs (between 10/03/2008 and 21/03/2008)
	1 public speech: Integrating Reading and Writing (25/03/2008, keynote speaker of the city's NEC seminar)
	4 unstructured interviews (09/03/2008, 13/03/2008, 18/03/2008 and 26/03/2008)
April 2008	2 semi-structured interview (06/04/2008, 09/04/2008)
May 2008	7 entry logs (between 15/05/2008 and 23/05/2008)
	3 unstructured interviews (10/05/2008, 22/05/2008, 29/05/2008)
June 2008	1 semi-structured interview (08/06/2008)
	1 unstructured interview (25/06/2008)

Appendix 3: Observation transcripts

Observation with Anya on 12/10/2007 Class 2 Grade 2   9:40-10:25
Unit 3: Life in the Future

Time	Events	My comments/ Reflections/ Questions
9:40	Class begins	Normally how
9:42	Powerpoint shows photos of some ultramodern apartments and houses	many hours do you spend in one unit? How do you
9:43	Many students were amazed to see these photos	manage these hours? How long
	Two questions are shown on the Powerpoint:	for each?
	(1) What impression do these apartments and houses leave on you?	What are the classroom
9:44	(2) As a highest quality house, what factors do you think should be taken into consideration?	activities that you often do? e.g.
	Discusses Question 1	group work/free
	Picks a student to answer the question, student silent for a few seconds	participation/pick students to
	Anya shows the pics again and gives the student gesture hint/prompt	answer Qs? when to use
	The student replies "comfortable"	what?
	Anya asks him to give sentences using comfortable	
	Asks for more descriptive words for these apartments and houses	
9:50	Many more words are given by students (free participation)	There are often "silent" students in different
	Writes "well" on the blackboard and asks for "well …-ed" phrases to describe the apartments and houses	classes, what does she often do when the
9:55	More answers are given by the students (free participation)	student is "silent"?
	Talks about Q. 2	Very active

	Picks a student to answer More answers are given (free participation) Asks for more answers, encourages students to raise hands Picks more students to answer	classroom participation here, are the students very used to this kind of activities?

10:05	Your imagination (1) Besides living on land on the earth, where else do you suppose we humans will live in 1000 years' time? Some students stand up to answer the question (some volunteered, some are chosen) Some answers are very imaginative, e.g. We will live on the tree because the land will be covered with water, due to global warming (2) And what is the future residential transfer closely related to? Gives Chinese meaning:未来迁移相关的密切因素是什么 Also gives English explanation: What causes have led to the future residential transfer? Many answers are given, i.e. surroundings/environment Anya: this has caused serious what problems? Students: environmental Anya: Like what? Students: air pollution, the rapid increase of population… Ten more students are picked to answer the Qs. Powerpoint shows many sorts of environmental problems. Anya asks "Where can you see the future place?" More answers are given	So far, more than ten students are picked to answer Qs. When to pick students and when for free participation? Any rationale behind? It seems that she uses many words that are related to the unit in the previous section or the current unit. How does she word her talking? Which kind of words will she use? Does she think of special words to say?

10:20	Participants Group A: agents of a real estate company Group B: journalists from newspapers and TV stations *Materials for reference* Reading passage: p. 58-59 Speaking task: p. 60 Presentation: report before the class what your group have discussed The task of group A: Suppose a press conference is being held by a real estate company to make the undersea city known to people and encourage people to buy their houses under the sea. As the agent what will you talk about in the conference? Group B: raise as many questions as possible i.e. name of the city, purpose of building the house, children's education, the structures, housework, solutions to problems Asks students to work in fours within the big group Asks students to turn around and sit face to face to talk with each other Some students seem to be somewhat confused, asks whether they understand the instruction Asks students to use the texts first and discuss later on The paragraph is about 350 words (with many "big words") The student have ten mins to discuss Stop discussion Tells students that the report will be done the following morning Will go over a number of questions today	Did you think of this activity yourself? Or suggested in somewhere else? What was the rationale behind this activity? Is the task too difficult for the student or are they fast readers that are able to complete the task in such a short time?
10:28		

