A STUDY OF CHINESE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN CHINA—

THEIR BELIEFS AND CONCEPTUAL CHANGE

by

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ABSTRACT

This research explored Chinese college English teachers' beliefs and conceptual change in relation to the government-mandated shift from the traditional grammar-based approaches to language teaching to communicative language teaching (CLT).

This study employed an ethnographic approach and was conducted at a university in China. Six Chinese college English teachers agreed to participate in a three-month study during which their classroom teaching was observed and they were interviewed about their teaching experiences, understanding of the new teaching methods, and interpretations of the curriculum change. Three patterns of conceptual change were found in their beliefs about language teaching and learning: (a) change in teaching methods but no significant change in conceptions and beliefs, (b) change in both teaching methods and conceptions accompanied by painful conceptual conflict, and (c) change in both teaching methods and beliefs and an acquisition of broader curriculum perspectives. The stories and experiences of the participants indicate the complex, non-linear nature of conceptual development in their beliefs about language teaching. They struggled to expand their conceptual space by dwelling in the Zone of Between—between Chinese and Western educational traditions, between social, cognitive, and psychological processes of conceptual growth, between teaching and educating, and between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-in-use.

This study is expected to have suggestions for ongoing college English teaching in China, provide insight for the research of teachers' beliefs related to curriculum development in other cultural contexts, and inform language teacher education and development programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my parents who cherish education.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW: COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN CHINA

In 1986, after four years of English language education in the Department of British/American Language and Literature, I was assigned to teach English language in a comprehensive university in Xi'an, a big city located in Northwest China. I taught non-English major students—those who studied in all disciplines except English language and literature. The English programs for non-English major students in Chinese tertiary institutions were once called "public English" or "foundation English."

In my first year of teaching, some changes were made in the area of "public English" in our university. First, the term public English was replaced by "college English"; in China, the word college means undergraduate education. Second, college English teaching was divided into six bands at two levels: Bands 1-4 as basic level and Bands 5-6 as advanced level. The courses from Bands 1-4 were compulsory for all students, and the courses at Bands 5-6 were optional for those who had completed learning at Band 4. Third, at each band, college English was taught in three different courses: Intensive Reading, Extensive Reading, and Listening and Speaking. These courses were the traditional courses for English major students in English language departments; the appearance of these courses within "public English" indicated a leap in the requirements and learning objectives for non-English major students. Fourth, nationwide, unified, and standardized College English Tests called CET-4 and CET-6 were established to assess students' learning results after their completion of the college English Bands 4 and 6. Fifth, new textbooks were developed and distributed to all college English programs in Chinese tertiary institutions.

I came into the teaching profession at a turning point of college English teaching in China. Everything was different from the conventional "public English": new curriculum, new textbooks and teaching objectives, new types of assessment, and the requirement of new teaching methods. In that humid and hot summer of 1986, I was troubled by the question: How should I teach college English?

I went to observe an experienced teacher in the department. He was explaining the grammar and structure of every English sentence and translating every sentence into Chinese; he would occasionally stop to ask a few students to do translation. I noticed that some students were dozing off and some others were reading something irrelevant to the class. I was disappointed, and I wondered: Is this how English is taught, grammar plus translation? I did not have any knowledge about language teaching theory and methodology, but I decided not to teach like that. I hoped to make my English class interesting to my students, although I did not know how.

Soon after I started teaching, I had a chance to learn a new teaching method by watching teaching demonstrations on video in my department. The new method was called "functional-notional," and the teachers in the video demonstrated how to teach Intensive Reading, Extensive Reading, and Listening and Speaking with the new textbook *College English*. After two afternoons of video training, I still could not figure out the meaning of "functional-notional" teaching. I asked my colleagues, and none could give me a clear definition or description. The demo teaching in the video showed a few techniques of teaching reading and listening, but it did not arouse any deep thinking about language teaching.

In the 1990s, "communicative language teaching (CLT)" and "student-centered teaching" were the hot terms. However, just like "functional-notional," these terms were like empty shells; no one in our department explained what theories they rested on; no one demonstrated them in real classroom instructions. Most of our teachers took CLT to mean teaching oral skills. My understanding of student-centered teaching was that the teacher should not talk all the time but should allow the students more time to answer questions and practice what they had learned in class. As we teachers in our department had a heavy teaching workload but few opportunities to attend conferences or training programs, I put aside those terms and considered them passing fads in the field of language teaching.

Gradually I developed my own way of teaching. I transferred a lot of my learning experience to my classroom teaching. I would explain some complex sentences by analyzing their grammatical structures so that the students could accurately understand the text. I would require the students to memorize some beautiful paragraphs so that they could speak and write good English. I would organize discussions and dramas so that they could practice oral English. Nevertheless, the learning outcomes of my students were disappointing. Most of them did pass the CET-4, but they could barely use English to express themselves orally or in writing, nor could they understand English TV news. Dissatisfied with my teaching, I started to ask myself: What did I know about language teaching? Did I ever make any improvement in teaching methodology and in understanding of language teaching during these years of curriculum innovation?

With these questions in mind, I chose to study curriculum at Queen's University for my Ph.D. I became interested in teachers' beliefs and conceptions of teaching in

curriculum development and decided to do research on Chinese college English teachers'

development of beliefs and conceptions about language teaching in the context of the

changes in the college English curriculum in China. I conducted this study to try to

answer my own questions, which I believe are also the questions that puzzled and are still

puzzling my colleagues who are English language teachers in China. The research

questions for my dissertation regarding professional growth arose from my teaching

experience and reflections:

1. What did the Chinese college English teachers do to apply CLT to their teaching?

2. How did they make sense of the communicative methods they used in classrooms?

3. What conceptual changes, if there were any, took place in comparison with their prior beliefs about language teaching?

4. What factors contributed to the changes in beliefs and conceptions of teaching, if such conceptual changes took place?

I conducted this study in Anhua University (pseudonym) in South China, where

the college English programs were under change. I worked with 6 Chinese college

English teachers, five female and one male, whose initial teaching experience was similar

to mine. They all had undergraduate education in English language and literature and

Master's education in applied linguistics in graduate schools. They entered language

teaching profession between 1985 and 2000, and their language teaching experience

varied from 6-19 years by the time I worked with them in 2005. Table 1 illustrates the

biographic information of these participating teachers, whose names are pseudonymed in

this study.

Table 1

Biographic Information of the Participants from Anhua University

Participants	Gender	Age	Education	Years of Teaching
Lin	Female	40	B.A.	19
Ouyang	Female	40	B.A., M.A.	18
Song	Male	37	B.A., M.A.	13
Jing	Female	36	B.A., M.A.	13
Yuan	Female	33	B.A., M.A.	9
Murong	Female	30	B.A., M.A.	6

Note. B.A. = Bachelor of Arts degree; M.A. = Master of Arts degree.

A brief review of college English education in China will locate my personal teaching experience and my inquiry in a specific moment of history. The history of college English in China will provide a wider discourse for examining the development of the Chinese college English teachers in the context of curriculum innovation.

College English Teaching in China

English language education in China has experienced fluctuations in relation to the fall and rise of political movements and the change of economic policies since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The history of college English teaching can be divided into three stages: (a) from 1949 to 1977, when English language teaching was generally ignored; (b) from 1978 to 1985, when college English education was restored; and (c) from 1986 to the present, when English language education

underwent substantial change under the unified guideline of the National College English Curriculum (NCEC).

College English Teaching from 1949 to 1977

The political movements from 1949 to 1977 heavily influenced the college English language development in Chinese tertiary institutions. During the 1950s and the early 1960s, "the Cold War chilled Sino-American relations and the Soviet influence was at its height" (Ford, 1988, p. 25). The status of the college English program deteriorated when China developed a close relationship with the Soviet Union. Russian became the primary foreign language for Chinese university students. Even though other foreign languages were built into college and university curricula during this period, they tended to be replaced exclusively by college Russian (Dzau, 1990; Yan & Zhang, 1995). The explanations for the preference of Russian to English can be found both in government political policies and in the social psyche of Chinese people. The partnership between China and the Soviet Union as brother countries that headed the communist camp determined the importance of the Russian language in political, economic, and commercial cooperation with the Soviet Union.

With the breakup of Sino-Soviet solidarity in the late 1950s, English became a recognized subject and a primary foreign language in China. Many universities and colleges started to restore or establish English programs for the students of arts, sciences, and engineering. Those who had learned Russian in high schools had to start from the ABCs when entering higher educational institutions (Sun, 1996). "In 1964, the Ministry of Education (of China) established a 7-year program for the teaching of foreign languages, giving English top priority in recognition of its increasing popularity around

the world" (Ford, 1988, p. 25). But soon, English teaching lost its status again due to the Cultural Revolution, a political and ideological movement lasting from 1966 to 1977 (Ford, 1988; Sun, 1996; Yan & Zhang, 1995). During this period, Chinese higher education came to a halt: all colleges and universities stopped enrolling new students for a few years. Even though the college English (then called public English) courses were still on school curricula, classroom instruction was seldom conducted in meaning.

During the 1960s and the early 1970s, the classroom instruction of public English employed the Grammar-Translation Method. This method "had dominated Chinese foreign language instruction since the nineteenth century" and focused "on learning about English, not learning to use it" (Ford, 1988, p. 26). Also in this period, the Audiolingual Method—a sequenced presentation of grammatical points, oral pattern drills, and a controlled vocabulary—gained its initial influence in China. However, its implementation was flawed because of the resistance from teachers who "fiercely clung to their traditional role of lecturing to a passive group of learners" (Ford, 1988, p. 27). The start of the Cultural Revolution cut short the agenda for innovating the college English curriculum.

Resuming College English from 1978 to 1985

The year 1978 marked the turning point in the modern history of China. In 1977, the Chinese Government declared an end to the Cultural Revolution and decided to shift the nation's attention away from political struggles for ideological purification and toward social and economic development. In 1978, the Chinese Government initiated reforms and the open-door policy to pursue economic development and modernizations in industry, agriculture, national defence, and science and technology (Adamson, 1995;

Cheng, 1988; Cowan et al., 1979; Ford, 1988; Sun, 1996; Wang, 1999; Yan & Zhang, 1995). Chinese educational systems, which had been damaged during the Cultural Revolution, were restored, and college English teaching was reinvigorated (Yan & Zhang, 1995).

The English language was believed to be an important tool to help modernize China (Adamson, 1995; Cowan et al., 1979; Ford, 1988; Wang, 1999; Yan & Zhang, 1995). Cowan et al. (1979) observed that "English language is viewed as a necessary tool which can facilitate access to modern science and technology advances, and as a vehicle to promote understanding between China and other countries where English is a major language" (p. 466). One key element in the drive to modernization was "to have a significant number of competent users of English in a whole range of professions, business, workplaces and enterprises" (Wang, 1999, p. 45). In such circumstances, the college English programs were viewed as an important part both in the higher educational system and in the development of the nation. The 1980s witnessed a series of hastened epoch-making issues in China's college English education: the establishment of the China Association of Teaching Foreign Languages to Non-Foreign-Language-Major Students; the formulation of the college English teaching curriculum in draft in 1980; the publication of the revised National College English Curriculum (NCEC) in 1986 based on the 1980 version, and its implementation in the same year (Yan & Zhang, 1995, pp. 36-37).

The initial steps in the development of college English proved difficult due to China's long-time isolation from the international world for political and historical reasons. Although the reform and the open-door policy called for a rapid development of

English language teaching (ELT) to meet the ambitious modernization goals, the slow development of China's ELT from the 1950s-80s made college English teaching and research incapable of a simultaneous response to teaching methodologies, material development, teacher preparation, and curriculum design. The situation of the college English programs was described by a team of American researchers led by J. R. Cowan. After visiting 21 colleges and universities in five Chinese cities, Cowen and his colleagues (1979) found that there was no standard English curriculum for arts and sciences students. "Generally, 320 hours, 4 hours per week in the first two years of the undergraduate program are assigned to the study of English by non-majors, while the primary objective of these courses is reading" (p. 468). The English teaching materials were seriously inadequate: "For most tertiary institutions, the professional books and periodicals on linguistics, applied linguistics and ELT available to the English teaching staff are scarce and frequently out of date" (p. 469). English language teaching methods were primarily reliant on the grammar-translation method or the audiolingual approach, form-focused, with "rigidly enforced teacher-as-dominant and student-as-submissive role relationships" (p. 474). Their survey result was incorporated by Ford (1988), who was doing research on the situation of English language teaching in a Chinese university during1984-85. He pointed out that pedagogical practices [had] not changed very much in China since 1949 and that Chinese scholars doubted the modern language teaching practices "due to social pressures to maintain the traditional practices, and [they] felt that practices suitable to the United States may not work in China" (p. 29).

Social and economic progress in China during this period demanded an immediate innovation of college English education. The contemporary college English

curricula, which varied from school to school, could not meet the required English proficiency and the demands of university students. With the open-door policy bringing more employment options in foreign enterprises and joint ventures as well as more educational opportunities overseas, students also complained about the dated teaching materials and teaching methods. Either for government interests or for the private plans of individual learners, voices were strong for reforming the college English curriculum in this period of time (Hu, 2002a).

College English Teaching after 1986

The explosive growth of college English teaching in China has been striking since the 1986 implementation of the National College English Curriculum (NCEC) for non-English major students. The NCEC was the first unified English curriculum that "gives a general outline for college English teaching" in objectives, aims, requirements, organization, and assessment (Yan & Zhang, p. 37), and it was the first time since 1949 "that listening, speaking and writing [were] listed as teaching objectives in a national syllabus" (Yang, 1990, p. 157). It was also the first time that students across China had to take the unified College English Test (CET) after completing English courses at the foundation stage.

The boom of college English education was impressive because of the expansion of Chinese tertiary education. The number of new students enrolled in Chinese higher educational institutions increased from 1.02 million in 1979 to 1.88 million in 1986, most of whom took English as a foreign language. By 1988, it was estimated that 50 million people in China were engaged in English study, among whom 40 million were students at various levels of educational institutions (Cheng, 1988).

The popularity of English was reflected not only in the ever-increasing number of English learners, but also in the rigid requirements of schools and employers. In Chinese higher educational institutions, English became a compulsory course under the unified guidance of the NCEC. English proficiency was required for employment in academic and research institutions, government offices, business companies, and other work areas (Cheng, 1988). With the progress in globalization and the increased economic influence of China on the global economy, learning English had become an obsession for college and university students (Wang, 1999, p. 45). To cope with China's rapid development, the State Ministry of Education undertook another revision of the college English curriculum in 1999 and explicitly claimed the goals of college English teaching: develop students' competence in English communication and preparing them for social and economic development in the new millennium (College English Curriculum Revision Team, 1999, p. 175).

Significance of This Study

Since 1978, the English language has gained increasing importance in China from elementary to tertiary education. Many studies have been done to explore how to improve English language teaching and learning, yet few studies have explored the development of Chinese teachers of English in the processes of curriculum reforms. A survey by Yang (2003) reported that, of all the articles published in EFL journals in China in 1999, only 2% were about language teachers and their knowledge base. This contrasted with 24.7% of the articles on pragmatics and motivation related to language teaching and learning, 20.8% on EFL theories and teaching methods, 16% on foreign language educational reform, 16% on syllabus development and foreign language education, 15% on the

influence of cultural factors and multimedia on English language teaching, and 5.5% on academic research and classroom teaching. Even less attention was paid to teachers' beliefs and conceptual development in language teaching. I surveyed the articles in two China's leading ESL/EFL journals from 2003-7 and found a notably small number of studies in the professional development of Chinese teachers of English. This implies that the exploration of English language teachers' beliefs and conceptual development is being ignored at least in China's ESL/EFL research community.

This study, therefore, is significant in two aspects. Firstly, it examines Chinese college English teachers' beliefs about language teaching and explores their conceptual development within the context of curriculum innovation. It thus fills the gap in the research about language teacher development in China. Secondly, this study increases our understanding of how language teachers' beliefs and conceptions of teaching change in the process of using alternative approaches to classroom instruction. I expect that this study will provide insight into and suggestions for the ongoing college English curriculum development in China. This study's findings will have implications for research into language teachers' beliefs in other cultural contexts and for planning of pre- and in-service language teacher development programs.

<p style="text-align:center">Structure of This Dissertation</p>

Following this introductory chapter, I review three areas of research literature related to my study of China's college English teachers. First, I compare seven approaches to language teaching and the philosophical foundation underlying each approach, and I identify the relationship between curriculum innovation and teachers' professional development. Second, considering that the college English teachers in this

study taught at the tertiary level, I review the studies regarding the conceptions of teaching and learning among the teaching faculty in the field of higher educational institutions across cultures. Third, I review the studies about the beliefs and conceptions of teaching and learning among Chinese teachers of English language in relation to the curriculum development in China. Based on these literature contexts, I focus my research on examining the conceptual development of China's college English teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning during curriculum innovation and implementation. In Chapter 3, I present my theoretical framework, which builds upon the studies regarding cognitive development and processes of conceptual change. In Chapter 4, I describe the research methodology of this study, the fieldwork and data collection, and the process and strategies of data analysis. In Chapter 5, I report the findings of this study as case stories of the teacher participants in three types of conceptual change over their teaching careers. In Chapter 6, I discusses the themes that describe what factors facilitated or impeded these college English teachers' conceptual development in language teaching and their professional growth concerning teaching, learning, and being teachers. I end my dissertation with the implications of this study for the dynamic development of language teachers' professional growth and curriculum change and with suggestions for future research in this field.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study of Chinese college English teachers' beliefs and conceptual change is rooted in four areas of literature: (a) approaches to teaching English as a second language, (b) paradigms of language curricula and the underlying beliefs, (c) conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, and (d) the influence of Chinese conceptions of teaching and learning on college English teaching. Locating my review of literature within these areas, I begin this chapter with the clarification of some terms so that the boundary of each term in this study is clearly defined. The review of literature elaborates the research questions that I intend to address in this study.

Terms and Terminology in This Study

Prior to reviewing the literature, I need to clarify some terms related to the ESL/EFL curriculum and language teachers' beliefs. This will be helpful because these terms are confusingly defined and used in various studies of language teaching and teacher development.

Approach, Method, and Technique in Second Language Teaching

In a discussion of approach and method of second language teaching, it is necessary to define approach, method and technique and clarify the relationship between them. These terms, especially approach and method, are interchangeably used in the field of language curriculum and methodology, and, therefore, cause confusion about the concept that each term represents.

Anthony (1963) put approach, method, and technique at three different levels. He associated approach with the theories about the nature of language and language learning. At this level, assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified. Method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be covered, and the order in which the content will be presented. Technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described.

Herrera and Murry (2005) defined an approach as "the philosophical orientation to instruction that serves as a guide for choosing among methods that are considered to be consistent with the tenets of the theory and research that ground the philosophy"; a method is "a body of philosophically grounded and purposively integrated strategies and techniques that constitutes one translation of an approach into professional practice"; and a technique consists of actions or action sequences that are designed to achieve a defined objective as an implementation of an instructional method" (pp. 170-171). The authors used the metaphor of an "umbrella" to illustrate the hierarchical relationship between these terms: appropriate methods fit under the umbrella of a particular approach, and appropriate techniques fit under the umbrella of a particular method.

Anthony (1963) and Herrera and Murry (2005) are consistent in their definitions of approach, method, and technique and the hierarchical levels which these terms represent. In this study, I use these terms as they are defined by Anthony and Herrera and Murry. Based on their definitions, an approach can entail various methods that share the same philosophical foundation about what language is, what knowledge of language should be learned, and how language should be taught. A method can have various

techniques to implement its objectives, and the root of these techniques can go deep into the philosophy hidden behind that method.

Curriculum and Syllabus

In North America, curriculum often is synonymous with syllabus and the two terms are interchangeably used (White, 1988; Yalden, 1987). However, some researchers (e.g., Rogers, 1989; White, 1988; Yalden, 1987) pointed out the distinction between these two terms.

Yalden took the view of Robertson (1971) who defined curriculum as a complex package of "goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs" and syllabus as "a statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself" (see Yalden, p. 29). She preferred to use syllabus to define a non-institutional language course, that is, a language course that is entirely outside an institutional setting (p. 30). White (1988) defined curriculum as "the totality of content to be taught and aims to be realized within one school or institutional system," whereas he defined syllabus as "the content or subject matter of an individual subject" (p. 4). Rogers (1989) held that a syllabus prescribes the content to be covered by a particular course and forms a only small part of the total school program, whereas curriculum is a much broader concept, including "not only what children learn, but how they learn it, and how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment, and in what kind of facilities" (p. 26). In Roger's description, the division between curriculum and syllabus is that of totality and part: A curriculum covers all

aspects of institutional education and a syllabus is about the plan of a course within the curriculum.

It appears to me that the relationship between curriculum and syllabus is more than a course plan serving as a single part in the institutional totality. A curriculum is not just the totality of an institutional program, but it also provides broad and multiple perspectives about education, including second or foreign language education. The word curriculum, in Pinar's (1975) reconceptualization, stems from its Latin root "*currere*":

> The study of "*currere*," as the Latin infinitive suggests, involves the investigation of the nature of the individual experience of the public: of artifacts, actors, operations, of the educational journey or pilgrimage. … *Currere*, historically rooted in the field of curriculum, in existentialism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis, is the study of educational experience. (p. 400)

Pinar (1975) pointed out that the analysis of "*currere*" shifts our perspectives and turns our eyes inward to examine the cognitive development and "organismic change" (p. 412) in the individual experience of education.

Syllabus, on the other hand, focuses on the end of the course and the means to that end. It describes a much narrower concept of learning than curriculum. Rogers (1989) said that the conventional use of syllabus design limits language educators' capacity to design language educational programs. The reasons for this problem are the long-time separation of second language education from other disciplines in general education and the typical definition of second language teaching as applied linguistics rather than as a kind of education (p. 26). Rogers called for language educators to pay attention to curriculum design, development and dissemination issues, so that they can be "fully aware of some major discussions current in professional education circles about educational programs and the nature of educational change process" (p. 26).

In this study, I use the term curriculum to refer to the planning, organization, and development of language programs based on certain approaches in a specific cultural context, for example, the development of the functional-notional approach and the communicative language teaching approach in Chinese educational environment. The curriculum concept enables me to look at language teachers' experience in the development of language programs from a much broader vision of educational, cultural, and cognitive perspectives than the technical perspective of a syllabus can allow.

Teachers' Beliefs and the Terms Related to Teachers' Beliefs

One of the most confusing issues in research on teachers' beliefs is the messy use of terms. The increased number of studies in this area in the past two decades has produced an array of terms to describe teacher beliefs, such as *teachers' principles of practice*, *personal epistemologies*, *personal practical knowledge*, *perspectives*, *images*, *orientations*, *constructs*, *implicit theories*, *commonsense knowledge*, or *maxims*. Clandinin and Connelly (1987) compared their study of teachers with other related studies and found that the various terms were "simply different words naming the same thing"—teachers' personal knowledge (p. 488). Kagan (1990) preferred to use the terms teachers' knowledge and teachers' beliefs synonymously in her analysis of methodological issues in studying teachers' knowledge.

The diversity of terminology indicates the complexity and multidimensional nature of the studies about teacher belief system. Although different in terms, the goals of these studies were to find out what the individual teachers knew and thought about teaching, learning, learners, and subject matter. Thus, the variation in terminology can be viewed as the understandings of teachers' beliefs in the different contexts, perspectives,

and disciplines from which the researchers examined the teachers. Given that a teacher's beliefs are shaped by many factors (Fang, 1996) and display a variety of content and forms (Calderhead & Robson, 1991), these different terms reflect teachers' beliefs in different aspects and on different dimensions. For example, a teacher's beliefs can be embodied in his or her expectations of students' performance or in his or her theories about a particular subject area's learning and teaching (Fang, 1996).

Richardson (1996) took *beliefs* as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (p. 103). Green (1971) suggested that people hold their beliefs in clusters and that each cluster is within a belief system and is protected from other clusters. Richardson's (1996) and Green's (1971) definitions are complementary: the former described the social-psychological property of beliefs, and the latter proposed the structure of beliefs. Kagan (1992), in an attempt to clear up the confusion of terminology, broadly defined teachers' belief as tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught; her definition accommodates teachers' thought, knowledge, decision-making, and conceptions of teaching.

The term *teachers' belief*, as it is used in this dissertation, is defined based on the descriptions of Green (1971), Richardson (1996), and Kagan (1992). Teachers' beliefs are viewed as a cluster of beliefs within a belief system, including the understandings, assumptions, and propositions about teaching, learning, students, and subject knowledge that teachers believe are true. In this definition, teachers' beliefs are in a system, and this system is different from other clusters of beliefs in that it is psychological and

epistemological in nature; teachers' beliefs are embodied in different forms and content and on multiple dimensions.