(1) What kind of writing it is? Advertisement?
    Something else?
Students respond advertisements
(2) What does challenge suggest here in the topic?
    What kind of challenges do we have?
Many answers are given by the students, i.e. the
new design of challenge city, to design an undersea
city is not an easy job, whether people will buy it or
not is challenge/safety problem is also a challenge

Picks another student to continue the challenges
This seems to be an absent-minded student
Student silent for 20 seconds
Anya: "Do you think is it easy or difficult to…"
Student respond: Difficult
Anya: This is another what?
Student: challenge (maybe with the help of his
classmate)
Anya: We have something more to show challenge
    这里的 challenge 隐藏了很多

Anya: How many advantages the agents want to tell
the public?
The first thing is easy contact
The second thing is more personal space
The third thing is personal security
The fourth thing is no household worries

Class ends and reminds students that group
leaders will be asked to come to the stage to report
to the classmates

Who is the group leader? Is the group established with a long period of time? With a fixed group leader? Or how to choose it?

How was the report going?

Appendix 4: Example of Entry Logs

Date	Unit	Content	Activity	Remark
22/04/2008 Tue.	7-3 Under the sea	1. Vocabulary exercises: (1) situations given, students are asked to give the words or phrases to describe the situation, example Qs: which word/phrases can be used to describe the situation? (2) Complete the sentences with the words or phrases learnt above (3) Translation P. 63 (6 sentences to use the new words) 2. Group activity: each group presents his or her free writing with some of the words, phrases, or sentences in the reading (Dimension of life) learnt in class		1. situations given make the students have better understanding of these new words and then they can use them effectively and accurately 2. Exchange their free writing in the group helps their study of the words and enhance their understanding of them
22/04/2008 Tue.	7-3 Under the sea	1. Grammar: passive-ing form (1) Dictation of some sentences containing passiv-ing form closely related to the reading on P. 21 Old Tom the Killer Whale (2) Practise using the passive-ing form a. passage about "Old Tom" c. sentences P. 22 and P. 64 c. Chinese-English translation 2. Listening-shark attacks P. 63		1. Not finish the listening, due to lack of time 2. Dictation to stimulate the students' awareness of such structure by observing and discovering

Original version (in Chinese):

你能不能介绍一下自己的经历，尤其是学习经历、工作经历以及这些经历是如何影响你的教学的？

我很自豪的说，我毕业的学校是***学校。我于 1978 年考入***，当时是高中毕业考进去，不过学位是中专，高中毕业的中专，学制是两年，专业是英语教育。因为我们毕业以后是要教书的，所以学校对语音方面有很苛刻的要求，听力、口试…需要模仿林格风教程，只有很逼真了才能过。还有口语，自由说话的话题，还有语法、词汇。也有教学法的内容，不过更多的在语言学习上。在教学法方面，我记得教务主任给我留下很深刻的印象，他人特别好。

你说他给你留下了很深刻的印象，是什么印象呢？他是怎么教书的？

他说出来的教学艺术现在都忘了，不过我就记得他人很好，很真诚。他教课的时候也是 lecture 的形式。还有，教单词、语法都要有语境，这一点对我现在的教学都有影响。还有精读的老师。上第一堂课的时候怎么教、板书怎么样，这些上课的时候老师都讲过。当时我们一批的有 119 名同学。我毕业的成绩是 99.5 分，第一名，当时有留校的可能，但我就想回家。回来以后我就在***教中专英语。那一届是两年，两年以后***师范中专的英语专业取消，我就来***中学教书。不过后来我还是继续学习，自学，考电大。先是大专、后来是本科。我本科是 1996、1997 年左右毕业的，专科毕业于***，本科是***学院，都是英语教育专业。没有办法，得继续学习、充电，不管怎么样，评职称什么的都是硬碰硬，需要有文凭。