Approaches to Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL)

Since the 20th century, teaching English as second language (TESL) has undergone changes in approaches and methods. The approaches and methods that affect English language teaching in China include the Grammar-translation Method (GTM), the structural approach, the Audiolingual Method, the functional-notional approach, communicative language teaching (CLT), Content-based Instruction, and Task-based Language Teaching. ESL researchers (e.g., Breen, 1987; White, 1988; Yalden, 1983) put these language teaching methods and approaches into two categories based on the curricular foundations underlying them: grammar-based approaches and communicative approaches. A brief introduction of language teaching approaches and their curricular foundations will help clarify the nature and dimensions of the curriculum innovation in college English teaching in China.

Grammar-Based Approaches and Curricular Foundations

Based on similar curricular foundations (see Breen, 1987; White, 1988), that is, the basic ideas about what language is and how language is learned and taught, grammar-based approaches include the Grammar-translation Method, the structural approach, the Audiolingual Method, and the functional-notional approach.

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)

English language teaching drew on the model for Latin teaching (Richards & Rogers, 2001; White, 1988). Before the 16th century, Latin was the dominant language of education, commerce, religion, and government in the Western world. In the 16th century,

modern languages such as French, Italian, and English gained in importance as a result of political changes in Europe, and Latin declined to a classical language in the school curriculum. "The study of classical Latin and an analysis of its grammar and rhetoric became the model for foreign language study from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries," and Latin was taught in grammar schools (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 3). English was fixed within the grammar school system, which regarded language as a body of esteemed information to be learned with an emphasis on intellectual rigor (White, 1988).

Richards and Rogers (2001) pointed out that the GTM was "based on the assumption that one universal logic formed the basis of all languages and that the teacher's responsibility was to show how each category of the universal grammar was to be expressed in the foreign language" (p. 37). The GTM is known for rigorous teaching of grammar rules and conjugations through rote learning, translation, and repeating simple sentences. White (1988) depicted this method as follows:

> Grammar-translation involves the learning and application of rules for the translation of one language into another. Vocabulary is learned as isolated items and words are combined according to rule. Knowledge of the rule is regarded as being more important than application and the focus is on teaching about the language. There is no oral or pronunciation work, since it is the written language which is taught, and mental discipline is stressed rather than any ability actually to use the language. (p. 8)

Under the influence of classical Latin language learning, the study of grammar of modern languages became an end in itself.

The Structural Approach

The structural approach to language teaching can be traced back to the work of Leonard Bloomfield, an American linguist whose *Language* (1933) laid a foundation for

structural linguistics. Structural linguistics describes language by segmenting and classifying a language into phonological, grammatical, and lexical constituents. Drawing on the tenets of structural linguistics, the structural approach views language as "a system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning," and the grammatical rules operate on these elements to make sentences and the transition of sentences (Richards & Rogers, 2001, pp. 20-21). The goal of language learning is the mastery of these linguistic elements and the mechanical rules that construct the language system.

The GTM and the structural approach derived from different traditions: The former originated from the classical Latin teaching tradition in European schools; the latter developed from a linguistic theory—structural linguistics. Nevertheless, in the field of second language teaching and learning, these two approaches are classified in the same category for their similarity in philosophical foundation, teaching methods, and techniques, which I delineate in the later part of this chapter. In the 1940s, the structural approach was employed in foreign language teaching in the United States and produced the Audiolingual Method.

The Audiolingual Method

This method was developed at the entry of the United States into the World War II because of the needs of the U. S. army for rapidly trained personnel in languages (Herrera & Murry, 2005; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Stern, 1983; White, 1988). An Aural-Oral method was employed to train the military personnel in short but very intensive programs in which they were trained to elicit the basic structure of the language from the conversations with the speaker of the target language. After the war, the Aural-Oral method was combined with behavior learning theory and developed into Audiolingualism.

Herrera and Murry (2005) depicted the Audiolingual Method as follows:

> The audiolingual method presented pattern drills and dialogue designed to develop grammatical structures and vocabulary in a highly sequential manner. Teachers reinforced accurate production and error correction through consistent feedback. Developers of the audiolingual method believed when language learners practiced pattern drills and dialogue designed to develop particular language structures, the new language structures would become a habit. They viewed language acquisition as the memorization and recall of language patterns. (p. 179)

The linguistic assumption of the Audiolingual Method is a structural description of language beginning at a phonological level and finishing at a sentence level; this structural perspective of language suggests the sequence for language learning and teaching. Another assumption of this method is that language habits will form as a result of repeated drills; this assumption is based on the behavioral learning theory of stimulus, response, and reinforcement.

The Audiolingual Method has been popular in teaching ESL/EFL since the 1950s, and it spread to English language classrooms in Chinese universities in the 1960s (Ford, 1988). *English 900* was a representative learning material of Audiolingualism (Richards & Rogers, 2001); it could be seen in Chinese bookstores even into the 1990s. The Audiolingual Method declined in the late 1960s, yet its method and materials are still used in many forms today.

The Functional-Notional Approach

One can argue about how the functional-notional approach should be categorized. One opinion (e.g., Richards & Rogers, 2001; White, 1988; Widowson, 1990l; Yalden, 1983; Yang, 1990) is that this approach belongs to a communicative category; another opinion (e.g., Breen, 1987; White, 1988; Yalden, 1983) is that this approach is rooted in the structural foundation of language learning and teaching. To me, the functional-

notional approach stands between the grammar-structural approach and the communicative approach with its roots in the structural category and its intended end of language for use in the communicative category. As I categorize the approaches and methods of second language teaching based on their philosophical foundations, I prefer to put the functional-notional approach in the grammar-structural category.

The functional-notional concept emerged in the 1970s when communicative competence was proposed as the goal of language teaching. At that time, immigrants and guest workers rushed into the European countries, so that the rationale of language learners' needs was taken into account in foreign or second language teaching. Such language needs led the Council of Europe to develop a curriculum for learners based on the functional-notional concept of language use (Breen, 1987; Savignon, 1991; Yalden, 1983). *Threshold Level* (*T-level*) by Van Ek (1975) and *Waystage* by Van Ek and Alexander (1977) were initiated as the prototype functional-notional curricula.

White (1988) presented a full description of the functional-notional approach. He pointed out that such curriculum organization was no longer determined solely by grammatical considerations, but had to take communicative purpose into account. Two important elements were introduced into the curriculum: (a) a functional aspect, in terms of the intentional or purposive use of language; and (b) a notional aspect, concerning such concepts as time, space, movement, and cause and effect. He explained that a functional-notional curriculum was the interweaving of structural and functional elements, and linguistic structure was still the centre for the organization of the content and sequence of curriculum. To many language teachers, functional-notional approach is "little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching" (Richards &

Rogers, 2001, p. 155), paying "systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language" (Littlewood, 1981, p. 1). As the oral practice is more centered on the structural components than on authentic communication, this approach is called the 'weak version' of communicative language teaching (Hawatt, 1984; Nunan, 1989). Despite its structural paradigm in language teaching, White (1988) still stated that the functional-notional approach started the revolution of language teaching and learning; after all, the practical use of language in social contexts became the content and the objective in syllabus design.

Communicative Approaches and Curricular Foundation

Changes in language teaching methods, as Richards & Rogers (2001) pointed out, have reflected the recognition of changes in learners' needs and the development of theories of the nature of language teaching. The consideration of learners' needs as well as the emphasis on the social function of language in use makes communicative approaches different from grammar-based approaches. In contrast with grammar-based approaches, communicative approaches take the end of language learning to be language use, not "an examination of language structures and their practice" (Yalden, 1987, p. 26). Language is no longer viewed as the knowledge of rules, but as the knowledge of communication, and language learning is no longer merely for linguistic competence, but for communicative performance.

Communicative Competence

Hymes (1972) proposed the concept "communicative competence" as differing from linguistic competence, stating that "communicative competence represent[s] how we [relate] our linguistic competence to our social use of competence" and "the two

systems of knowledge [are] interdependent" (as cited from Breen, 1987, p. 88). Sandra

Savignon (1972), who carried out one of the earliest studies on communicative

competence, defined communicative competence as "functional language: the expression,

interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more

persons belonging to the same (or different) speech community (communities), or

between one person and a written or oral text" (Savignon,1983, p. 303). This definition

indicates communicative competence as being the capacity of making meaning through

interaction with discourse, in contrast with the traditional notion of grammatical

competence as being the knowledge of the structure of a language at the sentence level.

The proposal of "communicative competence" initiated discussions among

language teaching researchers (e.g., Canale, 1983; Savignon, 1983; Yalden, 1998, just to

name a few) about the components that construct communicative competence. Canale

(1983) listed four areas of knowledge and skills: (a) grammatical competence, (b)

sociolinguistic competence, (c) discourse competence, and (d) strategic competence.

Savignon (1983) pointed out that these components are not static knowledge and skills

but interact constantly in communication. She suggested that sociolinguistic and strategic

capacity allows the learner a measure of communicative ability, even before the

acquisition of any grammatical competence. Yalden (1998, p. 7) shared a similar

interpretation of communicative competence, and her presentation of this idea is more

concrete in objectives and more oriented to the social functions and notions of language.

She wrote that the specification of a communicative syllabus should address: (a) language

functions, such as agreeing, persuading, denying; (b) general and specific notions

expressed through language; (c) rhetorical skills, such as extracting information from a

text, obtaining clarification from an interlocutor; and (d) linguistic forms required to express meaning and to communicate. It is important to note that in the above descriptions of communicative competence, linguistic competence is just one part of communicative competence, and, as Yalden (1987) commented, "the key to the understanding of communicative competence is its interactive nature" (p. 21).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Richards and Rogers (2001) stated that communicative language teaching (CLT) starts from a theory of language as communication and that the goal of language learning is to develop communicative competence in the target language. CLT appeared in the changes in the British language teaching tradition in the 1960s and spread to North America and other ESL/EFL contexts in the mid-1970s. Since its appearance, there have been various understandings of CLT and they, in turn, have led to different versions of CLT in classroom application. From the 1970s-80s, CLT was also known by the terms notional approach or functional-notional approach (see also White, 1988; Widdowson, 1978, 1990; Yalden, 1987). In the 1990s, some new approaches emerged, including Content-based Instruction and Task-based Language Teaching.

Richards and Rogers (2001) presented an explanation for the varieties of CLT. They stated that CLT "aims to: (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication" (p. 155). They also maintained that CLT's comprehensiveness makes it different in scope and status from any of the other approaches or methods of language teaching. They explained that for some language teachers, CLT is "an integration of grammatical and functional

teaching"; for others, "it means using procedures where learners work in pairs or groups employing available language resources in problem-solving tasks" (p. 155; see also Breen, 1987; Yalden, 1987). In recent years, some approaches that originally developed in general education, such as Cooperative Learning and Multiple Intelligences, have influenced language teaching methods, and therefore, have enriched CLT methodology.

Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based Language Teaching is based on "the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching" (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 223). Appearing in the 1980s, it draws on the CLT principles that language learning activities should be authentic for genuine communicative purposes and meaningful language tasks (Richards & Rogers, 2001; Yalden, 1987). In this approach, the task is the central unit in the planning of classroom teaching, and "the chief focus of classroom work becomes the performance of tasks rather than the language required to perform them" (Yalden, 1987, p. 66). As interaction is important in communicative competence, the learning tasks need to be communicative in nature. Nunan (1989) defined a communicative task as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (p. 10). A task, such as asking for directions, reading a map, making a phone call, or finding a solution to a problem, should be a communicative act in its own right (Nunan, 1989).

Richards and Rogers (2001) noted the difference in the roles of the learner and the teacher in Task-Based Language Teaching and those in grammatical-based language teaching. The learner is a group participant and a risk-taker—he or she needs to interact

with other learners, negotiate for meaning, and clarify meaning; the teacher designs and selects tasks and assists the learners to function in the activities. In the Grammatical-Structural approaches, the teacher imparts information and transmits linguistic knowledge in classroom instruction, and the students listen to the teacher and internalize what they have learned through oral or written assignments.

Content-Based Instruction

Richards and Rogers (2001) defined Content-based Instruction as "an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus" (p. 204). This approach is grounded in two central principles: (a) the CLT principle that instruction should reflect the learners' needs for language learning and focus on real communication of information, and (b) the motivation principle that "people learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a means of acquiring information, rather than as an end in itself" (p. 207). The content of language teaching, as the authors explained, is not the subject matter of "grammar or functions or some other language-based unit of organization," but "subject matter from outside the domain of language" (pp. 204-205). Herrera and Murry (2005) believed that the Content-based language curriculum is "based directly on students' academic and linguistic needs," and the content of the teaching should integrate "the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language acquisition skills" (p. 188).

As instruction is organized around content, Content-based Instruction appears in various forms in second language programs in accordance with the needs of different groups of language learners and the purposes of different language programs. There are

Immersion Education programs such as French Immersion, Immigrant On-Arrival

Programs, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Programs for Students with Limited

English Proficiency (SLEP), to name only a few.

Weak and Strong Versions of CLT

Up to the 1990s, CLT incorporated some new conceptions from general education

that emphasized learners' autonomy, self-directedness, and the process of learning. New

versions of CLT appeared, such as cooperative learning and procedural curriculum.

Thereafter, CLT was no longer a specific method; it came to be an orientation to a set of

conceptions that were embedded in various approaches to language teaching, which were

combined as "communicative approaches" in academic publications (see Herrera &

Murry, 2005; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Yalden, 1998). These approaches, however,

differ in strength; Howatt (1984) found that there are weak and strong versions of CLT.

> The weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten
> years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their
> English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate
> such activities into a wider program of language teaching. . . . The 'strong' version
> of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is
> acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an
> existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of simulating the development of
> the language system itself. If the former could be described as learning to use
> English, the latter entails using English to learn it. (p. 279)

Yalden (1998) also pointed out the different use of CLT between the functional-notional

approach and the task-based approach, stating that the former is weak in CLT and the

latter is much stronger in application of CLT in classroom instruction.

Given the differences in the use of CLT in language classrooms, CLT marked a

qualitative change in second language teaching. Richards and Rogers (2001) made a

conclusion about the changes brought by CLT:

Common to all versions of Communicative Language Teaching is a theory of language teaching that starts from a communicative model of language and language use, and that seeks to translate this into a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviors, and for classroom activities and techniques. (p. 158)

Paradigms of Language Curricula and Beliefs about Language Teaching

As discussed above, the major trends in language teaching include grammar-structural approaches (Grammar-Translation Method, situational approach, Audiolingualism, and functional-notional approach) and the current communicative approaches (content-based instruction and task-based language teaching). Each approach is based on a philosophy of language curriculum that addresses fundamental questions about what language is and how language is learned and taught (Herrera & Murry, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; White, 1988). White (1988) outlined three parts that a language curriculum encompasses: (a) philosophy and value systems; (b) the main components of a curriculum—purposes, contents, methodology, and evaluation; and (c) a process of curriculum development and evaluation. The philosophy and value systems serve as a foundation for curriculum design and explain the main components of the curriculum and how knowledge is disseminated, produced, and used in the curriculum system.

Propositional Paradigm and Process Paradigm

Approaches to second language teaching and language curricula have experienced a series of changes. Breen (1987) categorized four types of syllabi under two paradigms: formal and functional-notional syllabi in the Propositional Paradigm, and task-based and process syllabi in the Process Paradigm.

The Propositional Paradigm organizes and presents language knowledge and capabilities in a systematic sequence based on logical formulae, structures, networks, rules, or schemas. Breen (1987) stated that this paradigm "maps out knowledge of language and the conventions of language performance" (p. 160). Under this paradigm are the grammar-structure curricula including the Grammar-Translation Method, the Structural Approach, Audiolingualism, and the functional-notional approach. The value system of the formal curricula is rooted in the classical humanistic ideology that language learning is for mastery of the knowledge and rules of language. This value system produces the structural approaches to language teaching methodology that give priority to the systematic study of grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and morphology, and it pursues correctness and accuracy in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

In contrast with the Propositional Paradigm, Breen (1987) described curricula under the Process Paradigm present knowledge about how correctness, appropriateness, and meaningfulness can be achieved during communication within some events and situations. This paradigm attaches importance to *how something is done*. It maps out the procedural knowledge and the underlying operations that enable language learners to communicate in a range of events and situations. The Process Paradigm consists of the communicative approaches that cover Task-based Language Teaching, Content-based Instruction, and other curricula that highlight the process or procedural principles of learning. A task-based curriculum is built within a range of tasks, and learners are assumed to gain their communicative knowledge and skills by undertaking these tasks. The process curriculum goes further by focusing on the procedures of language learning in the actual social situation where learners are self-directed in learning and undertaking

tasks (p. 166). Yalden (1998) stated that the process curriculum is learner-centered and highly communicative in methodology. Table 2 illustrates the two paradigms in language curricula and the underlying beliefs about language, learning, and teaching.

Table 2

Paradigms in Language Curricula

Propositional Paradigm		Process Paradigm	
Grammar-Structural Approaches		Communicative Approaches	
GTM Structural Approach	Functional-Notional Approach	Task/Content-Based Language Teaching	Process/Procedural Curriculum
Language			
Tacit knowledge and capabilities in a systematic plan based on logical formulae, structures, networks, rules, or schemas.		Procedural knowledge and underlying operations for learners to communicate within a range of events and situations.	
Learning			
Mastering the tacit knowledge, rules, and conventions of language and language performance by listening to teachers.		Gaining communicative competence by undertaking a range of tasks in real social situations, through self-directed learning.	
Teaching			
Transmitting/Imparting grammatical rules, structures, vocabulary, phonology, and morphology to learners; emphasizing correctness or accuracy in four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.		Organizing/Facilitating learners to undertake the tasks and helping them engage in learning autonomy; emphasizing correctness, appropriateness, and meaningfulness in communication.	

Note. Synthesized from Breen (1987), Yalden (1983), and White (1988)

The two paradigms of second language curricula are respectively based on two different philosophical foundations of knowledge, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge dissemination. Herrera and Murry (2005) summed up the philosophical foundations for grammar-based curricula and communicative approaches. Underlying grammar-based

curricula, as they stated it, are the classical theories of knowledge as expounded by John Locke and David Hume, who believed that all human knowledge was the product of interaction with the world or environment outside humans themselves and, therefore, knowledge was fixed and external to individuals. The learning theories that shared in this paradigm referred heavily to behaviorism as represented by Skinner, who believed that environment shapes positive behavior by rewarding desirable behaviors and punishing undesirable ones. Language teachers who consciously or unconsciously subscribe to these views of knowledge and knowledge acquisition believe that language is best taught through "sequenced patterns of instruction, the reinforcement of correct language use, and the correction of erroneous language production" (Herrera & Murry, 2005, p. 178).

Underlying communicative-based curricula, as Herrera and Murry (2005) illustrated, are the contemporary views of knowledge and the cognitive and social constructivist theories of learning represented by Vygotsky. In Vygotsky's views, knowledge is not fixed and prescribed but is contextually and interactively variable and constructed. Learners are not external to the knowledge process, but they gain knowledge through guided or independent construction of meaning from experience (Herrera & Murry, 2005, p. 177) and through their interactions with their environment (p. 181). Language teachers who consciously or unconsciously hold these views of knowledge and learning believe that meaningful social and communicative interaction in the target language is a more effective way for students to learn the language than through explicit teaching of structure and vocabulary. In classroom instruction, such teachers "foster a communicative environment conducive to social interaction and the construction of meaning in context," so that language, thought, meaning, and use are treated not as

discrete, separated components but as integrated knowledge and skills that "emulate the natural progress of communication" (pp. 183-184).

Shift of Curriculum and Alteration of Language Teachers' Beliefs

The different paradigms of language curricula and the philosophical foundations underlying them result in quite different language classroom scenarios, learning results, and teacher/student roles (Breen, 1987; Breen & Candlin, 1990; Herrera & Murry, 2005; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Spada, 1990; Yalden, 1987). Language teaching in the Propositional Paradigm feature teacher-centered transmission of linguistic knowledge to students, and learning is characterized by the mastery and reproduction of such tacit knowledge with low ability to use the target language in real communicative environment. The roles of teachers and students are clearly perceived: teachers impart knowledge about language, and the students are passive listeners and receivers of such knowledge. Language teaching in the Process Paradigm is characterized as learner-centered instruction with emphasis on meaningful acquisition of language and communication skills (Herrera & Murry, 2001). Spada (1990) described communicative classroom teaching as follows:

> Classroom organization that is student-focused, with an emphasis on meaning-based practice and the use of authentic materials in which extended texts predominate, is considered to be more communicatively oriented than a classroom that is teacher-centered, where language itself is the focus of instruction and where most materials are pedagogical, with little extended text. (p. 294)

Breen and Candlin (1980) summed up the three roles of an effective language teacher: (a) to facilitate the communication process between all students in the classroom and between the students and the various activities and texts, (b) to function as an independent participant in the classroom, and (c) to act as a researcher and learner who

observes the process of language learning and develops capacities to organize students'
learning.

An important feature that is highlighted in the communicative approaches is
learner-centered instruction. Richards and Rogers (2001) stated: "Another frequently
cited dimension of CLT, its learner-centered and experience-based view of second
language teaching, also has antecedents outside the language teaching tradition per se" (p.
158). Yalden (1987) depicted four areas of considerations in learner-centered instruction:
(a) objectives of learning, (b) rate of learning, (c) method (or style) of learning, and (d)
content of learning. A learner-centered classroom brings to language teachers more
complex situations of teaching and learning than a teacher-centered classroom.

The study of the paradigms of language curricula and their philosophical
foundations suggests that the development of language curricula across paradigms
requires not merely adopting new teaching techniques or teaching materials but also
understanding different philosophies of learning and teaching. To language teachers, it
means changing or renewing their beliefs and conceptions about language, language
learning and teaching, and teacher/student roles in classroom teaching.

Within the context of the college English curriculum innovation in China, the
change from grammar-based approaches to communicative approaches is complex. In
addition to a change in technical aspects, such as applying CLT methods to classroom
teaching and using new teaching materials and techniques, the curriculum change is also
linked to the alteration of other aspects, such as philosophy, values, cultures, educational
traditions, learners, and teachers. The most important among these aspects are the
teachers, whose beliefs about how language should be learned and taught determine what

teaching methods to use and how to use them in the classrooms. Therefore, a change in teachers' beliefs is crucial to curriculum development. Clandinin and Connelly (1999) stated: "If teacher development did not occur, students' development in the direction specified by the reformer would not follow. Teachers, in this view, are as much the target of reform as students" (p. 373). Some ESL educators and researchers (e.g., Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Pennington, 1996) advocated that learning to teach is a lifelong story and that research attention should be directed to how language teachers develop beliefs in their teaching careers over time.

Conceptions of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Teachers' beliefs in post-secondary education are categorized into two general orientations: the teacher-centered and the student-centered (e.g., Kember, 1997; Pratt, 1992a, 1992b; Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992, 2001). Teachers' beliefs exist on multiple dimensions concerning knowledge, teaching, learning, and the link between teaching and learning (Kember, 1997). Teachers' conceptions of teaching, which embody the belief dimensions, can be classified in five categories on a continuum between the two orientations, ranging from teaching as imparting information, transmitting knowledge, facilitating understanding to teaching as changing students' conceptions, and encouraging knowledge creation (Kember, 1997; Samuelowicz & Bain,1992; 2001). A teacher's beliefs evolve from simple to elaborate conceptions of teaching, and a significant conceptual development is from the teacher-centered orientation to the student-centered orientation (Kember, 1997).

Five Conceptions of Teaching

Pratt (1992a) described conceptions as lenses through which we view our world. He pointed out that beliefs are the most abstract aspect of a person's conceptions because beliefs support and constitute a teacher's conceptions of teaching. In his early survey of conceptions of teaching among the teachers of adults in Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Mainland China, he interviewed 253 adults and teachers of adults through a phenomenographic method, which reveals how things look from the point of view of the interview participants. Five types of conceptions of teaching emerged from Pratt's study: *Engineering, Apprenticeship, Developmental, Nurturing, and Social Reform*. In his later studies, he replaced the term *Engineering* with the term *Transmission* (see Pratt, 1998).

In the *Transmission Conception,* the teachers' attention is paid to the content to be taught and to efficient content coverage. Knowledge is believed to be external to learners, and learners are viewed as passive receivers of knowledge. Learning is to be measured with mastery and reproduction of a body of knowledge. The *Apprenticeship Conception* is based on the belief that "a body of established wisdom and knowledge exists in the form of expert practitioners, and it is to be handed down from those who know, to those who don't know" (Pratt, 1992a, pp. 221-222). Similar to the Transmission Conception, in the Apprenticeship Conception, teaching gives first regard to content, and content is embodied in the practice and expertise of teachers. Knowledge is passed through role modeling, and learning happens in the context of practice. The *Developmental Conception* emphasizes the instructional process to promote learners' cognitive development. Teachers facilitate, not control, learning and encourage students' autonomy. Knowledge is to be explored and generated by students from multiple resources,

including teachers and textbooks. The goals of teaching are to change and transform students' understanding and thinking and to prepare them with problem-solving abilities for unpredictable and complex situations. Pratt reported that this conception was visible in North American higher education, but was rare in the interviews within China. The *Nurturing Conception* focuses on "learners' self-concept and sense of being in control of life's events" (p. 214). Central to this conception is a close relationship between teachers and students derived from a sense of caring. Teaching is guided by a primary concern for the worth and dignity of each learner and is balanced between caring and challenging, supporting, and directing. Learners set out the purpose and procedures of learning, and learning is facilitated by a relationship of trust and respect. The *Social Reform Conception* is centered on an explicitly stated ideal or a set of principles that gives a vision of better social order. Teaching and learning are guided by a high goal or a political ideology—the foremost element in the teacher's thinking about teaching.

Apart from the *Social Reform Conception*, the other four conceptions are centered on beliefs about what knowledge is, how knowledge is learned and taught, and teacher-learner relationships. Pratt pointed out that the *Transmission Conception* and the *Apprenticeship Conception* feature teacher-centeredness, with a focus on how teachers present and transmit knowledge to students, whereas the *Developmental* and *Nurturing Conceptions* feature student-centeredness, focusing on how teachers facilitate students' learning and help them generate knowledge on their own. From Pratt's perspective, there is no one conception that is superior to the others and each conception can result in equally good teaching and learning (Pratt, 2001).

Pratt's study classified the conceptions of teaching that were held by the teaching faculty in post-secondary education. In the current climate of international exchange in education and culture, possible change and development might occur in certain types of conceptions in the beliefs of university academics. It is imperative to examine what happens to ESL/EFL teachers' conceptions and beliefs in the context of higher educational institutions in countries such as China, where education tends to be open to new theories and techniques of teaching and learning as it drives to meet the new demands of social and economic development.

Sequence of the Conceptions of Teaching

Samuelowicz and Bain (1992, 2001) put the conceptions of teaching into ordered levels. In 1992, they conducted a study about the conceptions of teaching held by academic teachers in two universities respectively in the United Kingdom and Australia. They conducted semi-structured interviews with 13 instructors. The comparative data analysis resulted in five classifications of conceptions of teaching at ordered levels: (a) teaching as imparting information, (b) teaching as transmitting knowledge, (c) teaching as facilitating understanding, (d) teaching as changing students' conceptions, and (e) teaching as supporting student learning. These five conceptions of teaching were put in two broad categories: teacher-centeredness and student-centeredness. Teacher-centered teaching covers the conceptions at levels (a), (b), and (c), where students' existing knowledge is not taken into consideration. Teachers control knowledge and transmit or impart it to students, the expected learning outcome is the mastery of the transmitted knowledge in quantitative terms, and learning is subject oriented rather than problem-solving oriented. Student-centered teaching covers the conceptions at levels (d) and (e),

where the students' existing knowledge is considered, teaching and learning are interactive processes, and teachers help students construct knowledge through activities. Students learn to make sense of their reality and to adopt the framework of knowledge in the field that is shared by the expertise of their peers and teachers. In 2001, the authors reassessed their earlier framework and evaluated the adequacy of the belief dimensions and categories. They interviewed 39 academic teachers across a range of disciplines in accordance with a "belief" frame: beliefs about teaching, learning, knowledge, and links between teaching and learning. Data analysis resulted in the emergence of seven conceptions of teaching, which overlapped with the five conceptions in their earlier study. The seven conceptions still fall within the two categories of conceptions: teacher-centered versus student-centered teaching and learning (see Table 3).

Table 3

Categories of Conceptions of Teaching at Ordered Levels

Teacher-Centered			Student-Centered			
Impart knowledge	Transmit structured knowledge	Facilitate understanding	Help students develop expertise	Prevent misunderstandings	Negotiate meaning	Encourage knowledge creation

Note. Adapted from "Revisiting Academics' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning," by K. Samuelowicz and J. D. Bain, 2001, *Higher Education, 41,* 299-325.

Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) believed that certain conceptions resulted in desirable teaching in higher education. In a comparison of their classification schemes with those proposed by other researchers (see Biggs, 1990; Dall'Alba,1990; Fox, 1983; Martin and Balla, 1990), the authors found that, although the boundaries of conceptions

of teaching were different in definition in each study, "in all schemes, teaching seen as presenting, imparting, or transmitting information is classified as the lowest whereas teaching conceptualized as a process of bringing about conceptual change in students is classified as the highest" (p. 105).

Developmental Perspective of Conceptions of Teaching

Kember (1997) analyzed a body of research conducted during the period between 1983 and 1994 regarding the conceptions of teaching of university academics. His research synthesized five categories of conceptions of teaching: (a) imparting information, (b) transmitting structured knowledge, (c) student-teacher interaction, (d) facilitating understanding, and (e) conceptual change or intellectual development. He pointed out that the relationship between the five alternative conceptions is hierarchical within a continuum: all five conceptions are under two broad orientations characterized as teacher-centered/content-oriented teaching and student-centered/learning-oriented teaching. The former orientation covers the conceptions of teaching as imparting information and as transmitting structured knowledge; the latter orientation covers the conceptions of teaching as facilitating understanding and as promoting students' conceptual change and development. A transition category, labeled student-teacher interaction, links the two orientations. The five conceptions are on a developmental spectrum. Table 4 illustrates Kember's study.

Table 4

Developmental Model of Conceptions of Teaching

Teacher-Centered/ Content-Oriented		Transition between the Two Orientations	Student-Centered/ Learning-Oriented	
Imparting information	Transmitting structured knowledge	Student-teacher interaction/ apprenticeship	Facilitating understanding	Conceptual change/ intellectual development

Note. Adapted from "A Reconceptualization of the Research into University Academics' Conceptions of Teaching," by D. Kember, 1997, *Learning and Instruction, 7,* 255-275.

Kember's model provides a hierarchical and developmental perspective about the conceptions of teaching. He regarded the five conceptions beneath the two orientations as being on a developmental continuum on which teacher-centeredness and student-centeredness are "an ordered set of qualitatively differing conceptions" (p. 263). He suggested that the boundary between each pair of conceptions—between imparting information and transmitting knowledge or between facilitating understanding and promoting conceptual change—is diffuse, whereas a more significant and qualitative change is in the transitions between the two orientations, that is, from teacher-centered orientation to student-centered orientation. Although he did not explicitly discuss which conceptions produce better teaching, the developmental sequence of his model implies the expected progress from teacher-centered orientation to student-centered orientation— from teaching as imparting information at the lower level to teaching as facilitating students' conceptual change at the higher level on the spectrum.

Kember (1997) and Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) have similarities and complementary elements in their conception models. The two models are consistent in

their classification of the teacher-centered conceptions of teaching; however, the authors have different explanations of "facilitating understanding" and put it in different categories. To Samuelowicz and Bain (2001), "facilitating understanding" means "academics provide readymade understandings and methods for students, show them how to apply the knowledge, and interact with them to ensure that the understanding has taken hold" (p. 320). To Kember (1997), "facilitating understanding" means "facilitating the development of understanding or conceptions of knowledge"; learners "are recognized as individuals rather than as an audience to be lectured to" (p. 267); and the outcome of learning is "applying the knowledge, rather than through regurgitation" (p. 268). Kember's (1997) "facilitating understanding" is closer to Samuelowicz and Bain's (2001) "developing expertise," which means that "the teacher assists the students, through extensive interaction, to personalize their understanding of the material, and to use their new understanding to interpret the world in an altered way" (p. 320). I thus take Kember's (1997) "facilitating understanding" to be the same as Samuelowicz and Bain's (2001) "developing expertise." What is more, Kember (1997) set a "Transition Category" in his model, which bridges the shift from the "Teacher-centered" philosophy to the "Student-centered" philosophy.

Beliefs and Conceptions of Teaching in ESL/EFL in Post-Secondary Education

Although the researchers of the above studies looked at teachers' beliefs and conceptions of teaching from various perspectives and used different terms, there is consistency in the following schemes.

1. All the above reviewed studies categorize teachers' beliefs and conceptions (except for Pratt's Social Reform conception) into two orientations: teacher-centered orientation and student-centered orientation.

2. The authors of the above studies are generally consistent in describing the characteristics of the conceptions under each orientation.

3. The dimensions of the teachers' beliefs and conceptions of teaching in the above studies are convergent in these aspects: beliefs about knowledge, teaching, learning, roles of teacher and students, and teacher-student relationships.

4. Samuelowicz and Bain (1992, 2001) and Kember (1997) classified the teachers' conceptions of teaching at ordered levels, with the conceptions under teacher-centered category at a basic level and the conceptions of student-centered categories at an advanced level. Kember (1997) proposed a developmental perspective, that is, a teacher's beliefs and conceptions of teaching could transfer from a lower level to a higher level, and a significant conceptual change was from the teacher-centered teaching to the student-centered teaching.

Drawing on the conception models by Kember (1997), Pratt (1992a, 1998), and Samuelowicz and Bain (2001), I built a conceptual framework that classifies and defines seven sets of conceptions of teaching on a developmental spectrum: (a) imparting information, (b) transmitting structured knowledge, (c) providing and facilitating understanding, (d) teacher-student interaction and apprenticeship, (e) helping students develop expertise, (f) helping students negotiate meaning, and (g) encouraging students' knowledge creation, conceptual change, and intellectual development. I put these seven conceptions are put into three categories: the teacher-centered category that covers the

first three sets of conceptions (from a to c); the student-centered category that includes

the last three sets of conceptions (from e to g); and the transition category, conception (d),

between the teacher-centered and the student-centered categories. In Table 5, I describe

the sequence and classifications of conceptions of teaching in higher education.

Table 5

Sequence and Classification of Conceptions of Teaching in Higher Education

Teacher-Centered			Transition	Student-Centered		
Imparting knowledge	Transmitting structured knowledge	Providing/ facilitating understanding	Student-teacher interaction/ apprenticeship	Helping students develop expertise	Negotiating meaning	Encouraging knowledge creation, conceptual change, intellectual development

Note. Synthesized from Kember (1997), Samuelowicz and Bain (2001), and Pratt (1992b)

In my earlier discussion about the philosophical foundations of the second

language curriculum, I explained that Breen (1987) classified four types of second

language curricula under two paradigms: Propositional Paradigm and Process Paradigm.

By comparing the conceptions underlying those paradigms (see Table 2) with my

framework of the conceptions of teaching in higher education (see Table 5), I found that

the underlying conceptions of the four types of language curricula are addressed in the

seven conceptions of teaching held by the post-secondary academics. I therefore

integrated the beliefs and conceptions of language curricula with the sequence and

classification of conceptions of teaching in higher education and built the conceptual

framework that is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Beliefs and Conceptions of Teaching in ESL/EFL in Post-Secondary Education

Grammar-Structural Approaches (Propositional Paradigm)			Communicative Approaches (Process Paradigm)	
Teacher-centered Teaching		Transition Stage	Student-centered Teaching	
Grammar-translation Method	Structural Approach	Functional-notional Approach	Task-based/Content-based Language Teaching	Process/Procedural Approach
Imparting knowledge	Transmitting structured knowledge	Teacher-student interaction/apprenticeship; Facilitating understanding	Helping students develop expertise; Negotiating meaning	Encouraging knowledge creation, conceptual change, and intellectual development

In this conceptual framework, grammar-based approaches, which represent the Propositional Paradigm, include the formal and functional curricula and fit into teacher-centered conceptions of teaching; communicative approaches, which represent the Process Paradigm, cover task-based and process curricula and fit into student-centered conceptions of teaching. The functional-notional approach, with its conceptual root in the Propositional Paradigm and its expected learning outcome in language use, fits into the Transition Category because of a certain degree of teacher-student interactions in classroom teaching for the purpose of students' practising the instructed content for immediate use (see White, 1988; Yalden, 1983). The functional-notional approach also covers the conception "providing or facilitating understanding" in that its propositional perspective allows the teacher to "provide readymade understandings and methods for students, show them how to apply the knowledge, and interact with them to ensure that the understanding has taken hold" (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001, p. 320). The functional-notional approach occupies the Teacher-centered Category and the Transition Category and has the features of both structural and communicative language teaching; however, it is at the weak end of the communicative approaches and contains little student-centered conceptions of teaching.

In my framework, these conceptions of teaching in different categories are actually on a developmental continuum. The boundary between the sets of conceptions within one category "is shown as diffuse, implying a relatively easy development" across the conceptions (Kember, 1997, p. 264). The shift from the Teacher-centered Category to the Transition Category can be obvious, but it is not a significant conceptual change.

Significant or qualitative conceptual change occurs only when one's conceptions shift from teacher-centered orientation to teaching to student-centered orientation to teaching.

Influence of the Chinese Literacy Tradition on College English Teaching in China

College English teaching in China has been under the influence of the Chinese educational tradition that is characterized by Confucianism. Lee (2000) pointed out that the Confucian ideology of education has shaped the Chinese conceptions of knowledge, the purpose of learning, and the teacher-student relationship. Pratt's (1992b) study revealed that the Chinese conceptions of teaching featured teacher-centered knowledge transmission. In their research on college English teaching in China, some other researchers (e.g., Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Campbell & Zhao, 1993; Dzao, 1990; Penner, 1995; Wang, 1999) noticed similar conceptions in Chinese college English classrooms. Their studies also indicated that the Chinese conceptions of teaching held by the college English teachers are the major obstacles to their adoption of the CLT approach in college English teaching.

Chinese Literacy Tradition

Chinese educational tradition, characterized by Confucianism and Confucian education, has had a deep influence on conceptions of teaching and learning in China. In his study on the history of education in China, Lee (2000) discussed the ideology of Confucian education regarding knowledge, learning, and the roles of teachers and students. He pointed out that "Confucian teaching is centered on personal enrichment rather than on its usefulness for securing recognition of or benefit to one's self" (p. 2). Learning is for oneself: for personal joy of learning and for moral advancement. Under such influence, "knowledge of things" dominated the educational concerns. The

embodiment of this idea in traditional Chinese literacy education was that most texts were designed to teach the literary meaning of the term: the knowledge of words and names and the moral implication of the texts.

A Confucian attitude toward knowledge, teaching, and learning determines the roles of teachers and students. A good teacher is expected to "give clearly structured, information-packed lectures with much information written on the blackboard" (Hu & Grove, 1999, p. 7). He or she should have passion for knowledge, be responsible for students, and meet their desire for learning. Pratt (1992b) elicited similar findings from his study of Chinese conceptions of teaching. He conducted semi-structured interviews with 57 Chinese scholars and adult educators both in China and in Canada (some were visiting scholars in Canada). He found that the Chinese conceptions of teaching were conceived as (a) delivery of content, (b) development of learners' personality, and (c) a particular type of relationship between teacher and learner. He commented that the first two conceptions positioned teachers at the center of the educational process: teachers as transmitters of knowledge and as role models of particular values; these two conceptions are consistent with his teacher-centered models of Transmission and Apprenticeship Conceptions, which were discussed earlier. He said that the third conception positioned learners as the focal point and embodied the learner-centered Nurturing Conception. However, in my understanding and personal experience, the nurturing conception in China is not necessarily learner-centered. Instead, it is framed in the hierarchical relationship between teachers and learners: caring, guiding, and helping pass from teachers and experts as authority to students as knowledge receivers who show respect for teachers' knowledge and gratitude for their caring.

Intensive Reading Course in College English Teaching

The embodiment of the Chinese literacy tradition in college English teaching is the Intensive Reading course, which focuses on "the academic study of grammar, literature, and in-depth analysis of literary texts" (Burnaby & Sun, 1989, p. 222). The Intensive Reading course features teacher-centered lectures that transmit a substantial knowledge of English. Wang (1999) described the general classroom procedure that the Intensive Reading course follows: The teacher explains the rules of grammar at great length, analyzes the function of words and the collocations of words and phrases, and cites many example sentences both for the students to memorize and to support the teacher's explanation because neither the teacher nor the students can tolerate the slightest ambiguity of meaning.

Even though the Intensive Reading methods have been the target of much criticism from some Chinese and Western ELT professionals (e.g., Dzao, 1990; Li, 1984; Penner, 1995; Wang, 1999), Chinese college English teachers and university students held the belief that the Intensive Reading course was important and effective for teaching and learning the English language. Campbell and Zhao (1993) investigated the attitudes of Chinese instructors and students towards the practice in Intensive Reading through questionnaire, interviews, and observations. Their findings reflected a general positive attitude towards the Intensive Reading course. The participating instructors in their survey believed that students' English proficiency was increased with the number of words or texts mastered. It is evident that such beliefs about language teaching and learning correspond to the traditional Chinese literacy pedagogy that focuses on memorizing words and texts of exemplary writing from gems of literature.

The roles of teachers and students in Chinese college English classrooms are discussed in Cortazzi and Jin's (1996a; 1996b) studies about the culture of learning in China. The authors observed English classrooms ranging from kindergarten to university levels and interviewed teachers at these different levels. Their data analysis revealed the Chinese expectations of good students and good teachers, at least in English language classrooms. From the teachers' expectations, a good student should be diligent in their study; respect, obey, and cooperate with teachers, and develop good morality and personality. From the students' expectations, a good teacher should have deep knowledge in his or her subject areas; demonstrate a moral character worthy of imitation; and be strict, fair, and parent-like. "Learners see themselves as apprentices: study is strongly based on imitation of the teacher as master or model; they internalize knowledge through close attention and memory, believing that understanding and the ability to use English creatively will come later" (1996b, p. 156). These teacher and student expectations are consistent with the traditional Chinese beliefs and conceptions of teaching identified in both Lee's (2000) and Pratt's (1992b) studies.

Difficulties in Implementation of CLT in China

Several studies (e.g., Anderson, 1993; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Hu, 2002b; Liao, 2000; Liu, 1998; Penner, 1995) reported that the Chinese college English instructors and students held negative views about the CLT approach. The researchers pointed out that the competence-oriented and student-centered conceptions of teaching are different from, even opposite to, the Chinese knowledge-oriented and teacher-centered conceptions of teaching. Burnaby and Sun (1989) conducted a study about Chinese English teachers' views of CLT based on data collected from interviews with 24 Chinese instructors of

English. The authors reported that, given their favorable comments on the CLT approach, the Chinese instructors found it hard to apply CLT in the Chinese context because of its difference from, even opposition to, Chinese educational beliefs and practices. The interviewees mentioned that many CLT activities seemed like games rather than serious teaching, and that they would feel upset because "they are not teaching" when using such activities (p. 229).

Another factor that made CLT difficult to apply in China, according to Burnaby and Sun's report, was the large class sizes (usually 50-70 students). The large-size class might be the result of Chinese attitudes towards knowledge and knowledge acquisition. Penner (1995) investigated the conflict when using CLT methods in the college English classroom with Chinese classroom culture in terms of beliefs, pedagogy, and structure. "If it is expected that the teachers' role is to transmit knowledge (belief), then the models in the class will be teacher-centered (pedagogy). With this teaching role, the number of students (structure) can range from 10 to 70 without challenging or affecting the beliefs or pedagogy" (pp. 4-5). Liu (1998) supported Penner's perspective that the large-size class was derived from educational beliefs rather than the limited resources. He pointed out that "even in wealthy Taiwan, the average class in state schools still has between 40-50 students, due to the beliefs that large numbers can be taught well with predominantly lecture-style teaching" (p. 5).

The above studies indicate the influence of Chinese educational tradition on the college English teaching in China and the difficulties of implementing the CLT approach in Chinese college English classrooms. The conceptions of college English teaching in China are mainly teacher-centered transmission of structured knowledge of English

language in terms of grammar, structure, and vocabulary. The roles of teachers and

students are clearly set in the shadow of Confucian ideas of teaching and learning:

knowledge was external to learners and was passed to learners from teachers; the teachers

were the knowledge holders and had the authority. As a result, the use of the CLT

approach in college English instruction mostly came into difficulty because the student-

centered conceptions of teaching were not compatible with the philosophy and values of

Chinese beliefs of education regarding knowledge, learning, teaching, the roles of

students and teachers, and the relationship between them. Chinese college English

teachers need a significant change in beliefs and conceptions of teaching to embrace the

student-centered CLT approach and apply it in their classrooms. This leads to the

research questions that I intend to address in this study. Because the college English

curriculum has undergone innovation for the past 20 years, and its development is still

going on, what has happened to the college English teachers in the curricular innovation?

What changes have taken place in their classroom instruction and to their beliefs and

conceptions of language teaching? These questions motivated me to explore Chinese

college English teachers' conceptual development in the context of curriculum innovation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed four areas of literature related to Chinese college

English teachers' beliefs and conceptions of teaching: (a) the approaches to teaching

English as a second or foreign language, (b) the paradigms of language curricula and

beliefs about language teaching, (c) the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher

education, and (d) the influence of Chinese conceptions of teaching and learning on

College English teaching in China. In the review of the approaches to second/foreign

language teaching, I delineated the trend of second language teaching that developed from grammar-based approaches to communicative approaches, and I documented the theoretical foundations underlying each approach. Delineation of this area of study is helpful to the understanding of the conceptions of language teaching and learning hidden in the beliefs of language teachers who embrace certain types of curricula. In the previous review of paradigms of language curricula, I highlighted the philosophical foundations within which the curricula in the Propositional Paradigm are qualitatively different from those in the Process Paradigm in regard to knowledge, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge dissemination. This area of study indicates the necessity of a deep level of change in language teachers' beliefs when a language curriculum develops from a grammar-based approach to a communicative approach. As college English education is a part of higher education, a review of teachers' conceptions of teaching in post-secondary education locates the understanding of Chinese college English teachers' beliefs and conceptual development in the context of teacher development in post-secondary education across cultures. Based on the classifications of the conceptions of teaching in post-secondary academics, I built a conceptual framework to delineate the conceptions of teaching in ESL/EFL in higher education. Finally, in a review of Chinese literacy tradition and its influence on college English teaching, I highlighted the problems of applying CLT in China. The studies in this area indicate the need for Chinese college English teachers to transform their beliefs and conceptions to language teaching in order to develop CLT in their college English classrooms.

The review of these areas of study introduces my research questions: What has happened to Chinese college English teachers' beliefs about language teaching in the

ongoing curriculum development? If any, how did conceptual change take place? To understand and examine Chinese college English teachers' beliefs and conceptual change, I build a theoretical framework in the following chapter by drawing on the studies of conceptual development.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Considering that the focus of this study is Chinese college English teachers'
conceptual development through adopting an alternative language teaching methodology
because of curriculum innovation, I intend to build a theoretical framework based on the
discussion of the cultural context of modern Chinese education and the theories and
perspectives of individual conceptual development. In the first section of this chapter, I
briefly discuss the Confucian educational tradition and the Western educational influence
that together have constructed the hybridity context of current Chinese education. It is in
such hybrid educational traditions that Chinese college English teachers shape their
beliefs about teaching, learning, and being a teacher. This hybridity of modern Chinese
education forms the perspective from which I view how Chinese college English teachers
interact with the approaches to language teaching that have been imported from the West.
In the second section of this chapter, I discuss four conceptual development models and
perspectives respectively by Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982), Turner (1980),
Vygotsky (1978), and Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008). Drawing on their models,
I build a conceptual change framework in which I examine how Chinese college English
teachers develop beliefs and conceptions of language teaching in the context of
curriculum innovation in China.

Chinese Educational Tradition and Western Influence on Modern Chinese Education

When it comes to English language teaching (ELT) in China, language educators
and researchers (both Chinese and Western) frequently mention the influence of the

Confucian tradition on language teaching and learning in China. As I discussed in Chapter 2, some researchers (e.g., Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1984; Penner, 1995; Yu, 1984) have pointed out that the Chinese tradition of education is responsible for the difficulty educators face in applying Western language teaching theories in Chinese classrooms. Herein arises the question about the cultural and educational context in which I tried to interpret the conceptual development of the Chinese teachers of English: Were their difficulties in adopting the CLT approach caused by growing up and being educated in the Chinese educational tradition? It is important to clarify the Chinese educational context in which Chinese college English teachers interact with the Western-imported language teaching theories, such as CLT and student-centered conceptions of learning and teaching.

Confucius's Influence on Chinese Education

Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) is respected as a great teacher, educator, philosopher, and sage throughout 2,400 years of history in China. Confucianism, a system of thoughts and ideas based on his teachings, has had a deep influence on the life, thoughts, culture, and education of the Chinese people. He lived in the turmoil of the Spring-Autumn and Warring States era (770-221 B.C.E.). At the time, there arose several kingdom states that were continually at war with each other, making people suffer from disasters, death, and homelessness. Awe to Heaven (similar to "reverence for God" in Western culture) was diminishing among the rulers who governed their states with tyranny, getting further away from the way of humanity. The rites and humane governance practised by the ancient sage kings declined, and society was in disorder (Dai, 1996; Hoobler & Hoobler, 1993).