那你一来就教高中，一年一年教下来吗？

我刚来的时候教初一，那一年实行的是新教材。当时的教研员是***，我以前在***的时候他听过我上课，很欣赏，所以有意让我从初一教起，做为 role model 一类的教师，每星期都有很多乡下的老师来听课。那段时间对我教学技艺的提高有很大帮助。因为，我总是想，有这么多的老师来听课，应该采用一些什么手段、活动，把课上得更有意思。有些活动可能在当时算很新的事情，我就是想，有什么活动能让学生喜欢，也有效。当时，教研员做这些活动可能也有自己的打算，每个人上任都想干些事情，但是这个经历确实让我受益很多。

你刚开始教的时候，在教学过程中，有没有什么事情/经历让你印象特别深刻，让你到现在都忘不了？

我记得教初三的时候，有一个教材，题目好像是 Can I help you, mum? 为了调节气氛，当时我从家里带来围裙什么的，让学生表演，以激发他们的兴趣。当时也不知道 role play 什么的，只知道"演戏"，让学生感兴趣。我在外语学校上学的时候授课形式之一也有表演，当时自己也很感兴趣。

我记得上次有一个老师说，她刚开始教书的时候，有一次学生没有擦黑板，她一定要学生擦，可是学生拒绝，她就拒绝上课，这件事让她一直难以忘记。你有没有过相似的经历？

没有。这可能也跟我的性格有关。如果有这样的情况，我就打圆场，事情也就过去了。我可能会自己擦黑板，可能一边擦一边说，下次不要再让我擦黑板了…如果学生拒绝，硬让他们来的话，学生可能偏跟你对着干，这样自己也下不了台。让学生下台也让自己下台。

那你刚开始教书的时候，有没有哪一位老师对你的帮助特别大？比如 role model 一样，带着你一起教？

当时我们有一个老组长。他的名字叫***，他给我留下很深的印象，尤其是他的敬业精神。他其它的事情基本不太做，就是教书，对学生要求特别严，特别能磨。其实他是一个毁誉参半的人…他基本上每份作业都要亲自改，每一篇课文都要学生背会了，亲自去教室，一个一个地向他背。有人可能会说他太磨了，但是他说，我这是为学生负责。

那他当时对你来说就是一个 role model?像你现在对待其他老师一样对你？

当然，他也不会像我现在对待其他老师一样对我。那个时候考试卷不像现在一样是打印的，当时是蜡纸，需要刻，他总是让我刻，有的时候干到凌晨两点。那个时候总有人给他写信，向他求教，他经常就让我替他回信。我刚才说过，他其它的事情基本上不太做，就是教学，所以我经常需要给他干很多事情。但我发现做这些事情对我自己也是一种提高。尤其是他的敬业精神给我留下了很深的印象，当然我不会像他那样磨。他没有手把手的教我怎么教书。有的时候我有困惑，不知道该怎么教了，就去母校听听课，跟同学写信交流交流，互寄备课教案，更多的印象来自我的母校，我上课的时候，有的时候就想想自己怎么学…可能这也跟我的 personality 有关系。外语学校比较侧重语言的应用，尤其是对口语的要求。

你说你有的时候会想想自己怎么学，那你是怎么学的呢？

我是一个比较听话的学生，基本上老师要求的我背，老师没有要求的我也背，当时***来的一个学生，看见我在路灯下读书，就跟别人说...当时我们在***读书，我都没有玩遍***，只是走了几处近一点的，真正去***玩还是工作以后。

那你在***读书的时候，除了你刚才说的教务主任，还有没有什么其他老师给你留下很深刻的印象？

我记得当时的语音老师。我们学语音学了一个学期的时间，我们的老师，现在考联合国译员考出去了，他是我们整个学校的语音模范，特别纯正的伦敦英。上课的时候先放录音，模仿，正音，语音听写，然后是语段听写，语篇听写...先是读三遍你写，然后是读两遍你写，然后是读一遍你写...从音标到单词到句子到语段再到语篇，一步一步的听写。他水平好，人好，对教学特别严格。

还有精读老师，不光有词汇教学，句子翻译，还有 moral education，思想性。他讲的时候不仅是读一读、翻译一下句子，讲讲单词，他还有提问，在当时算是比较新了。