Confucius's Education for Moral Transformation and Social Improvement

Confucius cherished the harmonious society modeled by the ancient sage kings. Central to his philosophy was "the Way," meaning the way of humanity. In Confucian ethics, "the Way of Kings" referred to the way of humanity that had been implemented by the ancient sage kings (Shen, 2001). He set up the ideals of social order, harmony, and humanity as a value matrix: "To restrain oneself and return to the rituals constitutes humanity" (*Analects*, *12.1*). He believed that such social ideals could be realized by restoring the rituals and morality of the ancient kings.

To Confucius, education was a means of cultivating virtues in people, and "virtuous behavior can ensure individual success and societal harmony" (Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 92). Holding a positive assumption of the natural quality of human beings at birth, he said: "By nature, people are close to one another; through practice, they drift far apart" (*Analects*, *17.2*), meaning that people are good by nature and have an innate moral sense (Fairbank, 1971, p. 52) and that they acquire goodness and evil in later life owing to the environment in which they grow up and the company they keep. This means that people are cultivatable and perfectible if they are led to the right path through education, through their own efforts at self-cultivation, and through the emulation of models outside themselves (Fairbank, 1971, pp. 52-53). Confucius believed that moral education and transformation of people were more effective than ruling them with laws and punishment. "If you govern them with decrees and regulate them with punishments, the people will evade them but will have no sense of shame. If you govern them with virtues and regulate them with the rituals, they will have a sense of shame and flock to

you" (*Analects*, 2.3). Confucian stress on moral education, as Fairbank (1971) commented, has persisted down to the present Chinese education.

Confucius believed that scholars and intellectual elites were the main power of societal improvement. His curriculum focused on the history, literature, and documents of the past generations of the kings, particularly the documents of the Zhou Dynasty—a golden age in his eyes. He edited them into Six Classics: *Poetry*, *History*, *Rituals*, *Music*, *Book of Change*, and *Spring and Autumn Annuals* (Dai, 1996), stating that the instructional contents of these classics "inspire you with *Poetry*, establish you with *Rituals*, perfect you with *Music*" (*Analects*, *8.8*). Teaching students in his private school, Confucius aimed at making them the intellectual elites and men of humanity, who acknowledged "the Way," did the righteousness, served the country, and helped rulers govern in the way of humanity. Confucian intellectuals associated personal fulfillment with the well-being of the country: they should achieve self-cultivation first, then family harmony, then good order in the country, and finally peace in the world. A famous maxim describes Confucian intellectuals as those who are "the first to become concerned with the world's troubles and the last to rejoice in its happiness"; these are the words of Fan Zhongyan (989-1052 A.D.), a great literary figure in the Song Dynasty (960-1127 A.D.). In Confucian doctrines, the intellectual elites, including the rulers and scholarly officials, were the role model for ordinary people and the cornerstone of a harmonious society. If they modeled virtues, people would be good; this was put by Confucius, "The gentlemen's moral character is wind and the small man's [ordinary people] moral character, grass. When the grass is visited by wind, it must surely bend" (*Analects*, *12.19*).

As learning was for the cultivation of morality and virtues and for the well-being of the country, the scholars and intellectuals received education to serve the government. They could carry out the state missions faithfully and wisely, advocate the righteousness and humanity, and improve the society by behaving as role models for ordinary people. For this reason, Confucius advocated, "One who excels in his official position should then devote himself to learning; one who excels in learning should then devote himself to civil service" (*Analects, 19:13*). Scholarly officials, with humane character and responsibility to carry out benevolent governance, were the objectives of the Confucian curriculum. Closely associated with the rationale and ethics of government, Confucian education was not only about humanity and self-perfection but also about applied politics.

Confucius's Epistemology, Pedagogy, and Teacher-Learner Relationship

Confucius's epistemology is based on his views of knowledge and man's learning ability. He took the literature, history, practice, and documents of the previous kings as the true knowledge worth learning. His view of knowledge is close to the Western metaphysical view of knowledge, that is: "Truth is an ideal and incorporeal form—something that is out there, beyond the physical" (Davis, 2004, p. 17).

For Confucius, a learner's ability and intelligence are not the decisive factors in learning. He recognized the differences in people's gifts and innate intelligence, but he believed that effortful learning decides the learning results and achievements. He said: "Those who are born to understand the knowledge of truth are the best; second are those who come to understand it through learning; next are those who find it difficult to learn and understand and yet persist in their studies. People who find it difficult to learn but do not even try to learn are the worst of all" (*Analects, 16:9*). He argued that what

distinguishes a sage from an ordinary person is learning and diligence, not innate ability and intelligence. As a prominent teacher, he acknowledged that he was not gifted by nature: "I am not someone who was born with knowledge. I simply love antiquity, and diligently look for knowledge" (*Analects, 7:20*).

Confucius's learning is not only closely tied to diligence but also to practice, thinking, and reflection. One of the most frequently cited sayings in China is the first line from the *Analects*: "To learn and then have occasion to practice what you have learned— is this not satisfying?" Genuine learning is indispensable to thinking, reflection, and seeking the meaning of what is taught and learned; as Confucius said: "Learning without thinking makes people lost; thinking without learning makes people perplexed" (*Analects, 2:15*). He believed that "by reviewing what was learned, one can learn new knowledge" (*Analects, 2:11*), which is close to the idea that new knowledge is acquired on the basis of existing knowledge (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). The principles of learning in Confucius's statements, as Louie (1984) commented, parallel "the modern principles of learning whereby constant review of things learnt was essential for retention and progress" (p. 30).

Confucius's epistemological principles entail his attitude toward learning and knowledge—loving learning and being honest to knowledge. He taught his students not to be pretentious about knowledge, stating: "This is wisdom: to recognize what you know as what you know, and recognize what you do not know as what you do not know" (*Analects, 2:17*). With an honest attitude toward knowledge, Confucius was willing to learn from any people who had knowledge: "When walking with two other people, I will always find a teacher among them" (*Analects, 7:22*). He appreciated the person who "was

diligent and loved learning, and was not ashamed to ask advice from those in lower social ranks" (*Analects, 5:15*).

Confucius's epistemological views indicate the role of a teacher and the teacher-learner relationship. The teacher should be the role model of learning and should love teaching, that is, "learn without ever feeling tired of learning, and teach without ever feeling tired of teaching" (*Analects, 7:2*). Teachers should love their students and set higher standards for them; as Confucius said: "If you love someone, will you not advise him?" Although emphasizing that students should learn from a teacher, he also suggested that a teacher should learn from students. "Not only is Confucius eulogized for having advocated reverence for teachers and knowledge, but his achievements in educational thoughts are said to have included the recognition of the relationship between students learning from teachers, and teachers learning from students" (Louie, 1984, p. 34).

Establishment of Confucianism in China

Confucius's ideas were not accepted by any kings until after his death. Confucianism was chosen as the state orthodoxy by Emperor Wudi (140-87 B.C.E), who commanded that only scholars from the Confucian school could advise political leaders (Shen, 2001; Yuan, 2001). A set of imperial examinations was designed based on the classics of the Confucian school to select the worthy and the talented to serve as officials at court and in the provinces. The civil examination system lasted about 12 centuries from the Sui Dynasty (589-618 A.D.) to the Qing Dynasty in 1905.

Promoted by intellectual elites, mandated by government policies, and reinforced by imperial examinations, Confucian ethics and philosophy became instilled in the fabric of Chinese culture and education. Eisner (1992, p. 303) pointed out: "When a particular

ideology becomes pervasive or has no competing alternative, it tends to become invisible." In a similar manner, the Confucian ideologies have been practised by Chinese in all social and educational dimensions, sometimes without awareness (Huang, 1997). Confucian ideas, which were further enriched and developed by Confucius's followers, were so deeply rooted in Chinese literature, drama, and literacy education that both Chinese intellectual elites and grassroots people respected the Confucian doctrines as authority. For 2000 years, Confucianism formed a broad and complex educational system that centered on the established Confucian philosophy, epistemology, pedagogy, and the roles of teacher and learner.

Western Educational Influence in China

After losing the Opium War in 1840 to Great Britain and being forced to open to the opium trade, China declined under the regime of the Qing government. At the turn of the 20th century, other Western powers rushed into China, making her a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. This period of history lasted for until 1949 (Spring, 2001), during which time the Chinese people struggled for freedom, equal rights, and independence (Ding, 2001). China went through radical social changes and turbulence—the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic in 1911, the wars between the warlords, the Sino-Japanese War, the Civil War, the fall of the Republic, and the establishment of the People's Republic. In the 20th century, three educational reforms took place in China: The first reform, from the early 1900s to 1949, was the establishment of a modern educational system using the Western school patterns; the second reform, in the 1950s, adopted the Soviet educational model; the third reform, from the late 1970s and still ongoing, aims to "absorb all that [is] of value in the world's

experience and adapt it in realistic ways to China's own development" (Ding, 2001, p. 172).

Impact of Western Education before 1949

Fairbank (1971) attributed China's decline and disadvantage after the Opium War to the lag in industry and science and technology. Chinese intellectuals criticized Confucianism for impeding China's progress in science and technology (see Huang, 1997; Shen, 2001) because the focus of Confucian education was on humanity. They took the development and teaching of science and technology as the national salvation, appealing that "Confucianism … must be discarded so that China [can] achieve true modernization" (Clopton & Ou, 1973, p. 4). They went overseas to learn directly from educators in the liberal European countries and the United States (Yuan, 2001) and brought back to China Western philosophy, education, and science and technology (Clopton & Ou, 1973).

At the turn of the 20th century, Western education was introduced to China by Chinese scholars who pioneered the educational reform, by the Republic Government, and by Western missionaries (Clopton & Ou, 1973; Ding, 2001; Fairbank, 1971; Yuan, 2001). Modern school systems and higher educational institutions patterned after Western models sprang up (Ding, 2001), and Confucian classics were reduced or were eliminated from the school curricula to give space to mathematics, science and technology at all levels of institutions (Hayhoe, 1996; Yuan, 2001). The American influence was obvious in this period of time: American educators were invited to China, including John Dewey, who lectured in China from 1919 to 1921. The Republic Government adopted an American-style school system in 1922, and the American influence continued in the

Chinese educational system until the fall of the Republic Government to the Communist

Government in mainland China in 1949.

Impact of Soviet Union Education in the 1950s

With the Korean War and the ensuing Cold War, China experienced international

isolation in the 1950s and had to import everything from the Soviet Union, including

education (Ding, 2001; Louie, 1984). In the Communist Government's campaign

"Learning from the Soviet Union," Chinese educators and teachers learned Soviet

educational theories and pedagogy, adopted Soviet textbooks, and took over Soviet

academic rigor and standards. At the same time, a large number of Soviet experts came to

China as advisors, teachers, and researchers in Chinese higher educational institutions

(Ding, 2001; Hayhoe, 1996). Hayhoe (1996) depicted the Soviet pattern of higher

education as "extremely strong classification and framing" in hierarchical authority

patterns. "These patterns were introduced into the Chinese context … with narrow

knowledge areas rigidly defined by specialization and largely isolated in institutions

defined with a specialist identity" (p. 86). What is more, Soviet expertise was important

and valuable, particularly in industrial and technological development (p. 22).

However, the campaign "Learning from the Soviet Union" was not a matter of

simple adoption without critical reflection and adaptation. Louie (1984) stated that, in the

1950s, "[Confucianism] was put forward as an alternative to the flood of Soviet

educational theories" (p. 34). Ding (2001) pointed out that China's educational

development between the 1950s and the 1970s swung between the Soviet pattern with a

focus on classroom teaching and textbooks and Mao's emphasis on combining education

with social practice. With the breakup of China and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and

particularly during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), some of the Soviet educational theories and practice were criticized and dropped.

Educational Reform after the Late 1970s

The third educational reform started in the late 1970s as part of the economic reform and modernization of China. Detaching Chinese education from the sole influence of the Soviet Union, this reform did not follow the pattern of a particular country, but rather it aimed at expanding vision to the educational systems and theories of those developed regions such as Europe, North America, and Japan (Ding, 2001, p. 174). Since that time, various scholarly books about education have been translated, Chinese educators and teachers have access to academic research and publications, and the international exchange in education is increasing. Another striking phenomenon is the revival of Confucian morals regarding education and social values. China now is more sophisticated than before and does not simply absorb foreign experience and traditional ethos for her educational development.

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An Ecological Perspective on Modern Chinese Education

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It is hard to assess to what degree Confucianism still has influence on current Chinese education even though it was removed from the school curricula in the early 1900s and fiercely criticized in the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s. Louie (1984) argued that the Confucian educational tradition still has a strong influence on Chinese education throughout the years of political and social turbulence. As well, it is equally difficult to tell how much influence Western education has had on Chinese educational development (Hayhoe, 1996). Nevertheless, an ecological perspective can help illustrate the cultural

features of Chinese education based on the above brief introduction of Chinese-Western interaction over the 20th century.

Chinese Education as an Ecological System

Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008) used complexity theory to describe complex unities as being spontaneous, unpredictable, irreducible, contextual, and vibrantly sufficient. They illustrated the complexity of a system with an example. Sometime in the late 1970s or the early 1980s, zebra mussels from Europe were introduced by accident into the Great Lakes in North America. Having no natural enemies, the mussels quickly spread through all of the Great Lakes. It was estimated that the mussels would cause environmental disaster and upset the fragile and delicate balance of the Great Lakes. However, the disaster did not occur, and the ecosystem did not collapse. The ecosystem of the Great Lakes was vibrantly sufficient—a dynamic, diversified, robust, evolving, and constantly learning system. Zebra mussels have now been incorporated into that system, and some consequent changes have taken place in the relational web, the specific qualities, and the response patterns of the lake ecosystem. The authors pointed out, "The system has learned in a manner that is dynamically similar to the ways that humans, immune systems, societies, species, and other complex unities learn" (p. 79).

A complex system has the features of being dialectical and inclusive, so that it is capable of accommodating some contradictory applications and even incompatible beliefs. Chinese educational traditions are such a complex system that sees the co-existence of Confucian ideals and instrumental perceptions and practices. On one hand, this system insisted on an honest and modest attitude towards knowledge and learning,

and it maintained that learning was for the fulfillment of scholars' social responsibility and for the well-being of the society. On the other hand, in reality, Chinese intellectuals and teachers were made the authorities about knowledge, and learning was perceived as a path to certain social status and economic security (Fairbank, 1971) by both intellectuals and grassroots people. Although the civil examination was intended to select the talented for official service, it reinforced the instrumental understanding of learning among the people who hoped to change their social and economic status. Confucian education gradually evolved into a complex system that incorporated fundamental Confucianism and its variation of practice.

Such incorporation and inclusiveness made the Confucian educational system flexible, self-adjusted, and multi-dimensional, so that in the 20th century it was capable of having dialogue with the liberal Western educational tradition as well as with the rigorous Soviet academic hierarchy. During the Chinese-Western interactions, the Confucian educational system did not accept the wholesale of Westernization; instead, it responded to the Western influence with an eclectic approach—selection, adoption, and adaptation. Since the early 1900s, educational reform in China has been permeated with the notion of "Chinese learning for basic principle; Western learning for practical use" (Ding, 2001; Fairbank, 1971; Yuan, 2001). Tweed and Lehman (2002) found that Confucian approaches to learning still persisted in Chinese cultural contexts because they are adaptive in those contexts (p. 96).

Modern Chinese Education as a Hybridity of Chinese and Western Educational

Traditions

Today the Chinese education system is no longer Confucian education. It has

evolved into a hybrid of Confucian and Western educational traditions after a century of

interaction, conversation, adaptation, and integration. Ding (2001) described this hybrid

complex of Chinese education as follows:

> We cannot underestimate the importance of external cultural influence in China's
> educational development, but we must also recognize that it was not simply a
> matter of China progressing from a lower to a higher cultural level. Rather, it was a
> matter of the creation of a new cultural complex, which drew upon the best of
> foreign cultures and reached a higher level through a kind of dialectic between
> universal and particular, an integration of diversity and unity. (p. 183)

Evolving from the Confucian educational tradition, the ecosystem of the hybrid

Chinese education is more vibrantly sufficient and dynamic than it was, and more open to

and incorporative of new educational experience from other cultures and traditions. This

hybrid nature of Chinese education is illustrated in Figure 1.
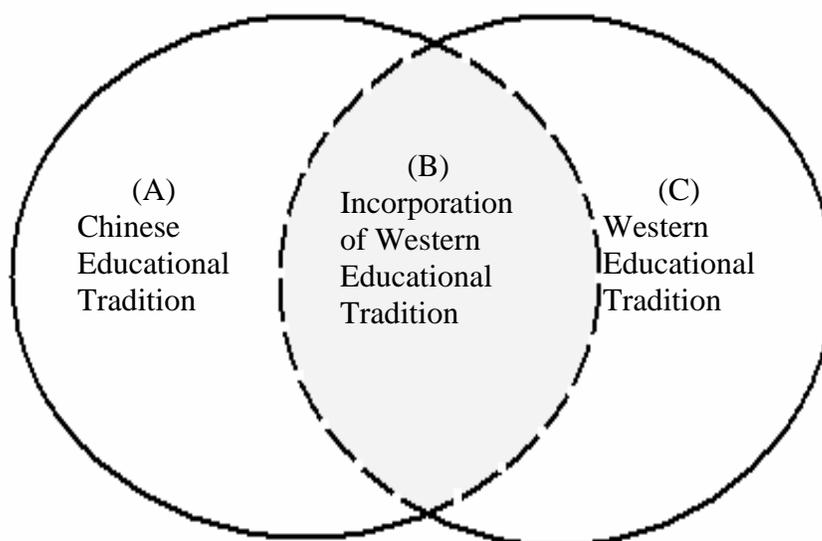
Figure 1. Hybridity of Chinese and Western Educational Traditions

The Chinese educational tradition, influenced by Confucianism, is still influential but no longer dominant in curriculum and practice; the overlapped area in Figure 1 illustrates that a part of Western educational traditions and practices have been well accepted and incorporated and have become a part of contemporary China's education system. The overlapped area is dashed, indicating both the ongoing openness of Chinese education to Western educational experience and the expansion of the zone of hybridity. Today it is more difficult to categorize a specific instructional practice into the Confucian tradition or the Western tradition; it can be shared in both traditions, or it can be the hybridization of both traditions. For example, the teacher-centered approach to teaching is not unique to Confucian tradition; it appeared in European classrooms at least in the 17th century (see Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kapler, 2008). In foreign language learning and teaching, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) prevailed in Europe when Latin was popularly taught in the schools (White, 1987). The grammar-based approaches (including GTM and the structural approach) have been well accepted in China since the 19th century because their epistemological views and pedagogical practice echoed the traditional Chinese literacy practice that emphasized the learning of Chinese words. In this situation, the studies and research about teaching, learning, and teachers' conceptual change in Western educational contexts should have certain applicability in the Chinese educational context.

Models and Perspectives of Conceptual Change

In educational studies, there are four influential models of conceptual change. From different perspectives and in different terms and metaphors, these models respectively explain conceptual change as (a) a replacement of old concepts with new

ones (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982), (b) as a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), (c) as transformation through liminal space (Turner, 1980), and (d) as expansion of the space of new possibilities (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008). In this section, I outline these four models of conceptual development; then, based on these conceptual development theories, I establish a framework from which I can examine how language teachers change their conceptions of teaching toward more complex levels.

Conceptual Change as Replacement of Old Concepts with New Ones

The conceptual change model proposed by Posner et al. (1982) is one of the most influential and the best known (Ho, 2000; Duit & Treagust, 2003). The authors intended to sketch a general model of conceptual change in the area of science education. Their research question was: How do people's concepts change under the impact of new ideas or new evidence? The purposes of their study were to examine how radical conceptual change or a paradigm shift takes place and to explain "the substantive dimensions of the process by which people's central, organizing concepts change from one set of concepts to another set, incompatible with the first" (p. 211). They had two parts in their conceptual change model: conceptual ecology and conditions for conceptual change.

The Features of Conceptual Ecology

Posner et al. (1982) pointed out that an individual's conceptual ecology has influence on his or her selection of a new concept. Conceptual ecology refers to the conceptual context of an individual within which learning takes place. The scope of conceptual ecology, according to the authors, includes such cognitive features as anomalies, analogies and metaphors, epistemological commitments, metaphysical beliefs, and knowledge from other fields. Anomalies, the character of the specific failures of a

given idea, are an important part of the conceptual ecology that selects its successor.

Analogies and metaphors can make a given idea intelligible. Epistemological

commitments provide general views about the character of knowledge as well as specific

views about some subject matter knowledge. Metaphysical beliefs are the views and

beliefs about "the ultimate nature of the universe and immune from direct empirical

refutation" (p. 215), and they can reject or select particular kinds of explanations.

Knowledge of other fields provides competing concepts. "One condition for the selection

of a new concept is that it should appear to have more promise than its competitors" (p.

215). Posner and colleagues believed that it is the conceptual ecology that determines

what conceptual change takes place.

Conditions for Conceptual Change

Posner et al. (1982) suggested four conditions that facilitate change in conceptions:

(a) dissatisfaction with existing conceptions, (b) a new conception being intelligible, (c) a

new conception being initially plausible, and (d) a new conception being fruitful. These

four conditions underlie the coherent process of conceptual change.

Posner et al. (1982) claimed that dissatisfaction with a prior or existing

conception is believed to initiate dramatic or revolutionary conceptual change. They

observed from their studies in science education that both scientists and students seldom

make a major change in their concepts "until they believe that less radical changes will

not work" (p. 214). The researchers assumed that if an individual has collected a store of

unsolved problems, he or she would lose faith in the capacities of their existing concepts

to solve those problems and then would turn to search for new or alternative ideas and

conceptions. It is such dissatisfaction with the current conceptions that initiates the individual to shift to a new conception for an alternative solution.

To replace an old conception, the new one should be intelligible, plausible, and fruitful. Posner et al. (1982) pointed out that intelligibility has two aspects. At a superficial level, intelligibility is a clear presentation of a new concept, non-contradictory in its use of terms and symbols and sensible in the syntax of the mode of expressions, so that the individual can understand its meaning. At a deep level, intelligibility requires that the individual not only knows the meaning of words and symbols but also identifies a coherent representation of what this new conception is saying, because "no theory can function psychologically at all unless it is internally represented by the individual" (p. 216). How an individual represents knowledge and theories determines his or her ability to make sense of the new conception. Posner and his colleagues claimed that "only an intelligible theory can be a candidate for a new conception in a conceptual change" (p. 217), yet the mere intelligibility is not equivalent to or sufficient for a conceptual change (p. 216). They pointed out that a new theory must have also initial plausibility.

A plausible conception appears to have the capacity to solve the problems generated by the individual's old or existing conceptions. Only when the new idea is plausible can it likely be accepted by the individual. Whether or not a new conception has initial plausibility depends on its degree of fit into the existing conceptual ecology. If the individual finds the new conception capable of solving problems and consistent with his or her current metaphysical beliefs, epistemological commitments, past experience, and sense of the world, then this new conception shows initial plausibility. Therefore, the

plausibility of a new idea is related to one's epistemological and psychological assumptions about knowledge and the world.

Posner et al. (1982) continued that, once an intelligible, plausible alternative resolves the apparent problems (anomalies), the individual may attempt to interpret the experience with it. The new idea will appear fruitful if it not only solves the problems but also leads to new insights or "suggests the possibility of a fruitful research program" (p. 214). The new insights, inquiry and research program indicate the potential of the new concept to be extended and to open up new areas of inquiry. The process of conceptual change as a new conception replacing the old one is illustrated in Figure 2.
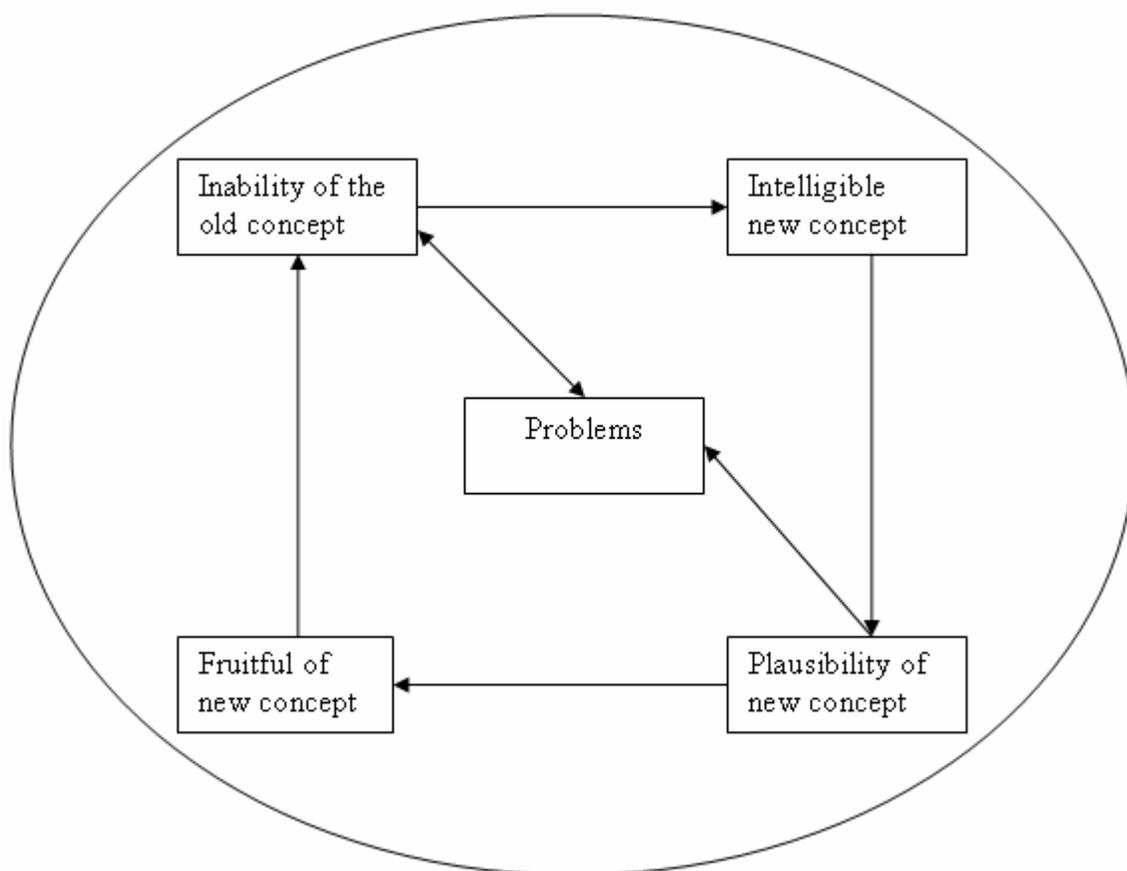
Figure 2. Conceptual Change as Replacement of an Old Concept with a New One

The circle in Figure 2 indicates on individual's conceptual ecology, which is the context within which conceptual change occurs. Once the individual finds that his or her existing conceptions are incapable of solving the problems, he or she is motivated to look for a new conception or idea that is intelligible. The intelligible new concept has to appear plausible, that is, it has to fit the individual's conceptual ecology and appear to have the potential to solve the problem. Then the new conception enables the individual to gain new insight and interpretation of the experience, and thus it opens a new area of research and exploration. The four conditions explain the processes by which a conceptual change may be initiated and a new conception may be accepted to replace the old one in the person's belief system. Posner et al. (1982) pointed out that a significant conceptual change is a gradual and peaceful "process of taking an initial step toward a new conception by accepting some of its claims and then gradually modifying other ideas" (p. 223).

Although the conceptual change framework proposed by Posner et al. (1982) is widely cited in the study of science education (Ho, 2000), its epistemological position has been critiqued as being insufficient to describe the complexity of conceptual development. Duit and Treagust (2003) commented that Posner et al.'s (1982) conceptual change model is an epistemological position built on a Piagetian idea. Piaget's epistemological position has been questioned because it overstates the approaches to learning that involve an individual's cognition but ignores the socio-cognitive way in which individuals learn. Davis (2004) critiqued Piaget's constructivist theories of learning for being "explicitly concerned only with individual cognitive process, not with interpersonal dynamics" (p. 134). He pointed out that constructivism, represented by Piaget's work, is "framed by the

ancient assumption that all thought resides in the head of an insulated and isolated learner" (p. 137). Considering the insufficiency of the conceptual change model by Posner et al. (1982), I now refer to other models and theories related to conceptual change and development.

Conceptual Change as Transformation across Liminal Space

Threshold and *liminal space* are the terms first proposed by van Gennep and then drawn on by Victor Turner (see Turner, 1980), the anthropologists who were engaged in ethnographic studies of the social structures and cultures of African tribes. Turner documented the rites of passage in a Kenyan tribe associated with the initiation of adolescent boys into manhood. Liminality means boundary or threshold, and Turner (1980) used the term to characterize the transitional space and time within which the rites were conducted. Particularly interested in the threshold/liminal phase of the rituals, he found that the threshold/liminal phase is the essential stage in a ritual in which an individual is transformed in his or her view of self and the world—he or she moved into the liminal process and then returned into the secular society, transformed by liminal experience (Turner, 1980, p. 163). The study of the ritual liminal process has implications for social innovation and people's conceptual change. Turner (1980) pointed out: "Ritual liminality contains the potentiality for cultural innovations as well as the means for effecting structural transformations within a relatively stable sociocultural system" (p. 165). The transformative function of the concept of threshold and liminal space has been applied to educational studies in the aspects of learning and teaching for conceptual transformation (Meyer & Land, 2005) and transformative education (McWhinney & Markos, 2003).

Threshold and Liminality

A threshold, as Meyer and Land (2005) explained, is a metaphor that "conjures the architectural space of the doorway, a transition point or intersection rather than a space" (p. 379). In education, threshold may be seen as "leading the learner on through a transformational landscape … toward a pre-ordained end" (p. 379). Liminality, on the other hand, offers less predictability and appears to be a more liquid space, simultaneously transforming and being transformed by the learner as he or she moves through it. Threshold and liminality entail different spatial characteristics—threshold is the entrance into the transformational state of liminality.

Transformative Function in Threshold and Liminal Space

Meyer and Land (2005) pointed out that in certain disciplines there are some conceptual gateways that lead to an initial troublesome way of thinking about or understanding of something, such as hegemony in the area of Cultural Studies. Communicative language teaching is also a conceptual gateway in the area of language teaching curriculum and pedagogy. The authors characterized conceptual gateways as being transformative in occasioning a significant shift in the perception of a subject, irreversible in being unlikely to be forgotten, and integrative in exposing the "previously hidden interrelatedness of something" (p. 373). Behind a conceptual gateway is a new conceptual space—knowledge and conceptions that are new to learners. To get through a conceptual gateway into the conceptual space, Meyer and Land (2005) suggested the threshold concept—"pedagogically fertile and energizing topics to consider" (p. 374), an entrance to a conceptual space or discourse.

Individuals who find the learning of certain concepts difficult or troublesome are in the state of liminality. Turner used this term to characterize the transitional space and time within which the rites were conducted. He found that the liminal phase of the rituals tended to be transformative in function. It usually involved an individual or group of individuals moving forward from one state into another. At the end of the ritual, the participating individual acquires new knowledge and subsequently a new status and identity within the community. However, "the transition is often problematic, troubling, and frequently involves the humbling of the participant" (Meyer & Land, 2005, p. 376) because his or her old identity is stripped away. In this period, the participant is neither fully in his or her old category nor in the new category, but in the liminal state—a process of changing and transforming. The transformation can take a period of time and involve non-linear movement. Within the liminal space, an individual mimics the new status but frequently regresses to his or her earlier status, full of both desire and apprehension. Once the state of liminality is entered, there may appear to be temporary regression, but there is no ultimate full return to the pre-liminal state. Therefore, liminality itself is the process of transformation at work; achieving transformation is the process of entering the liminal space. Learning has the nature of liminality.

The Journey of Transformation

Transformation is related to individual psychological and socio-organizational change from one status or paradigm to another. Individual conceptual change is the transformation of conceptions across paradigms. Turner (1980) followed van Gennep and divided a ritual's process into three stages: pre-liminal, threshold/liminal, and post-liminal.

In preliminary rites of separation the initiand is moved from the indicative quotidian social structure into the subjunctive antistructure of the liminal process and is then returned, transformed by liminal experiences, by the rites of reaggregation to social structural participation in the indicative mood. (Turner, 1980, p. 163)

"Indicative" was used to describe an actual world or a world interpreted by the individual with his or her practical judgment. "Subjunctive" was used to describe the experience in liminal space—a place on the threshold but neither here nor there. "It is the world of 'as if,' ranging from scientific hypothesis to festive fantasy. It is 'if it *were* so,' not 'it *is* so'" (Turner, 1980, p. 163, italics original).

Corresponding to Turner's (1980) sequence of the rites, McWhinney and Markos (2003) divided a transformation process into three stages: beginning, middle, and end. Their sequence emphasizes the process of change and development rather than the result of the change and development. According to the authors, a transformation needs a condition to take place. The condition is often a crisis—"loss of support for what has been or the awareness that one can no longer turn back" (p. 21), such as an awakening that life has lost meaning or work has fallen into a routine. Driven by such a crisis, the individual begins to make a change by searching for new meanings, new solutions, or new possibilities.

The exploration for new meanings may take the individual across the threshold into a space that is new and unfamiliar, a place where the individual belongs neither to his or her earlier category nor to the new, transformed category. McWhinney and Markos (2003) depicted crossing the threshold in a figurative way: "crossing the threshold separates the participants from normal activity and expectations. . . . They move into a liminal domain that is nowhere; those who cross the threshold vanish from their familiar selves and their community into night journey" (p. 26).

The middle liminal space accommodates transformations of individuals or social groups. The journey across the liminal space is complex and non-linear. McWhinney and Markos (2003) said that the individual may feel lonely and vulnerable, and have no answer to the question: "What am I doing here?" Learning is the tool that the individual can take at this dark time and "learning transforms [the person] in radical, irreversible, and often unexpected ways" (p. 21). The authors labeled a few ways in which transformation takes place: change may occur by accident or intentional plan, or result from accumulative transformative learning during a long time of engagement, or emerge from the natural rhythm of human life. There is no road or map for walking the journey through the liminal space. Mimicry is a way to learn and experiment with new methods and techniques. The individual has to explore his or her path by constant experimentation and exploration. The route may look full of curves and regression, but ultimately he or she moves forward.

When this journey approaches its end, the individual forms a distinct worldview. He or she is transformed. The end of the transformation is reintegration with work, life, community, and society. "The person … has retreated, reconceived the mission, adopted new directions, structured new roles, and is now ready to reappear in the agora" (McWhinney & Markos, 2003, p. 29). The person is no longer what he or she was when at the place of the threshold. The transformation across the threshold and liminal brings to him/her new conceptions, new meanings, and new relationships with the world.

Transformation across a threshold presents a model of conceptual change from a psychological perspective. It highlights the threshold and liminal space where a person's conceptions, worldviews, and experience are transformed in complex and non-linear

processes. This model is similar to Posner et al.'s (1982) model in that they both view

conceptual development within a person's internal cognitive and psychological space. In

these two models, the individual was isolated from his or her social context and discourse.

However, in fact human learning and development take place in all kinds of social

environments. To make up for this insufficiency of the conceptual change model by

Posner et al. (1982) and the threshold/liminal space model by Turner (1980), I use

Vygotsky's development model and his social learning perspective.

Conceptual Change as the Zone of Proximal Development

As a representative of social constructivism, Vygotsky initiated research on

human psychological development from social-cultural perspectives. He proposed that

learning is a developmental process, in which human cognition gradually develops

through social interactions in cultural communities (Vygotsky, 1978). Different from

constructivist theories that take learning and conceptual development as individual

cognitive processes, Vygotsky proposed that learning and development occur through

social interactions and interpersonal dynamics. "For him, learning was a process of

habituating to social practices through participation in those practices, and he saw

personal cognitive processes as a sort of reflection or internalization of collective or

external processes" (Davis, 2004, p. 135).

One of Vygotsky's contributions is his description of the zone of proximal

development (ZPD). Believing that learning and development are interrelated from the

very first day of an individual's life, Vygotsky (1978) proposed the concept of the ZPD,

"the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent

problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

The ZPD highlights the potential space of conceptual development. This space of conceptual development has not yet matured but is "in the process of maturation" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The functions of ZPD can be termed as the buds or flowers of development rather than the fruits of development. The ZPD indicates the internal course of development, that is, development not only presents the maturation processes that have already been completed but also takes the form of developmental processes that are currently in a state of formation or are just beginning to mature and develop. The ZPD provides teachers, educators and researchers with a developmental view of learning and growing. It presents not only what has been achieved but also what the course of achieving and maturing is. It allows us to see the possibility of conceptual development based on existing knowledge, conceptions, and skills.

The concept of the ZPD highlights the importance of learning. "Learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing [the] culturally organized, psychological functions" of human beings (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). It is learning that makes the buds and flowers grow to fruits. Vygotsky (1978) brought out the concept of 'good learning'—learning that is in advance of developing. He said: "Imitation and learning are thought of as purely mechanical processes"; however, "a person can imitate only that which is within [his or] her developmental level" (p. 88). This is because of the nature of human learning, which "presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88). Vygotsky believed that children, and adults as well, can imitate a variety of actions that go well

beyond the limits of their own capabilities or achieved knowledge in collective activity

and under the guidance of adults or more capable peers. Therefore, learning should aim at

a new stage of the developmental process, not lag behind it. He proposed:

> . . . an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. (p. 90)

The relations between developmental and learning processes are highly complex

and dynamic. Vygotsky (1978) suggested the sequence of learning and development: "the

developmental process lags behind the learning process" (p. 90); it is this sequence that

results in the ZPD. He also pointed out that only properly organized learning results in

mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would

be impossible apart from the learning.

Conceptual Change as Expansion of Possible Space

The conceptual development models discussed above all indicate the close

relation of learning to personal conceptual growth. Davis, Sumura, and Luce-Kapler

(2007) delineated the prevailing theories of learning and their origins in a Western

worldview. They found that the correspondence theories of learning, including

behaviorism and mentalist theories, "cannot explain how imagination and creativity arise,

nor why individuals differ so radically, especially when subject to the same sorts of

training regimes" (p. 109). They turned to complexity thinking, from which they tried to

explain learning, growth of competence, and conceptual development.

Complexity Thinking—A Comprehensive Way of Looking at Learning

Complexity thinking provides a more comprehensive and coherent frame to look at learning, changing, and education than any specific theory. As an umbrella notion, complexity thinking accommodates the coherence theories, such as constructivism, constructionism, cultural and critical theories of learning, and the ecological theories (Davis et al., 2008, p. 110). More important, complexity thinking insists that these theories should be addressed "*at the same time*" [italics added] because "education is a *transphenomenon*" [italics as original], and different disciplines and discourses of theories are complementary in explaining and interpreting educational issues (pp. 110-111).

In complexity thinking, learning is not simply to obtain information and acquire knowledge, nor "modification of behavior due to experience" (Davis, 2004, p. 181); learning is complex and non-linear in itself. To a learner, learning does not purely take place in the enclosed psychological and cognitive tracks within his or her mind, but it is a constant process of exchanging information with the external environment and adapting to the external context. In this sense, "learning is a constant restructuring of internal relation in order to maintain sufficient coherence" (Davis et al., 2008, p. 80). To achieve a sufficient coherence is not the end of learning; instead, it starts new inquiries, "tinkers new patterns of acting," and "modifies new internal relations" (p. 81). Learning never ceases, and it keeps evolving new structures and new ways of working. The process of learning is characterized as "recursion, iteration, feedback loops, folding back, elaboration and growth" (p. 83).

Change as Expansive Growth in New Possible Space

Oriented from complexity and ecological perspectives, Davis et al. (2008) pointed out that learning is changing, and it is determined by the inner coherence of the ecology, by the learning system, not by the trigger of external events. This claim is in contrast to the mechanical perspectives of learning that "describe learning in terms of movement along a line" (p. 83). What is learned is determined by the learner's internal factors or by his or her learning system, "not by the event that triggers the learning"; a learner's internal learning system is rooted in his or her biological and experiential structure (p. 81). A case in point is the phenomenon that individuals differ radically even when they are subject to the same learning and training. Learning, therefore, does not lead to directed progress, but to expansive growth (p. 83).

The four perspectives and models discussed above present the understandings and descriptions of human conceptual change and development from different discourses and fields of studies—cognitive and psychological discourses, anthropological discourse, and complexity thinking. They are overlapping, connected, and complementary to each other. It is these connections among them that enabled me to form a framework for examining Chinese college English teachers' conceptual development in language curriculum innovation in the hybrid educational context of China.

Chapter Summary

I discussed modern Chinese education and an individual's conceptual development from complex, ecological perspectives. Modern Chinese education has incorporated both the Confucian educational traditions and Western educational practices. Chinese college English teachers constructed their beliefs and conceptions of teaching

and learning in a hybrid of Chinese and Western educational traditions, and they are assumed to be capable of accommodating a Western imported language teaching methodology that is intelligible and plausible to them. Conceptual development undergoes complex social, cognitive, and psychological processes, and learning is the key to conceptual change. Based on the conceptual change models, Chinese college English teachers achieve development through learning to use new teaching methodology, transforming their beliefs and conceptions, and broadening their visions of language teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section briefly introduces the positivistic traditions in the research of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), points out the problems in the studies of teachers' beliefs and conceptions in TESOL and in higher education, and justifies my choice of ethnographic methodology for the study of Chinese college English teachers' beliefs and conceptual change. The second section presents my research design and the rationale for my research methods. The third section describes in detail my field research, including a brief introduction to the field, the ongoing curriculum change in college English programs at AU, and the process of implementing my research plans in the field. The last section describes the process of data analysis during and after the field study.

Research Traditions in TESOL

In November 1998, I attended a seminar about academic research and publication in the field of foreign language teaching in my home university in China. The speaker was the chief editor of *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, a leading academic journal in foreign language teaching in China. He pointed out a problem with the manuscripts submitted by the Chinese teachers of English for publication: lack of statistical data for scientific objectivity. I was impressed with the appeal in his ending remarks: "When you submit your articles, give me numerical data [*shuju*]; show me the charts and tables."

Empirical positivism was dominant not only in the research of foreign language teaching in China, but also worldwide in the field of TESOL. Prior to the 1970s in the United States, as Met and Galloway (1992) pointed out, research in foreign language teaching and learning relied heavily on the positivistic tradition apparent in every field of education. "Experimental models that borrowed from psychology and the biological sciences have reigned as the one true vehicle for legitimate investigation," and "The 'method' thus determined the questions, and research efforts focused on what was considered 'scientifically' researchable" (p. 879). This positivistic tradition did not change until the late 1980s and the early 1990s when qualitative studies of language and literacy began to appear in major journals of the field (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Met & Galloway, 1992).

Although the advocates of qualitative approaches have brought differences to TESOL research, the studies that claimed a qualitative approach varied owing to the stance of researchers and their relationship with the researched in their studies. Of the small number of qualitative studies about language teachers, most were conducted by questionnaire and structured interviews; few studies used in-depth interviews, an ethnographic approach, and narrative analysis. An example is Li's (1998) study published in *TESOL Quarterly* about South Korean teachers' perception of implementing CLT in their schools. Based on a questionnaire survey with close-ended questions and a semi-structured interview, Li's study did not highlight the voices of the participants who felt vulnerable in trying to implement CLT in the Korean context of education. As was pointed out by Watson-Gegeo (1988), qualitative studies as such "are impressionistic and superficial rather than careful and detailed" (p. 575).

Similar problems also existed in the studies of teachers of post-secondary education. Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) pointed out that the researchers in this field relied too much on questionnaire and structured or semi-structured interviews without classroom observations. The authors said that the teacher participants might have mixed "ideal" and "working" conceptions of teaching, that is, "the aims of teaching expressed by academic teachers coincide with the ideal conceptions of teaching, whereas their teaching practice reflects their working conceptions of teaching" (pp. 109-110). Chan and Elliot (2004) called questionnaire and structured interviews the "paper-and-pencil instrument," and they believed that this frequently used instrument could not reflect how teachers, who claimed to have certain conceptions of teaching, really taught in the classroom, how their claimed conceptions and beliefs were enacted in classroom instruction, and how their conceptions and beliefs evolved over time in their teaching career.

To avoid the defects listed above, I decided to adopt an ethnographic approach to studying Chinese college English teachers' beliefs and conceptual change in the context of curriculum innovation. I designed my research methods based on the principles of ethnography.

Ethnography is the primary method of anthropology. A definition of ethnography by Patton (2002) is related to its word formation: "*Ethnos* is the Greek word for 'a people' or cultural group," and an ethnographic study "takes as its central and guiding assumption that any human group of people interacting together for a period of time will evolve a culture" (p. 81). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) focus the term culture on "learned patterns of action, language, beliefs, rituals, and ways of life" (pp. 35-36). To

conduct an ethnographic study is to study the culture or the cultural patterns established by a specific group of people.

An ethnographic study features participant observation in intensive fieldwork (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 2002). In fieldwork, "the investigator is immersed in the culture under study" through observations, in-depth interviews, and collection of artifacts of the people in that culture (Patton, 2002, p. 81). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) give a detailed description of ethnographic methods:

> As a process, ethnography involves prolonged field work, typically employing observation and casual interviews with participants of a shared group activity and collecting group artifacts. A documentary style is employed, focusing on the mundane details of everyday life and revealing the observation skills of the inquirer. The informants' point of view is painstakingly produced through extensive, closely edited quotations to convey that what is presented is not the fieldworker's view but authentic and representative remarks of the participants. The final product is a comprehensive, holistic narrative description and interpretation which integrates all aspects of group life and illustrates its complexity. (p. 36)

To find out what conceptual development the Chinese college English teachers have achieved and how that conceptual change took place, I needed to observe what the Chinese college English did in their classroom teaching and what they thought about language teaching in naturalistic settings. An ethnographic approach would allow me to conduct my study in the naturalistic settings of the college English classrooms in the context of ongoing college English curriculum change, where I could observe the teachers to be studied "through a wider-angle lens" (Senior, 2006, p. 15).

The aim of my study was to increase our understanding of Chinese college English teachers' professional growth in the dynamic curriculum innovation and implementation. I expect that the readers of my study should will read it in light of their

personal and professional experiences, understand the teachers who participated in this research, and then better understand themselves.

Research Design

I reiterate the research questions to clarify the rationale for the design of my research and explain the research instrument, which included the researcher, the criteria for selecting the field and the participants, and the methods for data collection.

Reiteration of Research Questions

My study of Chinese college English teachers' changes in conceptions and beliefs is focused on the comparison of their conceptions of teaching before and after their use of the student-centered, communicative approaches to college English teaching that were required at the university where they taught. Their beliefs and conceptions of teaching are addressed on the dimensions of what language is, how language is learned and taught, and what the roles of a teacher are in students' learning. My study addressed the following research questions:

1. What did the Chinese College English teachers do to apply the CLT approach to their teaching?

2. How did they make sense of the communicative methods they used in classrooms?

3. What conceptual changes, if there were any, took place in comparison with their prior beliefs about language, teaching and learning, and the roles of teachers?

4. What factors contributed to the changes in beliefs and conceptions of teaching, if such conceptual changes take place?

This study took an ethnographic approach to examining "the shared beliefs, knowledge, practice and behaviors" (Ertmer, 1997, p. 159) of the Chinese college English

teachers in comparison to the philosophy of the CLT approach. To understand the Chinese college English teachers' beliefs and how their beliefs developed, it was useful to compare their prior and present teaching practices and their prior and present understanding of language teaching and learning. The purpose of the comparison was to find out the change that might occur to their teaching behavior and to their beliefs and conceptions. Factors contributing to conceptual change were elicited from the teachers' explanations of how and why the change(s) took place.

Researcher as Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Patton, 2002). The researcher's experience, training, and perspective, along with appropriate use of personal knowledge within the frame of technique rigor can add credibility to the research.

I was educated in China from elementary school to graduate school. This educational experience enabled me to develop a direct and in-depth understanding of Chinese literacy practice and its influence in Chinese educational institutions. My 6 years of post-graduate study in education in Canadian made me aware of and sensitive to the differences in educational traditions and practices between China and Canada. In field observations in China, I was culturally sensitive to the responses of the participating college English teachers to the Western-imported language teaching theories and practice and to the teachers' interaction with their Chinese students through the use of those methods. Nevertheless, my now experience and knowledge might tempt me to make pre-judgments. To avoid this, I kept open to the data: In observations, casual talks and interview, I encouraged the participants to talk, and I questioned what they said to clarify what they really meant.

I learned 4 years of English language and literature in my undergraduate program and studied Chinese and English Translation in my first Master's program in China. After 10 years of teaching college English in China and 6 years of graduate studies in Canada, I was bilingual in Chinese and English. My training in translation enabled me to be aware of the fine line between translation and interpretation. Translation requires that the target language text be faithful to the original language text semantically, functionally, and culturally, not allowing much explanation and summarization by the translator; interpretation allows for the interpreter's understanding, explanation, and summarization. In the process of the fieldwork, I worked with the Chinese college English teachers by speaking the Chinese language in daily communication and casual talks, but we used the English language for face-to-face interviews. I followed the principle of translation when translating the field notes of teachers' casual conversations and my observations.