那有没有 group discussion 之类的？

没有。这是到后来才发展的。

Ok,那讲一下你的 typical day 吧，你每天的 routine 是怎么样的呢？

我一般早上 5:45 到 5:50 起床，6:39 前在楼下等校车，到办公室以后拿一下资料，7:00 前赶到教室。二、四、六（如果星期六上课的话）早读，一、三、五晚读。上午两节课。中午分发作业，到教室转一下，让学生一个个背书，下午备课，6:00 开始听力训练，20 分钟后晚读，明确交待今晚读什么。你要是不交待的话，学生都不知道该读什么。

下午是备课、改作业，想一下上什么课，有什么方式呈现，现在复杂了，让学生参与，让他们作为主人，得让他们动起来，作为主人，我是引领者，让他们动起来，去做事，否则光是我说得话可能他们都想睡觉了。每节课都有很多事情，我想，在 45 分钟的时间里，至少有 30 分钟是很有效的，另外 15 分钟的时间，可能会有一些是 waste 的时间。

备课有的时候是无止境的，有的时候我吃完饭就去思考，轮廓，然后 collect information，再准备，再呈现，至少要花 2 个多小时，这是最低，有的时候到晚上十一、二点才能完成。上昨天的课之前我就想了很久，怎么用、怎么变通，内容是什么，思考的过程是从痛苦到高兴。

你要上的课程是什么时候准备的呢？是提前准备好还是每天准备第二天的内容？

一般来说，明天上的课都是今天备，一直都是这样，我做不到提前一两个星期备好课。不知道该上什么，只有今天的课上完以后，我才可以知道第二天上什么内容。今天上的时候看学生的表现、反应，知道他们听得怎么样，掌握的怎么样，才知道明天的课应该怎么教、怎么备。除非是 lecture，因为我的课需要学生参与进来，需要看他们的反应、表现。也许校长听到这话不高兴...

是不是校长需要老师们提前备好课？学校会不会抽查备课本？

不会。校长也不一定说非要提前多久备好，但是至少需要有一个明确的近期目标，每节课上什么，这周要讲到哪，这个月要讲到哪。这个我也有，但是具体上课的内容必须要到上课的前一天才能定下来。不过学校需要检查听课笔记，每个学期需要听至少十堂课，需要把笔记交上去。我也不会光是为了应付任务而去听、做笔记，我每个学期听的课至少都有几十节（注：前几天提起过外教的课基本上每节课都去听，这样知道哪个学生参加，参加的怎么样，活动的时候可以让学生更好的参与进来，另一方面也可以提高自己的听力），再加上去外面听课，每年都听很多的课。但是我一般不把笔记交上去，我就给校长给一下，这是我做的笔记，我去听课了，但我把笔记拿回来，因为我觉得笔记应该自己留着，可以以后拿来借鉴...就我自己来说，我觉得有的时候你没有在听课的时候我上得倒更自然一些。以前我们老师也说过，不要把每堂课都当作优化课，很累人，还是安照普通的课上，自然一些。

那这么多年来，你的教学观有没有发生过什么改变？

有，可能就是让学生动起来，让学生更有效的学，怎么样让学生更好的参与进来。教是教不会的，尤其是英语。应该怎么样让学生更主动的学习。调动学生的主动性、能动性，跟老师的教学是很有关系的。怎么样周密的设计，自然，authentic，有语境，真实...比如上次我去***听课，课前的 greeting，老师问学生:are you happy? 我就觉得不太真实、无聊...现在我觉得是越教越不会教。条条框框很多，自己这样做学生会不会觉得 boring，教学会不会无效，会不会事倍功半？还有 exam，分数，如果不受制于这些，可能会上得更好。但是这也不矛盾，对语言感兴趣，对应试应该也会有帮助。

Translation:

Can you tell me something about your experience please? Especially those relate to your study and teaching and how these have influenced your teaching?

After graduated from high school in 1978, I was admitted to study in *** Foreign Language Studies School (it is one of the best schools for foreign language studies in *** Province). My major was English Education. I studied there for two years and got a secondary school degree. The school has strict requirement on phonetics (listening, speaking…) because we are trainee teachers. We need to imitate Lingaphone's programme. We won't pass until it's very close to the original. We also have oral English, free talk, grammar and vocabulary. On top of that, we have teaching method as well, but the focus is on language. With regard to teaching method, the Dean of the academic affairs has left a deep impression on me. He's a very nice person.

You said he had left you a deep impression. What kind of impression is it? How does he teach?

I forgot most of the teaching methods that he taught us. I just remember he's a nice and sincere person. This form of teaching is also lecture actually. Additionally, he says you should teach vocabulary and grammar in different contexts and this has influenced a lot on my current teaching. And also, the teacher for intensive reading has also left me a deep impression. The teacher taught us how to teach the first lesson, include how to teach, how to design the teaching material. We have 119 students in that year and my graduation score is 99.5% (the highest). I had the chance to teach in the school, but I just wanted to go back home. After I came back, I had been teaching English in ***Normal School for two years. That was a secondary school course. After that, the English major was cancelled in *** Normal School, I came to teach in *** High School. While teaching here, I self-learnt higher degree courses, firstly a diploma, then a Bachelor degree. I graduated from my degree course in around 1996 or 1997. The college for my diploma course is *** TV university and that for my degree course is *** Institute of Education. My major was English Education for both courses. Anyway, I have to have further education in order to get a higher degree. You need to have higher degrees in order to get various professional titles.

So you have been teaching high school courses since then?

No, I taught junior school grade 1 students when I just came here. At that year, a new textbook was implemented. The teacher in charge of teaching and research of the city was ***. He observed my teaching when I was in *** Normal School and liked it somehow. Therefore, he wanted me to teach from grade 1 as a role model

sort of teacher. There are many teachers from the suburb area coming to observe my teaching. This experience has helped my teaching a lot. Because, I'm always thinking, there are so many teachers here, how can I use different activities and methods to make the lesson more interesting? Some of the activities are very new at that time. I was just wondering how could I design activities that were both interesting and effective for learning? This experience was really helpful for me.

When you started teaching, were there any things that had left you a deep impression that you can not forget them even until now?

I remember when I was teaching grade 3 students, there was a lesson and the title was "Can I help you, mum?" In order to make the teaching more interesting I brought aprons and other things from home to let students perform. I didn't know such concept as "role play", I just knew students might be interested in acting. When I was studying in the foreign language school one kind of teaching methods was performing and I really enjoyed it.

I remember one day a teacher said that when she started teaching in the beginning, a student refused to wipe the blackboard after her request, then she refused to teach. She can't forget this. Did you have the same experience?

Never. Maybe this is related to my personality. If there was such a circumstance I may just go over it simply. I may wipe the blackboard and say: "Don't let me wipe the blackboard…" If students refuse to do something and you just request them to do it, students may just do the opposite. This will make the circumstance difficult for both students and yourself.

When you just started teaching, was there any teacher that was particularly helpful to you? For example, role model that help you to teach?

There was team leader named *** and he had left me a deep impression, especially his hardworking. He didn't often do other things apart from teaching. He had strict requirements on students and taught really hard---always grind (a Chinese way of expression to say that a person does the same thing very often). Actually he was a person with both praise and critique…He marked every assignment paper himself, he requested students to recite every article. He went to the classroom and asked students to recite each article to him one by one. Some people might say he had too strict requirements on students, but he claimed that this was responsible for the students.

So he was sort of role model for you? Just like how you treat other teachers now?

Of course, he didn't treat me as how I treat other people right now. At that time examination paper wasn't printed and we had to use wax paper. He always asked me to write questions on the wax paper for him. Sometimes I had to work until 2am. At that time, many people wrote to him to ask about methods of teaching. He often asked me to reply these letters. I just mentioned he didn't do many other things apart from teaching, therefore I had to do a lot of things for him. However, I found it was a kind of improvement for myself as well. His hard-working spirit had left me a deep impression. Of course I won't do exactly the same way as him (for example, grind and grind). Sometimes I am confused as to how to teach, I would go back to the foreign language school to observe some classes. I often wrote to my classmates to discuss our teaching and sent to each other our teaching materials. Most of the ideas of teaching came from the foreign language school that I studied. When I was teaching I often thought how I learnt myself...Maybe this was related to my personality. The foreign language school paid great attention to the application of language, especially oral English.