Selection of Field for Research

I intended to conduct a 3-month study in the Faculty of English Language Education at Anhua University (pseudonym) located in Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong Province in South China. Site selection followed the principles of "suitable" and "feasible" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 432). I gained my initial knowledge about Anhua University (AU) from literature and from Lin, my former classmate who was teaching college English in that university. According to the literature, AU began to advocate the use of CLT approaches to English language teaching in the early 1980s (see Li, 1984), and after 20 years or so, this university has become the expert in that field. I heard from my former classmate that most of the college English instructors in AU had been recruited from different places in China where English teaching was grammar-based;

many of them had taught college English for years in their home universities before

coming to AU. To me, AU provided a *suitable* and *feasible* site for my field research

because the context of my research was that of curriculum innovation, and I surmised that

teachers without much CLT experience before teaching at AU could have encountered

some kind of conceptual conflict. In this context, I would be able to examine how they

used the CLT methods in their classrooms, what changes they perceived had taken place

in their language-teaching practice and in their conceptions of teaching, and how the

changes had occurred.

Selection of Research Participants

To selection participants, I followed the principle of purposeful sampling to

choose individuals "likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon

of interest" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 433; see also Patton, 2002). Purposeful

sampling technique was used to select information-rich participants (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 2002). According to the purpose of my study, I planned to

invite 3-6 college English instructors to participate. The participants would meet the

following requirements: (a) having 5-10 years of teaching experience before teaching at

AU, (b) beginning their teaching career with grammar-based methods and taking teacher-

centered classroom as the norm, and (c) currently using communicative methods in their

classroom teaching. The requirement for at least 5 years of teaching experience was in

accordance with Clark and Peterson's (1986) claim that greater experience does not lead

to greater adaptability to new conceptions and abandonment of strongly held pedagogical

beliefs. Teachers who had to move beyond using the structural approach to classroom

instruction in their early career might demonstrate a sharp contrast between their past and

present beliefs and practices in teaching. I intended to see what they had done to deal with such conceptual conflict.

I used my personal network (my former classmate, Lin, who was teaching college English in AU) to recruit the desired participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 2002). I gave Lin the selection criteria so that she could suggest those who met the criteria among her colleagues. The purposeful sampling continued until I found 3-6 participants who were interested and willing to participate in my research and whose profiles showed similar experiences in language learning and teaching. All participating teachers were informed of the purpose and methodology of the research before they decided whether or not to participate in it (see Appendixes A and B).

Data Collection Methods

Data collection instruments included field observation, in-depth interviewing of the participants, and collecting artifacts of the participants and their institution.

Field Observation

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) believed field observation to be an integral part of participant observation and in-depth interviews. In participant observation the researcher can observe several areas of interest at a site and search for patterns of behavior and relationships. In in-depth interviews, the researcher can note down the non-verbal body language and facial expressions that will help interpret the verbal data.

In this study, participant observation was the observation of the participants' classroom teaching, their activities outside the classroom, and their non-verbal expression in in-depth interviews. Classroom observation is even more important because "all classroom practices reflect teachers' principles and beliefs, and different belief systems

among teachers can often explain why teachers conduct their classes in different ways"
(Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 251). At AU, a session of English lasts 90 minutes. For
each participant, I planned to conduct three sessions of classroom observation over 3
months, with one session (90 minutes) in each month. I designed an observation guide
(see Appendix C) to concentrate on the participants' teaching methods, relationships with
their students, and responses to unprepared classroom situations such as unpredicted
involvement from the students. I took field notes to document my observations and
audiotaped some sessions and the short talks of the teachers during breaks.

I would be careful with my role in the participant observation because the
researcher has an effect on the data collected and the findings (McMillan & Schumacher,
2001). The extent of participation, as Patton (2002) said, is the variation along the
continuum between "complete immersion in the setting as full participant" and "complete
separation from the setting as spectator" (p. 265). He suggested that the researcher be
"fully engaged in experiencing the setting (participation) while at the same time
observing and talking with other participants about whatever is happening" (pp. 265-266).
McMillan and Schumacher (2001) warned that researchers should avoid the mistake
made by most field workers, who "remain a respectful distance from the informants—
cultivating empathy but not sympathy, rapport but not friendship, familiarity but never
going native" (p. 41).

To conduct participant observations, I observed from the perspective of both an
insider and an outsider. Taking an insider's position, I adopted an emic approach,
immersed in the setting being studied, and "not only [saw] what is happening but [felt]
what it is like to be a part of the setting or program" (Patton, 2002, p. 268). Conversely,

taking an outsider's position would allow me to see it from the etic perspective: standing far away or outside the culture under study "to see its separate events, primarily in relation to their similarities and their differences, as compared to events in other cultures" (Pike, 1954, as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 268). In the field, I shared as intimately as possible the life and activities of the college English teachers so as to develop the emic perspective; at the same time, I sat back from time to time to re-view what I had observed and document my reflection of what I had seen and heard from the etic perspective.

Observational data were analyzed to generate the interview questions about "what is happening and why" (Patton, 2002, p. 321). The early field observation helped narrow down the topics and focus the interview questions; as well, field observation helped me interpret the text data from the field notes and the interview transcripts.

In-depth Interviews

The in-depth interview is the most important instrument of data collection in an ethnographic study. The purpose of in-depth interviews in this study was to elicit the changes of beliefs and conceptions of teaching from the participants' experiences as language learners and teachers. The interview design referred to "career and life history interviews" as categorized by McMillan and Schumacher (2001), who said, "Educational ethnographers use this interview technique for career histories or narratives of professional lives. . . . Career and life history research of educators frequently require two- to seven-hour interviews and may take considerable time to locate the informants if the shared social experience occurred years ago" (p. 444). I designed three in-depth interviews with each participant after every session of classroom observation over a 3-

month period; each interview would last 45-60 minutes, and the total interview time for each participant would be 2-3 hours.

The interviews followed an interview guide (see Appendix D); the advantage of the interview guide was that I could (a) decide the sequence and wording of the questions according to the circumstances, (b) have flexibility to explore emerging themes related to the guide's topic areas, and (c) spontaneously ask questions to probe a particular subject. The interview guide approach was good for establishing a conversational style with a focus on the predetermined topic, so that the flow of each interview could move along in a natural and friendly way.

I designed the interview guide before I entered into the field, but it dynamically developed along with the progress of my field work. New questions were generated from the field observations and early interviews, and they were put into guide for the following round of interview. The early-stage interviews focused on the participants' biographic information and on the questions generated from field observations. The later interviews, which were refined from the earlier interviews and observations, were more detailed and focused on the participants' opinions of knowledge, teaching, learning, and the role of the teacher. The entire interview process was open to pursue the emergent topics brought up by the participants (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

Because core beliefs of teachers are shaped by their own schooling experience as students and as observers of their own teachers (Clark & Peterson, 1986), which Lortie (1975) termed the "apprenticeship of observation," the interview questions in this study were reflective in order to "elicit personal narratives or stories about concrete events and experiences" (Woods, 1996, p. 27). For this purpose, the interview questions were

designed to "focus on [the participants'] experience of behavior, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge, sensory perceptions, and the individuals' background or demographic information" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 445). Based on McMillan and Schumacher's (2001, p. 446) list of the functions of the interview questions, I designed the following five types of questions:

1. The questions about experience would elicit the descriptions of experience, activities, and behaviors during the researcher's absence. (e.g., What teaching methods did you use five years ago?)

2. The questions about opinions would elicit what the participants thought about their experience and reveal their intentions and values. (e.g., How do you like the teaching method you are using now?)

3. The questions about knowledge were intended to discover what the participants actually knew as factual information. (e.g., What do you know about CLT?)

4. The questions about feelings would elicit how the participants responded emotionally to their experience. (e.g., What impressive experiences have you had in your teaching career?)

5. The questions about background would discover the participants' demographic information, including education, mobility, residence, and working experience. (e.g., Can you tell me about your educational background and teaching experience?)

The combination of these types of questions would facilitate collecting the participants' career history and life history that contained their beliefs and conceptions about teaching (see Appendix D).

To avoid the potential loss of meaning in translation from Chinese to English, all of the interviews were conducted in English. Considering that the minimum requirements for a college English instructor to teach at AU included a bachelor degree in English language and literature and fluent English oral proficiency for classroom instruction, the interview participants had adequate English to express their experience and opinions. If they had problems clearly expressing a complex idea in English, I would ask questions to clarify what they really meant. If the participants could not find a proper word or expression in English, I encouraged them to use Chinese, and I would translate it into English. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions used for the dissertation were sent to the participants for verification.

Collection of Artifacts

Artifacts include both official and personal documents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). For this study, official documents included the formal and informal posters, slogans, and announcements concerning AU's college English programs. These documents could describe the functions and values of the organization that form the specific context for the participating college English teachers. Personal documents included the participants' teaching plans, journals, posters, correspondence with colleagues and students, and worksheets. The personal documents could be taken as the "first-person narrative that describes an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 451). Data from the teachers' personal artifacts were compared with the field notes and interviews and together they elicited the participants' personal perspectives, opinions, and conceptions.

Study in the Field

I conducted the field study in the Faculty of English Language Education at AU located in Guangzhou in China. A brief introduction of the physical context is helpful to understand the implementation of my research plans in the field and increase insight into the study.

Field Context: Guangdong, Guangzhou, and the University Town

Guangdong Province is located in the southernmost part of Mainland China, connected with Hong Kong to the east. The province has a land area of 17.98 thousand square kilometers and a sea area of 41.9 thousand square kilometers in a subtropical climate. Rich in natural resources and benefiting from its geographical convenience, Guangdong Province is leading China in industry, agriculture, and international commerce and trade. In addition to numerous big state and private enterprises, many international companies and Sino-foreign joint ventures have built their manufacturing base and research and development centers in the province. As one of the most economically active provinces in China, Guangdong has stood first for years in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and in residents' savings

(http://www.gd.gov.cn/gdgk/sqgm/200606/t20060612_372.htm).

Guangzhou is the capital city and the political, economic, and educational center of Guangdong Province. Close to the South China Sea, Guangzhou is called the South Gate of China. This prosperous metropolis covers an area of 7,424 square kilometers and is home to 11 million local residents and immigrants from other areas of China. The advantageous geographic location, convenient transportation, and vigorous international trade make Guangzhou one of the most attractive cities to international businessmen and

investors. The local dialect is Cantonese, but Putonghua, the official dialect in China, is widely used in schools and public services (www.guangzhou.gov.cn).

Because of the increased university enrollment of students in the past decade, the Guangdong Government decided to build a University Town in Panyu District, an area in the south of Guangzhou. The University Town is 40 square kilometers, accommodating the new campuses and facilities of 10 state and provincial universities in Guangzhou. With an investment of RMB¥30 billion (US$ 3.53 billion) from the Guangdong Government, the construction of the University Town started in January 2003 and was completed in August 2004. Twelve thousand students moved into the University Town in the fall term 2004 (www.guangzhou.gov.cn/special/2006/node_969). New bus routes extended to the University Town, and by the end of 2005, the Guangzhou Metro extended from Guangzhou downtown to the University Town, making transportation between Guangzhou and Panyu much easier and faster.

AU has a new campus in the University Town. From my conversation with Lin as well as from the bulletin notice on the AU campus, I learned that the new campus was called the "South Campus," and the original campus was known as the "North Campus." In the field study, I used the same terms to refer to AU's two campuses.

Entering the Field

On October 9th, 2005, I arrived in Guangzhou, and although I had read and heard about the city, I still felt shocked at the first sight. The tall, straight palm trees, the warm, humid air outside the airport, and the summer wear of the people all reminded me that I had come to a subtropical city. I felt that I was totally a stranger to this city because I did not know anyone here except Lin. I expected to explore the thoughts and experiences of

some college English teachers about whom I had no ideas. Would I recruit enough

participants for my study? More importantly, would they be willing to share their lives

with me? Could I collect enough data within three months?

The North Campus and South Campus of AU

After settling down in a small apartment on the original North Campus, I had time

to walk around to become familiar with the situation. It was a beautiful campus: A creek

ran through it and a grand, newly built library stood in mid-campus between two roads

shaded in banyan trees. The classrooms looked to be built in typical auditorium style,

able to accommodate 40-60 students. Long rows of desks and chairs were fixed to the

floor, facing the teacher's desk, the blackboard, and a television on a stand in front of the

room. It was the kind of classroom often seen in Chinese universities, set up for lecture-

style instruction that had been prevailing at this university.

What impressed me was the construction going on in a quadrangle in front of the

library. Lin told me that there used to be a few old buildings there, but the university had

decided to build a garden called the "Square of Culture" on that site; the old buildings

were pulled down and the construction was to be completed before the 40th anniversary

celebration of the university in early November. I saw the workers and caterpillar

machinery working on the rubble, but I doubted the possibility of their meeting the target

date because there were only about 25 days left. My doubt faded every time I passed by

the quad. In a few days, all the concrete blocks and bricks were removed; in another day,

the shape of the new landscape appeared: cobbled paths curved through the quad, which

soon was covered with grass and rimmed with flowers. A few days before the

anniversary celebration, a pavilion was erected, and sculptures of world-famous people—

Beethoven, da Vinci, Galileo, Einstein, Confucius, Qu Yuan (an ancient Chinese poet),

Lu Xun (a modern Chinese writer and thinker), and a few others—were tastefully

arranged in the quad. Just like magic, the "Square of Culture" wonderfully appeared in

front of the library, evoking a liberal spirit of education.

The South Campus of AU was about a one-hour bus ride from the North Campus.

The bus ran on the layers of the overpass across Guangzhou downtown, onto the highway,

across a long, curved bridge over the Pearl River—the longest river in South China—and

down into the University Town on the island of Panyu. A new urban area came into my

view: brand new boulevards, gardens and landscapes, supermarkets, and banks. Each

university was distinguished from the others by architecture styles. AU's South Campus

had the full facilities of a university—student and faculty residences, canteens and

cafeterias, classroom and lab buildings, library, bookstores, standard track and field

playground, gym, and courts for basketball, volleyball, and tennis. Each classroom was

equipped with modern technology equipment. In front of the classroom was a control

panel desk with a built-in computer hooked up to the internet, a DVD player, a projector

fixed to the ceiling, and a 54-inch flat screen hung in the front corner. Students had

individual, moveable desks and chairs. The classrooms had big windows with heavy,

creamy-color curtains and central air-conditioning. Here I saw the best-equipped

classrooms that I had ever seen in China. I was told that the government had invested

RMB¥1.3 billion (US$1.53 million) in AU's South Campus. Looking at the brand new

buildings and modern facilities, I seemed to be able to perceive the determined ambitions

and keen expectations of Guangdong Province for higher education.

The Faculty of English Language Education and the English Programs

Established in 2001, the Faculty of English Language Education was responsible for providing English language teaching to the non-major English students (that is, students from disciplines other than English language) throughout the 4 years of their undergraduate studies. By October 2005, the Faculty was staffed with 81 Chinese teachers of English, including 12 associate professors, 30 lecturers, and 39 assistant instructors, fifty-six of whom had Master's Degrees. The Faculty also hired six faculty members from English-speaking countries.

Beginning in 2000, using the National College English Curriculum (College English Revision Team, 1999) as a guideline, the college English programs at AU underwent a reform in objectives, teaching materials, teaching methods, and assessment. The new college English programs consisted of two stages: the foundation English program and the advanced English program. The foundation program was compulsory for the first- and second-year students. "Comprehensive English" was the central course throughout the first 2 years of university study, supplemented with the "Learning Strategies" course in the first year and an the "Audio, Visual, Oral English" course in the second year. Students had 6 hours of English class per week, totaling 432 class hours over 4 terms or 2 academic years. The advanced program for third- and fourth-year students included the courses "English Culture and Literature," "Translation," "Advanced Reading," and "Cooperative Writing." Students had the option of registering in the courses according to their needs and interests. Because the core of the foundation English program was "Comprehensive English," it underwent reform in objectives, materials, methodology, and assessment; these revisions are discussed in detail below.

Objectives. "Comprehensive English" had 4 class hours per week or 288 class hours in 2 academic years. The course objectives were described as follows:

> This is a basic course that trains students' comprehensive English skills, i.e., the skills of English listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as translation between English and Chinese. This course helps students to lay a solid foundation of English, acquire new methods of language learning, and improve their cultural perception in order to meet the needs of the social development and economic reconstruction of China. (Artifact: Faculty Document)

To sum up, the objectives of the "Comprehensive English" course aimed at developing students' (a) knowledge and skills of English, (b) cross-cultural knowledge and awareness, and (c) language learning strategies.

Teaching materials. Instead of adopting the commercially available textbooks popular among other Chinese universities, the Faculty of English Education at AU developed their own teaching materials for the "Comprehensive English" course and the supplementary "Learning Strategy" and "Visual, Audio, and Oral English" courses. Two textbooks were developed for "Comprehensive English": *Transitions* (Books 1 and 2) for the first year learning, and *Viewpoints* (Books 1 and 2) for the second year learning. The textbooks accommodated the issues of language difficulty, content of learning, and relevance to students' experience.

> [*Transitions*] is designed to be relevant to the lives and learning experiences of first-year students as they confront the reality and responsibility of "life way from home." The text and exercises are carefully constructed in a sequence of communicative tasks and strategies that often challenge the students in their first year of study at university. The teaching materials [*Viewpoints*] are in standard English and cover a variety of topics on rich, interesting and thought-provoking content. Students are exposed to a large quantity of interrelated, cognitively challenging language materials that will help them lay a strong foundation in English. Teachers are encouraged to use complementary materials that contain the latest information related to learning. (Artifact: Faculty Document)

The features of the teaching materials for "Comprehensive English" were (a) oriented to students' real-life experience, (b) rich in content, and (c) open to further material development by teachers.

Teaching methodology. With the content of learning being sequenced with communicative tasks and strategies, the Faculty advocated learner-centered approaches to language teaching. Teachers using the learner-centered approach were advised to:

1. use student-centered activities in classroom teaching, such as pair work, speech, presentations, discussions, role-plays, and debates;
2. supervise students' presentation and make it an assignment that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills;
3. interact with students in classroom teaching;
4. transmit knowledge and encourage independent thinking; and
5. employ multimedia facilities and audio/visual materials. (Artifact: Faculty Document)

This description of the student-centered approach suggests four aspects of language learning, teaching, and the teacher-student relationship: (a) language is learned through using it in communicative tasks and interactions; (b) teachers should integrate language skills in tasks and activities; (c) the encouragement of critical thinking is equally important to the transmission of knowledge; and (d) the teachers should learn students' needs and adjust their teaching accordingly. This student-centered approach is quite different from the traditional college English teaching practice, that is, teacher-lectures focusing on grammar, vocabulary and reading.

Assessment. Students' learning was assessed in both formative and summative approaches. The formative approach evaluated students' progress through their performance in presentations, journals, and homework assignment, and it accounted for 60% of their total mark. The final examination accounts for the remaining 40%. The

national College English Test Bands 4 and 6 (CETs-4/6) were no longer tied to students'

graduation and degrees (Artifact: Faculty Document).

     Innovation in College English Teaching at AU. The English programs centered on

the "Comprehensive English" course at AU were a change from the "Intensive Reading"

practice prevailing in college English teaching elsewhere in China. In the first place, the

teaching objectives were not merely limited to language knowledge and skills, but

included learning strategies and cross-cultural knowledge that would facilitate the

learning of English. Second, the teaching materials were self-developed and close to the

needs of the AU students; this changed the previous scenario that a small group of

experts developed unified college English textbooks for all the university students in

China with disregard for students' different English proficiencies and their different

needs for learning the English language. Third, from a theoretical perspective, learner-

centered communicative language teaching challenged the Chinese traditional teacher-

centered practice in general and the prevailing "Intensive Reading" practice in college

English classrooms in particular. The difference between learner-centered communicative

language teaching and teacher-centered "Intensive Reading" derives from different

theoretical views of knowledge, teaching, and learning rather than teaching techniques.

Finally, the detachment of the national CETs-4/6 from students' graduation reduced the

impact of the high-stakes testing on language teaching and learning, such as test-oriented

teaching and learning: no longer was teaching and learning aimed just at passing the test.

With these changes made in AU's English teaching, the college English teachers at AU

were unavoidably involved in the innovation and implementation of the new curriculum.

Recruiting Participants

Upon entering the field, I made a list of potential participants on the recommendation of Lin and the Dean of the Faculty of English Language Education. Lin named seven teachers who, she thought, met the criteria for participants in my study, including herself. She was very interested in my study and willing to volunteer to be a participant. My rationale for asking for the Dean's recommendation was that a part of the Dean's work was to evaluate the teachers. He suggested a list of teachers who, in his words, had "changed a lot in their teaching." Most of his nominations overlapped with Lin's. According to their recommendations, I had nine candidates on the list. I then talked to these teachers and sent them a letter of information. Four teachers could not participate in my study: One was not interested in my research; another did not really meet the inclusion criteria for participants; two others were interested but not available, either for health reason or because of conflicting schedules for the in-depth interviews. I finally selected five teachers who met the inclusion criteria, showed interest in my study, and had time for the interviews. They were Lin, Ouyang, Song, Murong, and Jing.

Because I kept the list open, I could invite Yuan, an additional teacher, to be a participant. I met Yuan on the shuttle bus to the South Campus soon after I started the classroom observations. She happened to sit behind me, so we chatted all the way on the bus. I learned that she had taught college English in an inland province and studied in a Master's program for 2 years in the United States before being hired by AU, where as well as teaching, she co-edited one of the textbooks for the English programs at AU. Her statement about how she had been changed by participating in the textbook development aroused my interest:

I feel that by developing our own textbook, my relationship with the curriculum changed. I feel I gain a much deeper understanding of the curriculum. Now I train the new teachers to use this textbook, but I hope all teachers could develop their own teaching materials. [In the past,] I was an instructor or a teacher, just teaching without thinking about curriculum things. Now I develop from an instructor to a curriculumist. I hope all instructors here develop their own textbook and become a curriuclumist. (Field notes: Yuan)

Perceiving that her experience could contain a very powerful insight into language teacher development, I decided to invite her to participate in my study. She carefully read the letter of information, agreed to join, and signed the consent form.

Three weeks after I entered the field, six college English teachers at AU signed the consent forms to be volunteer participants in my study. The profile in Table 7 presents their educational backgrounds, professional training, and years of teaching before and after they taught at AU.

Table 7

Profiles of the Participating College English Teachers

| Participants | Educational Background | | | Teaching Experience | | |
	B.A	M.A.	TTP	Before AU (Location/Years)	AU (Years)	Total (Years)
Lin	English (1980s)	Graduate courses (non-degree)	TTP	Northwest China 11	8	19
Ouyang	English (l980s)	Applied linguistics (2003)		Southwest China 7	11	18
Song	English (1980s)	Applied linguistics (1997)	ATTCs TTP	Northeast China 8	5	13
Jing	English (1980s)	Social linguistics (2001)		Northwest China 9	4	13
Yuan	English (1990s)	Diagnostic reading (2001)		Southwest China 5	4	9
Murong	English (1990s)	American studies (2002)		Southwest China 3	3	6

Note. TTP = Teacher Training Program; ATTCs = Advanced Teacher Training Courses.

Collecting Data

I implemented the plan I had made for data collection during the field research. Nevertheless, I had to make minor changes because of situations in the field. Firstly, it was impossible for me to conduct classroom observations and interviews in the same week when I recruited participants in a snowballing strategy. For example, in one week in November, I was doing the first observation in Jing's class, the second observation in Ouyang's class, and the first interview with Murong. Secondly, I found it impossible to conduct in-depth interviews right after the classroom observations because the teachers had to immediately teach another session, or they had to catch the shuttle bus home after a day's teaching. So I had to make an appointment with each participant about each interview time. In order to help them recall the specific classroom situations or the decisions they had made, I made observation notes in as much detail as possible and marked the places where I had questions to ask in the follow-up interview. Thirdly, three in-depth interviews were not feasible to all participants. Two teachers were too busy to schedule three interviews, but they agreed to prolong each interview time so that I could ask all my questions; I therefore adjusted their interviews to occur after the first and third classroom observations, so that I could ask as many questions as possible elicited from the observations and the interviews. Each of these two participant had at least a total of three hours of interviews, in which I asked all the questions that I asked in three interviews with the other participants.

Participant Observation and Observation Notes

In the field, I immersed myself in the context and developed rapport with my participants and other teachers. When I introduced myself, I mentioned my experience of

teaching college English in Xi'an, and my similar background quickly shortened the distance between me—a newcomer and an outsider—and the teachers. During the lunch break, I had lunch with them in the cafeteria, joining in and listening to their conversations. When observing a class, I sat in a back corner of the classroom with the students, so that my presence would not affect the teaching and classroom activities, and, at the same time, I could better observe the teacher and the teacher-student interactions.