You said sometimes how you learnt yourself, so how did you learn?

I was a good student, basically I recited whatever teachers requested us to recite. I also recited those that were not requested by teachers. I was seen reading under the street lamp at night. I studied in ***, but I didn't have too much time to travel around ***. I had just been to several tourism attractions that were close to the school...

When you were studying in * Foreign Language School, did any teacher (apart from the Dean that you mentioned) that had left you a deep impression?**

Yes, the pronunciation teacher. We studied pronunciation for the whole term. Our teacher, now he is an interpreter in UN, was the pronunciation model of the whole school, native British excellent. The procedure of his classes were playing the record, students simulating the reading, correcting the pronunciation, dictating phonetic symbols, dictating paragraphs and dictating paragraphs...In the beginning, he would read three times before the dictation, then twice, finally one time...From phonetic symbols, words, sentences, paragraphs and articles...one stage by one stage...He has very good English and teaching skills. He was also a good person. He also had strict requirements on teaching...

There's also our intensive reading teacher. He didn't merely teach us vocabulary and translation. He gave us moral education as well. When he was teaching, he didn't merely read, translate the sentences and talk about the words, he asked us questions as well. This was innovative at that time.

Anything like group discussion?

No, not at that time. It was developed later on.

Ok, can you talk about your typical day? What is your daily routine?

I normally get up at 5:45 to 5:50 and wait for the school bus before 6:39, fetch some documents from the office and arrive at the classroom before 7:00am. There's morning reading of English on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and there's evening reading of English and Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In the morning, I have two classes to teach. After lunch, I go to the classroom to hand out students' assignment, see what they are doing, and ask students to recite articles in the text book to me one by one. In the afternoon, I prepare for next day's teaching. After dinner, we have listening starting from 6pm and evening reading starts from 6:20pm. I need to tell students exactly what they need to read for each day. If you don't tell them, they don't know what to read.

Afternoon is more or less my own time. I usually prepare lessons and correct students' assignments. Think what I'm going to teach, to present in what way. It is more complicated now because we need to let students participate. They need to be the master in learning, they need to actively participate in the classroom. Teachers are just guiders. Students will be sleepy if they are just asked to listen to what teachers are saying. There are a lot of things to do in each lesson. I think in 45 minutes' teaching, at least 30 minutes need to be very effective. There might be some waste time in another 15 minutes.

Planning lessons is sometimes endless. Sometimes I start thinking just after lunch. Firstly the sketch, then collect information, prepare and finally present. I need to spend at least 2 hours' in preparing the lessons. This is minimum. Sometimes I can't finish until 11-12pm. For example, I spent a long time in preparing yesterday's teaching. I have been thinking as to how to use the information in the textbook and how to change it and what should be taught. The process of thinking is from suffering to happy.

Normally when do you prepare your teaching? One day in advance or long before?

Normally, I plan my teaching one day beforehand. I can't prepare my teaching one or two days beforehand. I don't know what to teach, I can only prepare after I have finished today's teaching. When I am teaching, I observe students' reactions and responses, then I will know how well they have mastered the knowledge. After this, I will know what to teach tomorrow and how to teach. Unless you are lecturing, my class needs the active participation of students, so I need to know their levels and their responses. Maybe the head teacher won't be happy to hear this…

Is it the head teacher requires teachers to plan lessons long time beforehand? Will the school spot check teachers' lesson plans?

No. The head teacher didn't say specifically you need to plan how many days in advance, but you need to have a clear short-term aim. For example, what to teach in this class and what needs to be completed before the end of this week/month. I also have this, but the details of teaching can only be decided one day in advance. However, the school needs to check teachers' observation notes of other teachers' lessons. Every teacher needs to observe at least 10 lessons each term and we have to hand in our notes. Of course, I'm observing and taking notes not just for completing the task. I observe at least 20 to 30 lessons per term (she mentioned a few days ago that she observes the foreign teachers' teaching every time when the foreign teacher teaches her class so that she will know better which student participates in the activities and how well they have participated in the activities. She can also help the foreign teacher to involve students in the activities. Of course, she can improve her listening at the same time), plus I need to be the judger in some teaching competitions, so I observe many lessons every year. However, I don't normally hand in the notes. I show them to the head teacher to prove that I have observed lessons, but I take the notes back because I think I need to keep these notes for future reference. To me, I sometimes feel I teach better when you are not observing my lesson because I'm more natural. My teachers also told us not to regard every lesson as high quality class because it is tiring. Just regard them as normal classes so that you will be natural.

You have been teaching for so many years, have you ever chanced your perceptions towards teaching?

Yes. Maybe it is to better involve the students, let them actively participate in the class, let them learn more effectively. I feel for the subject like English, students will not learn just by our teaching. How can make students active learners? This is closely related to teachers' teaching methods. How to carefully design the teaching

to make it natural, authentic? How to present the language situations to make it authentic? For example, I observed a lesson in *** last time, I feel the teacher's greeting is not so authentic. The teacher asked students: "Are you happy?" I feel it's not natural. After having been teaching for so many years, I even feel I don't know how to teach. There are so many frames and constrains, will the students feel boring? Will the teaching be effective? And also exam, if I'm not confined to this the teaching will be more effective. Of course, this is not contradictory. If students are interested in English it will be helpful to the examination as well.

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule with teachers other than participants

1. Which year of teaching are you in? What's your professional title?
2. How do you like the NC? What's the difference between this curriculum and the last curriculum?
--- What is the essence of the NC?
--- What do you think is task-based learning?
--- How do you like this curriculum?
--- Do you think it can be implemented well? Why?
--- How many curriculums have you used? Which do you like the best? Why?
3. What is your favourite way of teaching?
--- How do you teach different elements: vocabulary, reading passage, listening, writing, speaking, others?
--- (For example, any unit) How would you arrange your teaching? (How many teaching hours for what and how many teaching hours for what)
--- What do you want your students to get after a unit's teaching?
--- When you are making teaching preparation, what do you consider? What have influenced your ways of teaching?
--- What are the common classroom activities? How do you think these activities have helped your teaching?
■   Are these your favourite activities? If not, what? And why don't you use it? Are there anything that has limited your teaching?
--- Is there any change in your conception and teaching over the years? If so, what have caused these changes?

Unit2 (book 8)

Cloning

I. Brief statements Based on the Unit

This unit is concerned with a controversial topic cloning ,which will become more important as the years pass. So one of the aim of this unit is for students to be able to examine and discuss some of the issues associated with cloning .This should help them form their own opinions.In this unit the text explain how cloning works in mammals ,the history of cloning ,some of the issues that arise from this and whether it is possible to clone extinct animals.

II. Teaching Goals

1. The students can talk about their opinions about cloning.

2. Practise making acceptance and refusal.

3. The students are albe to use the Appositive

4. The students are able to write a composition about debate.

III. Teaching Plan: (Five Periods)

课时	板块结合范例
The first period	Warming up & listening (WB)
The second period	Reading
The third period	Using language
The fourth period	Learning about language (grammar)
The fifth period	Learn about vocabulary

Period 1   Warming up & Vocabulary

Goals:

1. Talk about clong .

2. Lead the students to be interested in clong .

3. Train the students listening ability.

Teaching procedures:

Step 1 Warming up

   T: You must know about many famous people. But do you know about some famous animals?

   Q:Why is Dolly famous world wide ?

She was c_____while the others were born naturally. It is the copy of another sheep.

about Dolly (Picture 1)

*   the world's first cloned mammal

*   created by Scottish scientist in 1996

*   sparked worldwide interest and concern after its birth

*   many countries including Germany, France etc. have banned human cloning since Dolly 's birth

* died in 2003 because of lung disease there are still many countries doing research on cloning technology

Q:What do you know about the cloning technology?   Its characteristics ?