In the classroom observations, I was both an insider and a spectator. Having been a college English teacher myself, I was familiar with the methods and the organization of the content that my participants taught in their classrooms. I could distinguish the traditional teaching activities from the alternative activities they employed. I could perceive and understand the intentions hidden in certain classroom activities. For example, Jing arranged a listening practice by stopping the audio at every sentence so that the students could jot down the exact words of a passage. Familiar with this listening-dictation activity, I knew that Jing intended to train students' accuracy in listening. At the same time, I was aware of my role as a researcher. My research experience and knowledge of language teaching theories reminded me that pursuing accuracy rather than fluency was a feature of the Intensive Reading tradition. I was alert and kept observing whether or not Jing's interest in accuracy was also embodied in any other learning activities in her classroom.

The most difficult part of the classroom observation process was to identify some critical incidents in the teachers' instructions. Richards and Farrell (2005) defined a critical incident as "an unplanned and unanticipated event that occurs during a lesson and that serves to trigger insights about some aspect of teaching and learning" (p. 113). He

believed that critical incidents are valuable to the researcher in that they "reveal some of the underlying principles, beliefs, and assumptions that shape classroom practices" (p. 117). There are no objective criteria for a critical incident; rather, it is the personal understanding of teaching and interpretation of meaning attributed to an incident that makes it "critical" (p.114). In my observation, I noticed an episode in Lin's teaching:

> Lin was taking the students to the reading comprehension questions for the text. She was explaining IQ and EQ—"high IQ helps find a good job, but good EQ leads to promotion and success." (Field notes: Lin)

Although explaining words was a common activity in English language classrooms in China, even the Intensive Reading teachers, who tended to go in detail into the meaning and usage of words, would seldom explain the words in the after-reading exercise, not to mention such common terms as IQ (Intelligence quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient). Based on the sentence she spoke, I felt that she did not explain these two terms for linguistic purposes, but that she was communicating her particular care about the students' personal growth. I identified her explanation of IQ and EQ as a critical incident. Her concern for the students' integrity was then an emerging theme that I followed upon in other classroom observations and in the interviews.

I took running notes of what I saw and heard in the classroom, including the time of the class, the number of students, and the activities and procedures of teaching. I sketched the classroom settings, such as how the space was arranged and what technology facilities were present and used. I used symbols, letters, words, and phrases to record the happenings in the classroom, such as the learning activities, the topics for discussion, and the interaction between the teacher and students. The notes of the second and third sessions of classroom observations were focused on the instructional routine,

the teacher's response to both expected and unexpected events, and teacher-student

verbal and nonverbal interactions. I also jotted down the events that I did not understand,

and I would ask the teacher for explanation after class or in the interviews (see Appendix

E).

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) wrote: "Field notes are produced in a quiet place

away from the site of observation and interaction with people in the field. They include

reflection, preliminary analysis, initial interpretations, [and] new questions to be

answered and tested in the next days and weeks of observation" (p. 18). Writing the field

notes in my apartment on the North Campus, I translated the sketches, symbols, and

messy handwritten notes into text. The observed nonverbal behaviors of the teacher and

students in classroom were transcribed into written accounts, which produced data for the

analysis of the teacher-student relationships and the teacher's role in students' learning

the English language. I also wrote down my reflections, impressions, and analysis of

what I had seen and heard, updated the focus for the next observation, and listed a few

questions that I would ask in the follow-up interviews. I set up a folder for each

participant in my laptop, and I put my edited observational notes, my reflections and

analysis, and my personal conversations with each participant in the appropriate

participant folder.

In-Depth Interviews

I had the participants suggest the time and place of the three in-depth interviews

for their convenience and comfort. Some participants preferred to have the interview in

their office or staff lounge on the South Campus; some chose to be interviewed in their

office on the North Campus. Lin preferred to have the interviews in the living room of

her apartment over a cup of tea. These settings were naturalistic for in-depth and wide-ranging interviews because their office and living room were the most common spaces where these teachers talked with colleagues and friends. Feeling relaxed and natural, my participants told classroom stories and explained the intentions behind their teaching actions and spontaneous decisions. We had a lot of laughter, sometimes sighs and tears, like collegial friends in conversation.

The first round of interviews was aimed at collecting data about participants' education background, early teaching experience, and conceptions of language teaching prior to working at AU. I started the interview with easy and fact-based questions, such as their educational background and the fields of study in their Master's programs. To identify their prior beliefs about language teaching, I asked them to comment on their early teaching methods, their relationship with students, and the teaching outcomes. I then was interested to know how they looked at English language teaching at AU, what teaching methods they used now, and how their teaching at AU was different from that in their previous institutions. Listening to their comments about teaching, I compared what they said with what I had observed in their classrooms and asked questions to invite explanations.

The second and third rounds of interviews were more focused on the teachers' beliefs and conceptions. The questions were more reflection-based, inviting the participants to look retrospectively and introspectively. I started with a classroom activity, a teaching decision, or a piece of teacher talk that I had observed in their classroom instruction. For example, I asked them to recount the most impressive teaching experience in their career or to explain what made them spend less time now on teaching

language points than before. They described the qualities of good language teachers based on their experience, values, and beliefs. The linguistic signals for the participants' beliefs included "I guess," "I think," "I believe," "my principle," and "my philosophy." I probed their beliefs with such questions as: "Why do you think . . .," "Why do you believe . . .," or "Can you give an example?" The participants elaborated their beliefs and conceptions with anecdotes and stories of their teaching experiences.

Most participants were very responsive; they explained their purposes for a certain teaching action and the changes that they had made in instruction by connecting to other teaching actions or by telling a story. Their language signals for elaboration were "for example," "another example," "last year," or "I once had . . ." Sometimes their response to one question was so extensive as to cover another interview question, which I would then skip as I moved on to other questions. Their extensive responses provided rich information and emerging themes that I could follow and probe. A couple of participants, however, were less responsive. They just answered the questions without much expansion and elaboration. I then encouraged them to talk more by asking such questions as: "You said group discussion can improve students' English proficiency. Can you explain why?" "Why do you think communicative language teaching is not fit for non-English major students?" By responding to these questions, the participants explained their intentions, rationale and plan behind their classroom actions and articulated their beliefs, assumptions and knowledge about language teaching and learning.

I followed the interview guide but did not stick to it. As the interviews were conducted in natural and friendly settings, and as I already had rapport with the

participants, the interviews became conversations between colleagues and friends. The interview guide helped me direct the conversation and kept it from being sidetracked in extensive talk.

Before each interview, I reviewed the question guide to ensure that I would ask good questions in appropriate ways. I deleted the questions that repeated other questions in nature and added new questions based on the information and themes emerging from the participants' responses. I also prepared alternative questions in case the participants were confused or had little response. After each interview, I transcribed the voice data immediately, when everything was still fresh in my mind. If I did not have time for transcription, I would listen to the audio and summarize the major facts, points, and opinions of the participants. I would record my doubts and questions and use them as a focus for the next observation or interview. For example, when transcribing an interview with Song, I found that he expressed inconsistent opinions about the value of classroom discussion. I typed my doubts in red in brackets, under the transcript of his expression:

> (I need to clarify Song's attitude toward classroom discussion regarding language learning. Does he want to say: it's a high level use of knowledge, but not directly related to language learning and improvement of proficiency? I'm confused. Probably I didn't make the question clear.) (Note on Interview transcript: Song)

Then I developed an additional question: "What is your purpose of using classroom discussion?" and I put this question to him in the next interview.

Throughout the interviews, I was not only a keen and interested listener but also an organizer of the wide-ranging conversations. I asked a question, inserted a comment, clarified a point, and encouraged the talk to go on. Immersed in the experience and stories of those participants, I shared their laughter and complaints. When a participant finished a story of an experience, I summarized the story into main points. By so doing, I

summed up what I heard and checked with the participant that my understanding was correct. Then I directed the interview to another question.

Transcribing the Interviews

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) suggested that transcription should focus on participants' spoken language and nonverbal behaviors. Spoken language is the stories told by participants that contain the meaning attributed to specific behavior. Nonverbal behavior is a "detailed monitoring of human behavior in situations where videotaping is not possible or inappropriate, such as in classrooms" (p. 19). Sixteen in-depth interviews with my participants produced 18 hours of voice data. I tried to transcribe the interviews right after they were conducted and transcribed them verbatim. When a participant emphasized a word, a phrase, or a sentence in the talk, I transcribed this piece of verbal data in upper case letters. I bracketed the participant's nonverbal response in the transcription, such as [laughing], [hesitated], or [thinking a few seconds], so that I could recall how the participant responded to a certain question at the time of the interview. As each interview lasted from 1-2 hours, verbatim transcription required large chunks of time. I transcribed half of the interviews in the field and the other half right after coming back from the fieldwork. The verbatim transcription of the interviews and the nonverbal responses of the participants prepared the detailed transcripts for intensive data analysis after the completion of the fieldwork.

Collecting Artifacts

The official artifacts that I collected included posters, newspaper reports, teaching materials, and the information posted on the website of the Faculty of English Language Education at AU. With the support of the Dean, I photocopied some Faculty posters, such

as lecture notices, announcements of meetings, and arrangements for final exams. I photocopied newspaper reports about the achievements of the Faculty of English Language Education. I also collected the published textbooks developed by the teachers and the materials printed in pamphlets for pilot teaching. I downloaded the information from the Faculty webpage about the English programs and courses, the textbooks, the objectives of teaching, the suggested approach to teaching, and assessment. These documents provided me with detailed information about the curriculum innovation in the college English programs at AU. A part of these data were used to describe the research context in this chapter, including introducing the English programs in the Faculty of English Language Education at AU.

I collected some personal artifacts from my participants. Lin provided her journals, some letters and card from students, and a rubric of students' oral presentations, all of which I photocopied. Lin and Ouyang allowed me to download their lesson plans to my computer. Jing and Yuan sent me the teaching materials that they had been involved in developing. On my last day working on the South Campus, I received a DVD of two participants' classroom teaching that had been videotaped by the Technological Support Office of the Faculty of English Language Education. I used all these artifacts as backup data in data analysis, and they increased my understanding of observational notes and the participants' narratives in the interviews.

By the time I left AU after 3 months, I had completed my fieldwork and collected all the data from the field research: field notes and observational notes, interviews, and the Faculty's documents and my participants' personal documents.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of three steps. First, I set up an analytical framework based on the literature regarding conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education and in language curriculum. Then I conducted intensive data analysis, including coding the transcripts, categorizing the data, and seeking data patterns. After all the data were sorted and categorized, I wrote up the findings based on the data patterns identified in the analysis.

Analytical Framework

In data analysis, I needed to identify how far each participant moved in his or her teaching by comparing previous teaching methods before joining AU with current teaching methods at AU and by comparing previous understandings of language teaching and learning with current conceptions of language teaching and learning. I outlined the following elements to be identified in the data analysis:

1. Each participant's teaching methods in early teaching elsewhere and prior to teaching at AU;

2. Each participant's understanding and conceptions of teaching methodology in the past;

3. Each participant's current teaching methods at AU;

4. Each participant's current conceptions and beliefs of language teaching;

5. Comparing (1) and (3) to identify whether or not any changes took place in each participant's classroom teaching methodology;

6. Comparing (2) and (4) to identify whether or not any changes took place in each participant's conceptions and beliefs of language learning and teaching;

7. Identifying what factors might have influenced the change in teaching methods and conceptions of teaching of each participant.

To identify the participants' teaching methods and their beliefs and conceptions of language teaching, I used the conceptual framework "Beliefs and Conceptions of Teaching in ESL/EFL in Post-Secondary Education" as the analytical framework for data analysis (see Table 6). This conceptual framework integrates the studies of language curriculum and conceptions of teaching in higher education, which I reviewed in Chapter 2. It describes the classification of language curricula, teaching methods, and underlying beliefs and conceptions of teaching in a developmental sequence, from a teacher-centered orientation to a student-centered orientation, from structural approaches to communicative approaches. Although this conceptual framework was discussed in Chapter 2, I put Table 6 here as a reminder.

(Analytical Framework): Beliefs and Conceptions of Teaching in ESL/EFL in Post-Secondary Education

Grammar-structural Approaches (Propositional Paradigm)			Communicative Approaches (Process Paradigm)	
Teacher-Centered Teaching		Transition Stage	Student-Centered Teaching	
Grammar-Translation Method	Structural Approach	Functional-notional Approach	Task-based/Content-based Language Teaching	Process/Procedural Approach
Imparting knowledge	Transmitting structured knowledge	Teacher-student interaction/apprenticeship; facilitating understanding	Helping students develop expertise; negotiate meaning	Encouraging knowledge creation, conceptual change, intellectual development

Methods for Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two parts: in-the-field data analysis and intensive data analysis. In-the-field data analysis was to generate data, find emerging topics in the fieldwork, and make the observations and interviews more focused. Intensive data analysis was to organize, analyze, and interpret the data collected in the field.

In-the-Field Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data began as soon as I entered the field and continued throughout the process of data collection (see LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 2002; Wolcott, 1994). In-the-field data analysis served two purposes: (a) making decisions about data collection and (b) identifying emerging topics and recurring patterns. Writing field notes was a time for deciding what to focus on in the upcoming observations. I analyzed how an observed event was related to my research questions and what questions I wanted to probe in the next observations and interviews. When transcribing the voice data, I compared a participant's explanation of a teaching act with the stories he or she told on other occasions, so that I could find the recurrent meanings as well as the conflicting explanations within a data set and across the different data sets of interview transcripts and field notes. For the interviews that I could not transcribe right away, I listened to the voice data and jotted down the main points and interesting facts, particularly any conflicting explanations and recurring topics. I was interested in those inconsistent or conflicting explanations when the participants talked about a teaching activity or about their beliefs about language teaching. The discrepancy between what the teacher did and said could reflect conceptual conflicts deep in his or her beliefs, and this was extremely relevant to my study. Identification of discrepancies in the

participant's teaching and thinking made my upcoming observations and interviews more focused and in depth.

Intensive Data Analysis

Data analysis after leaving the field was inductive to recognize the categories and patterns that emerged from data. I employed "three-step analysis" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994): (a) segmenting the text data into items and units of content with topics or codes, (b) grouping the topics into larger clusters to form categories, and (c) developing patterns. The sets of patterns come to comprise a whole picture (Patton, 2002).

Before coding the raw text data (transcripts and the field notes), I conducted a pilot coding to test the stability and credibility of my coding scheme. I invited HF, a graduate student at the Queen's Faculty of Education, to work with me, and we each coded a transcript back to back. HF had learned coding of qualitative data in the course on Qualitative Research. Before coding, I briefly introduced my research and the interview questions in the selected transcript. Comparing the coding on both prints, I found that we were consistent in segmentation and elicitation of topics. (For detail, see Pilot Coding Report in Appendix G)

In the first step of data analys, I found that coding 350 pages of interview transcripts and field notes was an exhausting and frustrating process. I numbered all the lines of the text of each participant's responses on the left margin of the transcript, segmented the text, and named the segments. I found it even more frustrating to name a chunk of data; I had to be very careful that the topics of the data chunks were descriptive, not interpretive, that is, the topic should describe the subject matter of the data chunk, not

my interpretation of what it was. I revisited the coded transcripts on a regular basis to make sure that the topics were descriptive of the data segments. I then made tentative codes for the topics. For each coded transcript, I created a codebook. I made a list of the topics in one column in the code book and marked their line numbers in brackets; in the other column, I made codes to represent these topics. Each code contained the information of a topic or similar topics and the location of the segment(s) in the original data transcripts. For example, the code "LingK" was for "linguistic knowledge [356]" and "knowledge of language [599]" respectively in line 356 and line 599. I developed more than 100 codes for the topics. These codes needed to be clustered in categories.

In the second step of data analysis, I put the data segments and their topics into categories. A *category* is an abstract term that represents the meaning of similar topics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Categorizing topics requires even more intensive comparing and contrasting. I used coloured pencils to mark the topics, using one colour for each group of topics similar in meaning and themes. I wrote down on a separate sheet the topics that were marked with the same colour, so that all the topics were clustered and organized in groups. I compared the topics in each group and entitled the group with a name that best captured the essential meaning of the topics in it. Then I compared the clusters of topics to see if one cluster was a subtopic of another cluster. Classification and organization of the clusters produced 18 categories of data. I wrote my analysis and thoughts as memos to the classified groups and categories of data, including commentaries on the meaning of the category, explanation of some specific aspects of the category, and description of the relationship among the categories. These memos were useful in seeking for patterns at the third level of data analysis.

In the third step of data analysis, I searched for patterns from the data categories. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), a pattern is a relationship among categories, and "major patterns serve as the framework for reporting the findings and organizing the reports" (p. 476). LeCompte and Schensul (1999) called a pattern the "structure" that consists of "large groups of patterns or relationships among patterns in the data that begin to build an overall cultural portrayal or theory explaining a cultural phenomenon" (p. 68). Looking for patterns is to re-pattern the categories, dimensions, and classifications of themes based on the relationship among them.

I ordered the 18 categories chronologically so that I could identify the changes over time in the teaching careers of the participants. I then combined and subsumed the categories according to the relationship among them. For instance, the teachers' exposure to the traditional learning and teaching environment was logically related to their teaching methods and the formation of their traditional beliefs about language teaching. Based on the logical relations and chronological sequence, the data categories of each participant were regrouped into four broader categories: (a) early teaching practice and beliefs, (b) current teaching practice and beliefs, (c) identified conceptual change, and (d) factors contributing to change. These four categories of data formed the vertical pattern of a participant, unfolding a storyline about his or her growth in the language teaching profession.

The vertical patterns allowed me to make horizontal comparisons across the storylines of all the participants. The horizontal comparison of the categories indicated the similarities and differences in educational background and early teaching context among the participants, in their use of communicative methods in classroom instruction,

in their interpretations of language teaching and learning, and in their thoughts about teacher-student relationships. The similarities and differences in participants' current teaching methodology and beliefs of teaching classified the individual storylines into three types of conceptual development: (a) change in teaching methods but not significant change in conceptions and beliefs, which I termed as "on the way to change"; (b) change in both teaching methods and conceptions accompanied by painful conceptual conflict, which I described as "bearings lost and bearings regained"; and (c) change in both teaching methods and beliefs and acquisition of curriculum perspectives, which I called "from language teacher to curriculum developer." These three types of conceptual change indicate that my participants were at different stages of conceptual development in their teaching career.

Writing up the Findings

In the process of writing up the findings, I struggled to find a balance between description, analysis, and interpretation. My first problem was the selection of data. As not all data needed to be reported, I had to decide what stories, patterns, and quotations best answered the research questions. The process of writing was full of analysis and comparison. I kept re-reading the data. Once the data were selected, I had to see that the participants' point of view was "painstakingly produced through extensive, closely edited quotations to convey that what [was] presented [was] not the fieldworker's view but authentic and representative remarks of the participants" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 36). I had to keep alert that I did not alter the participants' views when selecting and editing their narratives and stories.

The second problem in writing up the findings concerned thick description. Schwandt (1997) said that a thick description of social action is actually "to interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, and motivations that characterize a particular episode. It is this interpretive characteristics of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick" (p. 161). I realized that 'thick description' did not require that I pile up the facts and evidence, but that a descriptive account should go with my analysis and interpretation. I selected the most representative patterns, evidence, and quotations. The selected data with my interpretations constructed the description of what the participants were, what changes they had made, and how the changes took place.

The third problem that I encountered was interpretation. I often faced the dilemma of whose interpretation I should report, the participants' or mine? The participants explained what was going on and why, and their words contained their interpretation of the events and experiences. For instance, every participant claimed to have achieved a big change in language teaching since coming to AU, and they used such words as "big," "huge," or "dramatic" to indicate their interpretation of the differences that they had made. To interpret their interpretations, I used triangulation of data, analyzed the evidence from different sources of data, and compared data within and across cases. My interpretation "tells readers what that story means" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 2). It is my job to attach meaning and importance to data, explain what I have seen and heard, and indicate the significance hidden in the claimed change. My job was to interpret the interpreted world.

The findings were reported in "a comprehensive, holistic narrative description and interpretation which integrates all aspects of group life and illustrates its complexity"

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 36). The report presented the individual stories of all 6 participants in three types of conceptual change. Each individual story was in a narrative and chronological structure of "Early Teaching Experience," "Current Teaching Experience," and "Conceptual Change." The analysis focused on critical events and on identifying the nature of change that each participant had achieved. Their stories and experiences indicate the complexity of conceptual change in the context of language curriculum reform at AU.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have described my research design, fieldwork, data collection, and data analysis. I started with a brief introduction of the problems in TESOL research and in the study of conceptions of teaching in post-secondary education. Those problems justified my decision to use an ethnographic approach to conducting my research, and I designed the research strategies and data collection methods according to ethnographic research principles. In the fieldwork, I carried out my research plans step by step: recruiting participants, observing classes, conducting interviews, and collecting artifacts. I immersed myself in the life of my participants, developed rapport with them, and collected all the data that I had planned. When I first stood on the AU campus, I was not sure what I would get from the field; after three months working with my participants, I found my fieldwork fruitful. I realized that I was not only a research instrument but also a learner. While examining my participants' teaching practices and conceptual development of, I gained a deeper understanding of the research that I was engaged in.

I use the writer-developed conceptual framework as an analytical framework. This analytical framework helped me classify the data categories and patterns in data

analysis. I conducted data analysis throughout the field study and the writing of findings,

using three steps of data analysis to segment and code the text data, group and categorize

the segments, and find the patterns from the categories. Emerging from the procedure of

data analysis were three patterns of conceptual change that occurred to the participating

Chinese college English teachers in my study, which I report as findings in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

THREE PATTERNS OF CONCEPTUAL CHANGE

This chapter presents the six AU language teachers' change in teaching methodologies and in conceptions and beliefs about language teaching. Based on field research and data analysis, I present three types of conceptual change that occurred in the beliefs of my participants: (a) "On the Way to Change" tells the stories of Song and Jing, who changed their teaching methods but achieved insignificant change in beliefs about language teaching; (b) "Bearings Lost and Bearings Regained" reports the stories of Murong, Lin, and Ouyang, who altered their instructional methods and conceptions through painful reflection on their new roles in classroom, the goals of language teaching, and the curriculum innovation; and (c) "From a Teacher to a Curriculum Developer" presents the conceptual change of Yuan, whose beliefs about language teaching were broadened to the vision of curriculum and education after her participation in the textbook development. Each type of change is reported in specific stories of the teacher participants and summarized in a table. The story of each participant includes a brief description of the participant's background, a comparison of his or her early and current teaching methods, identification of their instructional and conceptual differences, and personal narratives about the factors contributing to his or her conceptual change.

On the Way to Change

In this case pattern, the conceptions of teaching of the two participants, Song and Jing were moving from the teacher-centered category to the transmission category of language teaching. Compared with their conceptions of teaching earlier in their career,

they achieved some conceptual change, but they have not yet moved beyond their early

fundamental beliefs about knowledge, learning and teaching.

<div align="center">*Song's Story*</div>

Song studied English language in a university in Northeast China in the 1980s.

After graduation, he was offered a job teaching college English in his home university.

After teaching for three years, he attended a one-year Advanced Teacher Training

Courses (ATTC) co-organized by the British Council and a Chinese university, in which

he got hands-on help in language teaching methods from the British and Chinese ESL

experts. In the middle 1990s, Song got his Master's degree in applied linguistics. In 2000,

he attended a one-week language teacher training course on how to use the *New College*

English textbooks that suggested a communicative approach to teaching.

Early teaching methodology

Song taught college English for eight years in his home university (excluding his

absence for the ATTC and Master's degree programs) before moving to AU. When he

started to teach, he did not have any knowledge about the CLT approach. He described

how English had been taught in his home university:

> Teachers taught a lot of grammar and vocabulary, structures, and translation.
> Teachers taught an articles on the sentence level. . . . They explained every sentence,
> its structure, grammar, and the use of words. . . . So the teachers had a lot of
> explanation of the reading passages. Also, after the students finished the exercise
> and followed the reading passage again, the teacher had to check the answer, that
> kind of thing, so [everything] was predictable.

The assumption underlying this approach to teaching was that teaching English

should be "from bottom to top," that is, from words and sentences to text. Song believed

that understanding the meaning of sentences would lead to understanding the meaning of

the text.

> They [teachers] had the assumption that if the students understood the meaning of the sentences, they naturally understood the meaning of the text. Teachers thought that teaching English should start from the bottom, like building something. It's from bottom to… it's from bottom to top. If you knew the words and sentences, you naturally understood the whole article.

He also focused his teaching on linguistic rules and knowledge, and he lectured throughout the class about grammar, structure, and vocabulary. The instruction and the classroom interactions were predictable and were controlled by the teacher within the teaching plan.

Song did not know about CLT until he had the opportunity to attend the ATTC program. However, he thought that incorporating CLT was difficult because of three constraints: large classes, students' reluctance to talk, and his limitation in oral English proficiency.