what is the difference among them ?
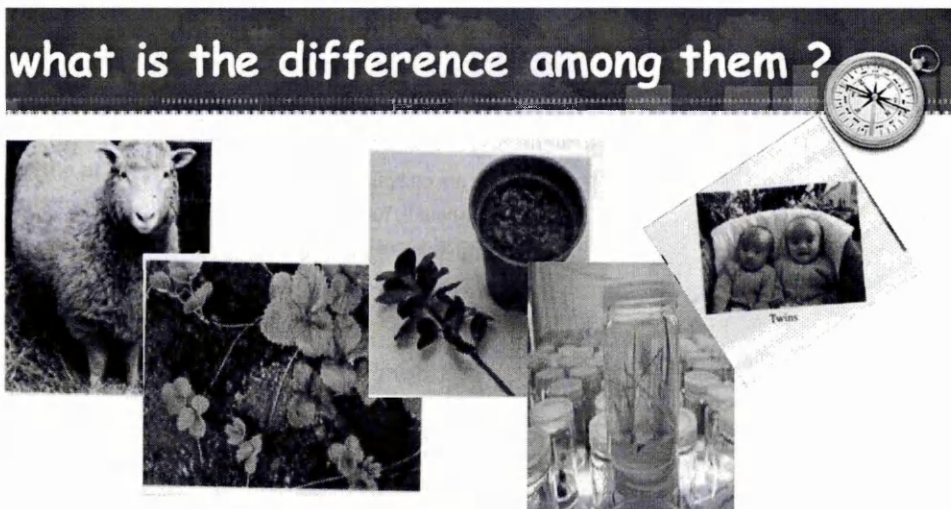
Natural clone ⟷ **Man-made clone**

Cloning is away of making an exact copy of another animal or plant.

Step 2 Pre- listening

Task 1

Turn to page 17 work in groups to discuss "What are you think about cloning? Is it cruel?"

Task 2: The Ss are asked to read fast the questions to find out the listening points first, and then predict two questions :

What is the dialogue about?

Dose Xiao Qing agree with Mary?

Step 3 While-listening

T:Please open your books at page 17. Before you listen to the tape, please read fast the questions to find out the listening points. Pay more attention to these important points while listening. While listening, you'd better make notes of the listening points.

Ask students listen to the tape.While listening, you'd better make notes of the listening points.

A few minutes later.

T:Now, I'll play the tape twice. Please listen carefully and pay more attention to the important points. You may make notes while listening. Notes taking are helpful for you to remember each oft the important points. After listening twice, check the answers and explain some difficult listening points if necessary.

After checking the answers, listen again and then finish the chart in exercise 2

Mary's ideas about cloning	Xiao Qing's ideas about cloning
1 cruel to animals	1 scientists are doing a wonderful job
2 makes them do unnatural things	2 may bring back extinct animals
3 it is a "dead end"	3 problems because it is a new science
4 clone born at age of "mother"	4 scientists need encouragement
5 weakens the species	5 it may provide medicine for illnesses

Step 4 Speaking

1. Discuss the given topic in groups of four.

1) What do you think of the new kind of technology?

2) Does it have advantages or disadvantages?

That's a good idea.

I cannot accept your argument

because…

I support… because…

No, I can't agree with… because…

I agree with…because….

How can you believe that?

Your argument has convinced me because…

I would like to agree with you but…

I don't care for your ideas because…

No, that is not reasonable because….

That's a great idea!

Your ideas sound very encouraging to me.

These useful structures may help you!

Step 5 Listening II (P54)

(Turn to page 54) The Ss are asked to read fast the question and multiple answers to find out the listening points first, and then listen to the tape twice to choose the best answer.

"Please open your books at page 54. Before you listen to the tape, please read fast the questions and multiple answers to find out the listening points. Pay more attention to these important points while listening. While listening, you'd better make notes of the listening points.

(A few minutes later).

"Now, I'll play the tape twice. Please listen carefully and pay more attention to the important points. You may make notes while listening. Notes taking are helpful for you to remember each oft the important points. After listening twice, check the answers and explain some difficult listening points if necessary.

Step6 Listening task (p57)

First asks the Ss to read these sentences and then listen to the tape and decide if they are facts or opinions.

"Now turn to page 57, there're 10 questions. You should form the habit of going through the questions and the answers to get the important listening pints. Yes? And make notes if necessary. Ok?

Play the recording and check the answers with the class.