> We had too many students in one class (my class had 50-60 students), so I couldn't pay attention to every student if they did some discussion or activities. And, another thing, the students did not talk much in the class; they didn't have the habit of talking or asking questions in class. Teachers should be responsible for that in some way. I think [on the] teachers' part, teachers should have very good English proficiency; they have to be good in talking in English.

The most important constraint was the limited oral English proficiency of the teachers:

> If you teach in communicative methods, the aspects of the content are more than the content in the textbook, so the [teachers' required] English proficiency is far beyond classroom English. So I think the teacher's English proficiency is the most important.

To Song, the teacher's high oral English proficiency would give him or her a strong ability to gain control of teaching when the content of instruction was off the track of the textbook and when the interactions between the teacher and students became unpredictable in a communicative classroom.

Current Teaching

Song began to work at AU around 2000. At the time of this study, he was teaching the Comprehensive English Course to second-year students. Looking back at his teaching career, he repeated the words "dramatic change" to emphasize the change in his teaching since he came to AU. "After I came to teach in this university, I changed my teaching style, dramatically. First, I can say that I have changed my teaching from the conventional or traditional teaching to [a] more communicative kind of teaching." The change, in fact, was that he combined the traditional teaching practice with the CLT methods:

> My teaching is a mixture of both communicative and traditional. I use some classroom activities, but I also explain the new words and expression and difficult points in the text. You can't have oral practice all the time, or the students will feel bored. I find they need to learn the new words and some grammar and structures. If you didn't teach them the new words, they feel they didn't learn much.

Basically, Song employed the communicative and traditional methods to serve different purposes in his teaching: the classroom activities were to involve the students in oral practice, and the lecturing was used to explain the new words and phrases to meet the students' beliefs about learning.

In my observation of his classroom teaching, I found that Song organized various classroom activities, such as games, dictation, presentations, role plays, and discussions and group work around new words. He confirmed my observation in the interview and explained his purpose for employing those activities.

> I give the students the freedom to use various forms to present their ideas, such as the lesson you saw in my class, students make use of mini-drama, something like that. In other classes, students make use of the interview, or kind of news report. So those kinds of things can make the classroom more lively. If you use the same style again and again, students will get bored.

The classroom activities, in addition to providing the students with the opportunities to practice their oral skills, also served the purpose of establishing a lively learning atmosphere and keeping the students highly interested in learning English.

Sitting among the students, I felt that they were not really involved in many of these classroom activities. In one session on the topic of "Beauty Pageants," Song asked the students from the Department of Computer Science to discuss, in groups, the standards for a beauty pageant and the questions they would ask the pageant candidates. For this task, he arranged three group activities: (a) the students worked out their standards for a beauty contest; (b) they found the specific words for each category of standard; and (c) they made questions with the relevant words. Then the students started to discuss the beauty standards.

> Song moved around the classroom, explaining some words and answering questions. I noticed that the students near me were talking in Chinese. Then he showed on the PowerPoint screen four standards for beauty contest: performance, communication skills, education, and inner beauty. (Field notes: Song)

Song did not invite the students to report their group's discussion results about the beauty standards. Instead, he declared the answer and then moved to the next activity. After a few minutes of the group work, he called for it to end and asked the students to tell what vocabulary they had found for each category of beauty. When few students volunteered the answers, he nominated some students to read the words they had found. After they spoke, he declared the vocabulary for inner beauty, and then moved on to the third activity.

> He asked the students to position themselves as judges and worked out the questions that they would raise to challenge the beauty candidates. In the group that I was close to, one student was talking in Chinese: "OK, for those beauty standards, how about the disabled people? If clear and elegant talking is the standard, are the deaf and mute people excluded? Such as Zou Lihua, she is beautiful, but she is deaf

and can't communicate verbally. Can she participate in the beauty contest?" I asked the student if he would propose that his teacher or classmates make some change to the standards for beauty contest; he said, "No. Forget about it." Then Song asked the students to go to other groups and exchange their pageant questions. (Field notes: Song)

Zou Lihua was a household name in China in 2005. She was a deaf and mute dancing artist starring in the sensational performance "Buddha of a Thousand Hands" on the TV show of the 2005 Chinese New Year's Eve. I could see that the students sitting close to me did not follow the teacher's assignment to make up questions with the given words; they were still questioning the beauty standards and the meaning of the beauty contest.

From these activities, I saw two layers of interests respectively from the teacher and the students, and they were misaligned. Song tried to involve the students in the task, yet the students did not commit real involvement. I could see that Song's purpose for this task was to engage the students in the practice of some words related to beauty, and his focus was on the techniques of making question with those words, not on how meaningful the beauty standards were to the students. Discussion was an activity that would provide the students with an opportunity to practice talking in English. In the follow-up interview, Song confirmed that the purpose of exchanging their questions at the end of the discussion was to share the questions so that they could "know as many questions as possible when they take part in the beauty contest." Probably seeing only a slim chance of being judges who would challenge beauty pageant candidates in English, the students were more interested in thinking about and critiquing the social meaning of a beauty pageant. The student's question about a disabled beauty candidate was critical and could have aroused an open and interesting discussion in the class, but that did not happen. Once the students realized that the learning activities were not genuine, they

chose to follow the teacher's instruction but without really being engaged in the learning activities. Throughout the class session, there was a series of activities like this, and I felt hardly any genuine communication between the instructor and the students.

In my observation, Song tended to encourage the students to participate in oral activities by giving very general, positive appraisal of their oral work, such as "good" and "interesting." Occasionally he clarified what the students wanted to say. He did not give many specific comments on the content and ideas of their talk, nor did he correct their pronunciation and grammar errors. In my interviews with him, he explained that the Faculty did suggest a rubric for appraising the students' oral presentation, but he thought it was "too rigid" and "complex." He preferred a "comprehensive way" of appraising the students' oral work.

> Actually we have got a list of that kind of rubric, but it is rather complex to use. As a teacher, you can see from their… you can judge their oral presentation in a very comprehensive way. . . . Just like when you score a composition, you just read it fast, and you can have an evaluation of it.

Obviously, Song adopted the CLT theory regarding error corrections. According to CLT principles, language teachers should not stop students' talk by correcting their pronunciation and grammar errors. As well, he believed that the students should freely express their ideas and that the teacher should not challenge or guide their ideas:

> I don't challenge them. I just compliment their ideas. Yeah, I would say "good idea" or "very good idea." Actually, all the topics for discussion for the second-year students are something controversial. So different people may have different ideas. . . . Even [if] you challenge them, they may argue against you. I just appreciate their idea, the value of their idea.

Because of his value-free and error-tolerance principles, Song seldom had much constructive and informative feedback to offer the students about their presentations. As a result, the content, ideas, and perspectives that the students had meant to share in the

class were left unattended. He assumed that his general, positive appraisal would encourage them to talk in English and would maintain a friendly teacher-student relationship that he believed was important for the CLT classrooms.

Using a mixture of CLT and traditional methods, Song lectured to explain vocabulary, difficult sentences, and paragraphs and structure of the text. He thought the way he taught reading was different from his early practice. In the past, he had taught reading at the "sentence level," whereas, now he was teaching reading at the "discourse level." By "sentence level," he explained that "teachers explained every sentence, its structure, grammar, and the use of words." By "discourse," he explained that he emphasized the connection of the content and the structure of the text, so that the students whould understand the main idea of the article, the main idea of each paragraph, and the transitions and connections of the paragraphs.

> Discourse level, I think, when the students are learning and reading a passage, they should be clear with the general meaning: what is the main idea of the article? This is the first thing. The second thing is that they should know the structure, the whole structure of this passage. They should know the main idea of each paragraph, and how the meaning of one paragraph leads to the next. So they can understand the article at the macro level or at discourse level, or at a higher level. They don't just understand the individual sentences. We also say: The students should not only see the trees, but also the forest.

In Song's perspective, the objectives of reading were to understand the literal meaning and information, the difficult words and sentences, and the structure of the article, so that the students saw both the "trees" (words, sentence structures) and the "forest" (context, discourse). The discussion after the reading was mostly for oral practice and for the clarification of a correct understanding of the facts and literal meaning of the material.

Compared to his early teaching methods, Song now had some liberties with the textbook in his teaching. On my first day of classroom observation, he came to my seat to

tell me that he would not follow the sequence of the teaching material; he would start with a short, group warm-up work for a listening exercise before dealing with the reading material. I found that he not only re-arranged the sequence of the content in the learning unit but also tailored the content, such as leaving out a suggested activity or adding a piece of a newspaper report. He believed that it was important for teachers to make some changes to the textbook material:

> Nowadays, I think textbooks are not very important in your teaching, not very important. So you can choose a kind of textbook and then you have to make some change to it. The textbook and the change you make to the textbook can make successful teaching.

In my observation, however, Song did not show much flexibility with his teaching plans in the classroom. I found that he followed his planned sequence throughout the session. For example, he had prepared for the standards for beauty, the vocabulary for each category of beauty standards, and the answers to the questions on the PowerPoint slides. His teaching moved along these pre-scheduled tasks and topics with little change. He seemed less interested in finding out the opinions of the students; either their opinions were not important for that learning activity, or he had already prepared the 'right' answers on the PowerPoint slides. He moved on to his next planned activity without checking what the students had come out with from their group discussion. He showed certain flexibility with the textbook, which means that he did not follow everything prescribed in the textbook and he had some space to insert his own ideas into his teaching. Nevertheless, he did not show much flexibility with the implementation of his teaching plans in the classroom, which means that he did not give much space for any unexpected and spontaneous interactions from the students whose questions might change the programmed teaching activities.

Compared with his description of his earlier classroom teaching, I saw that Song's teaching styles changed in three aspects. First, by organizing various activities, he no longer dominated the class with his monologue lectures about linguistic knowledge as he had done in the past. Although his offer of the correct answers and less flexibility with his teaching plans blocked the students' full engagement in the open-ended discussion, the learning activities increased the interactions between him and his students and among the students themselves. Second, he no longer concentrated the content of his lessons on the linguistic structure of the English language. He did not spend as much time explaining words, grammar, and structures as he had done in his previous institution; instead, he increased the listening and oral practice. Third, he no longer arranged his teaching by following every bit of content and sequence that were prescribed in the textbook; instead, he was able to adapt the teaching material to his understanding of classroom teaching and learning.

Conceptual Change

A comparison of my classroom observation with Song's description of his earlier teaching style indicated that he had made some changes in his teaching methods. Nevertheless, what change occurred to his conceptions of teaching should be examined from his understanding of the purposes of using the CLT methods and from his understanding of his role and the students' role in the classroom.

Song put the students' existing knowledge into two types: grammatical knowledge and knowledge of the world. The students' problem, he believed, was the unbalanced development of these two types of knowledge.

> So, discussion can also serve as a bridge between the students' grammatical knowledge and the knowledge of the world, right? Because their spoken English is

not good enough, sometimes they can't . . . relate these two things, so discussion can serve as a bridge. When their grammar knowledge matches their world knowledge, they can express anything in their mind.

His solution was the use of oral tasks and activities to improve their English oral skills because, as he said, "When they talk, they have to use their knowledge of vocabulary and pronunciation," and discussion was an effective oral activity to improve their English proficiency to the level of their knowledge of the world. He believed that the learning processes should be related to the technical practice of the English language rather than interact with the students' world knowledge. Such tacit views of students' knowledge and learning explained why Song put the students into a discussion without much interest in finding out what they thought about the standards for beauty contest.

Although Song employed various CLT activities in classroom, he did not change much of his understanding of the CLT and its function in teaching and learning. Similar to his early beliefs that the CLT activities served an oral purpose, here he repeatedly pointed out that the CLT activities extended oral opportunities to every student in the classroom and were an effective means to involve students in practising oral English.

So, the purpose of discussion in classroom is to give students, or we can say, give each student an opportunity to…to speak in the classroom. So the discussion can give the students more opportunities…it gives them more opportunities to practise their English.

In his understanding, the CLT methods complemented the defective traditional approach, which was ineffective in improving students' oral competence. His beliefs of CLT activities as only oral practice explained the misaligned interests that I observed in his classroom and his delivery of the 'right' answers to stop the potential opportunity for more meaningful discussion among the students. Deep in his beliefs, he still was a teacher who knew the 'right' answers and to whom the students should listen.

Communicative teaching was for oral proficiency, and such oral proficiency could be improved as long as students went through the pre-programmed activities. Song employed the CLT techniques at a superficial level, and he did not really accept the conceptions and beliefs underlying the CLT activities.

In some way, Song changed his conceptions about how to teach reading. In his early teaching, he had taught reading "from bottom to top" by transmitting the knowledge of the English language at the "sentence level." Underlying the "from-bottom-to-top" approach was his belief about the simple and linear process of teaching and learning: transmission of knowledge of words and sentences would naturally lead the students to understanding the meaning of paragraphs and the structure of the text, or the meaning of discourse. He noted, "Although [now] I don't spend too much time explaining those things, I also go through the paragraphs and explain some words." He reduced the lecture time about the linguistic knowledge at the sentence level and increased the explanations to paragraphs at the discourse level. The "discourse" approach indicated his changed beliefs, that is, transmitting knowledge of language at the sentence level would not necessarily and automatically improve students' reading at the discourse level; the teacher should help students understand the discourse of the reading material.

At the same time, his understanding of discourse was mainly limited to the facts and information in the paragraphs and the text.

> For example, last week when we dealt with the text story, I asked the students to read the first two paragraphs by themselves, and then I asked some questions: "Where is the Little Zhang Village? Who lives there? And why do they live there?" So, by answering these questions, the students have understood meaning of the paragraphs.

The questions that Song had asked the students to answer were about the direct facts in the text. "Understanding the meaning of the paragraphs" meant understanding the facts and information that was described in the text. Actually, his teaching at the discourse level was more focused on the literal meaning of a text. He helped the students understand the meaning of the reading material, but did not engage them in critical thinking about the deep and extended meaning in the text. His conceptions of teaching reading changed from transmitting the discrete knowledge of words, grammar and structures of the English language to helping students understand the structures of the reading materials, yet his teaching did not aim at influencing the students' existing conceptions and attitudes. This change was not a fundamental change in conceptions and beliefs because it took place within the category of teacher-centered orientation to teaching and learning.

Song did have some change in his goal of language teaching. In the past, his goal of teaching English was to prepare students for the CET-4 test; now he taught English to prepare students for future social experiences, such as the job market. He envisioned how the students would do with English in their careers:

> I think, after graduation, if the students are climbing to higher positions, they need to present their ideas to the group or to their subordinates. And also in the future, if they transmit their ideas to others, they have to use [English] in [a] particular form. . . . So I think it [English presentation] is useful for their future career.

In his understanding, the purpose of classroom presentations was to train students to demonstrate their ideas in the formal situation of workplace. For this reason, he preferred his students to make formal presentations. With the presentation's focus being on oral techniques, the ideas and viewpoints expressed by the students were not what Song would critique or comment on. It was the expression skills and oral fluency, not the

viewpoints, that were relevant to his teaching objectives. He explained that he avoided

influencing students with his own views of the world, believing that learning a language

was more related to mastering of its technical functions.

Compared with his early views of the teacher as the knowledge authority, Song's

current views of teachers were different in some way. He believed that the teacher had

many roles:

> To some extent, the teacher has to change his or her authority image in the class. That is, you have to establish a kind of friendship with the students. So, you have to walk in the classroom and talk with the students. So, you don't stand behind the teacher's desk all the time.

However, he still unconsciously played the role of knowledge authority to some extent; a

case in point was that he provided the 'right' answers and solutions to open-ended

discussions. Actually, the authoritative role he took in classroom was related to his

understanding of his students:

> Most of the time, you know, Chinese students just talk on the topic that the teacher set. . . . The students may sometimes raise very critical questions. But the students usually ask the teacher to speak first the teacher's understanding or the teacher's idea of that.

In the interview, when asked how he would have responded to the student's question

about the disabled beauty candidate had he been asked, he said:

> Yeah, it's a very critical question. [Thinking for a while] I probably would say that it's unfair to have disabled people compete with normal people; maybe . . . maybe there should be a special beauty contest for them.

This response confirmed my perception of his authoritative role in classroom. To him, a

teacher should have the knowledge to answer questions and fix the uncertainty in class,

and he should have the responsibility to give 'right' answers to students' questions. With

such beliefs about teacher's role, Song blocked the students' learning opportunities to

explore and inquire about alternative solutions on their own.

Song thought that he had made a dramatic change in his teaching style, and he viewed this change as a smooth process without any bumpy experiences as he adopted the new teaching methods and implemented the innovative curriculum at AU.

> I think it's quite smooth from the past to the present teaching. Though I moved from the Northeast to the South, I think the general environment, teaching is almost the same. So I didn't feel any kind of . . . cultural shock, [laughing] like that.

Probably Song did not feel the difference in the innovative environment for language teaching at AU because his major conceptions were still fundamentally rooted in the traditional beliefs about knowledge of language, teaching and learning, and the roles of teacher and students.

Factors Contributing to Change

Song attributed the improvement in his teaching to the increase of his teaching experience and to the "very good environment" of AU. Reflecting on his early teaching, he said he had little change at that time because of his inexperience as a young teacher and because of the limited access to academic conferences and journals: "All those things kept the teachers' concept of teaching in a disadvantaged way." Quite different from his previous university, AU provided with him a positive environment for his professional growth:

> [Now that I've] moved here, we have various accesses to conferences on language teaching and learning, and here you can also find a lot of academic journals to read. And you also have a lot of opportunity to exchange your teaching with your colleagues and with some other teachers from the university. . . . All these things, I think, contribute to improving your teaching.

Song obviously emphasized the external change of the teaching environment as the factor that had improved his teaching. In his eyes, the "good" environment of AU consisted of two positive conditions: (a) the academic resources that allowed him to know about the

latest techniques and theories of language teaching and learning and (b) the socialization

and communication between the colleagues that allowed him to share teaching methods

and ideas directly with other teachers in the faculty.

Throughout the interviews, Song did not mention any internal conflict between

his early beliefs and the beliefs underlying the new teaching methods that he adopted in

his classroom teaching. He had never questioned the beliefs and conceptions underlying

the CLT-style presentations and group discussions when adopting them into the

classroom. His non-questioning acceptance of the new teaching methods was related to

his claim of a "smooth" shift from the traditional approach to the mixted approach to

language teaching. His current beliefs were fundamentally rooted in the traditional

orientation about teaching, learning, and the teacher's role in the process of teaching and

learning. Because his conceptual shift did not touch his fundamental beliefs, he did not

feel the shock and frustration caused by the conflict of beliefs and conceptions that

people often feel when they experience the radical conceptual change across the

orientations of beliefs about teaching and learning.

<div align="center">*Jing's Story*</div>

Jing studied English language and literature in a foreign languages institute in the

Northwest of China and got her Bachelor's degree in the late 1980s. After graduation, she

taught English in a university in the Northwest area; there she taught students who

majored in English language and students who majored in other disciplines. In 1998, she

was admitted to an M.A. program in sociolinguistics at AU. Upon graduation in 2001,

she was hired by the AU Faculty of English Language Education to teach college English.

Jing knew about the CLT approach from her undergraduate study when some of her instructors had organized the class activities around this approach. She had read some books on language teaching methodology, but she thought that the Western theories and experience of classroom teaching were not necessarily suitable to the context of China. When she first started working at AU, a foreign professor, who was a teacher educator, supervised her teaching for some time. Although she felt that the foreign professor pushed her a bit too much, she still saw the influence of the new concepts on her teaching. At least, she started to think about those new ideas and tried them in her classroom.

Early Teaching Methodology

When Jing started her teaching career, teaching and learning in the Northwest of China were conservative. The most important aspect for learning was that students correctly understood the knowledge transmitted by their teachers; the most important thing for teaching was that a teacher was very knowledgeable and was capable of presenting clearly his or her knowledge in the classroom.

Jing did not have any formal teacher training before she started to teach college English. She learned to teach by observing her colleagues. "I went to experienced teachers' class to see how they were teaching, their teaching method," she said. The prevailing language teaching in her institution was grammar-translation and structural approaches with teacher-centered lectures.

> [The experienced teachers' teaching was] very traditional. First they read the article to the students, then they analyzed the grammar, pointed out the language points, made some sentences by using those words and expressions. Very traditional. After that they would ask students to do some exercise based on the text, the words and grammar. Totally teacher-centered, [and] students were rather passive.

At that time she taught both the English major students and the non-English major students, and she used different methods to teach each group. "When I taught English majors, I did use communicative teaching methods. I asked my students to do different kind of oral activities, but not as much as I do [now] in this university." When teaching the Intensive Reading course to the non-English major students, she taught in the traditional way that she had learned from her colleagues.

> I think, for that type of course, the teacher may feel like a spoon-feeder. Actually, I talked all the time when I taught that kind of course in that university. I was dominating the class. The students seldom had the chance to speak.

At that time, there was no way to apply the CLT activities to the non-English major students in the Intensive Reading class. The biggest difficulty was big class size. She explained: "At that time, the classes I taught were very large, yeah. Usually, a class had fifty or more than fifty students. So it's really hard for the teacher to organize the class." In addition, the students' low English proficiency and low interest in oral English made it impossible for her to use any CLT activities in class:

> The students majored in science and engineering, so the students' English level was much lower than the students in this university [AU]. They just wanted to read and write something, not speaking in class.

Teaching different courses to different groups of students in her first institution, Jing concluded that CLT could only be applied to classroom teaching within these four conditions: (a) to students of higher English proficiency, (b) to smaller classes, (c) according to students' needs, and (d) in a speaking and listening course. The communicative methods, which she called the "various oral activities," were only good for the English major students in smaller classes who "needed to practise their English in class" and who had better English proficiency than those non-English major students.

Jing's early teaching was basically transmitting the grammatical knowledge of the English language; she taught the language points at the grammatical and syntactical level. The teacher-student interaction was limited to the small group of English major students in oral practice.

Current Teaching

Jing has taught several courses at AU, such as "Translation and Literature," "Advanced English," and "Visual-Audio English Listening and Speaking." By the time of this research, she was teaching "Visual-Audio English Listening and Speaking." The teaching materials included the textbook "Perspectives and News English" (Artifacts/Jing) and audio-visual materials. The textbook contained ten units that covered the themes of family and marriage, video games, environmental concerns, cars, and euthanasia. The audio-visual materials collected the news reports related to those topics broadcasted by the media of the English speaking countries, such as the Voice of America (VOA) and the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). The objectives of this course, as stated in the preface of the textbook, were to "help students improve their independent thinking and problem solving abilities in English, on the basis of their existing worldviews and their current knowledge of English language" (Artifacts: Jing). The objectives were to be achieved by completing two types of tasks: (a) language training tasks to improve students' listening and speaking skills and (b) explorative tasks to improve students' problem solving abilities, through cooperative learning and under the guidance of teachers (Artifacts: Jing).

During my observation, the students were watching a piece of a news report by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). The news report was about a kind of

marriage custom called "TeeCeeSee" in the matriarchy society of Moso, a minority group in the Southeast of China. In the Moso minority, a son works in his mother's fields all day, eats his mother's cooking, and then goes to visit his wife at her mother's house, which is also where his children stay, with their mother, never their father.

After making a brief introduction about the Moso group and the Moso style of marriage, Jing asked a question: "Who will educate the children?" Then she answered the question by herself: "The uncle." Following a brief introduction of the topic was the word study. Jing asked the students to look at the word list in the textbook and on the PowerPoint screen. She went through the word list, read, and explained the definitions on the PowerPoint slides. Studying the words was for the next step—listening comprehension.

Jing played the video several times for the students to watch and listen. When playing the video for the first time, she paused at every sentence, explaining and paraphrasing it to the students. Then she played the video for the second time and stopped it from time to time to explain the words, the culture of Moso society, and the content of the report. After the detailed explanation, she played the video in whole. Then she asked the students to select the correct statements and to do a multiple choice exercise from the textbook; the purpose of the exercise was to check their listening comprehension.

Then Jing posted two questions for the students to answer. One was "Which is better: the 'Tee Cee See' marriage or ordinary marriage?" She showed a list of words about the features of conventional marriage and asked the students to find out words about the features of "Tee Cee See" marriage.

> Jing: Is the 'Tee Cee See' relationship between wife and husband close or loose?
> [The students were quiet.]

Jing: It's loose. And why?
[The students were quiet.]   (Field notes: Jing)

Jing answered the question by herself. Then again she showed on the PowerPoint screen one feature of the "TeeCeeSee" custom, and asked the students to give the other features. One student volunteered the answer. Then Jing posted the student's answer on the PowerPoint screen. I noticed that Jing answered most of the questions she had raised to the students. She had projected the answers on the PowerPoint slides before the class, and she published her answers when the students were quiet or when their answers were different from hers.

Before the end of the class, Jing asked the students to discuss in groups the topics related to the Moso society. She moved around the classroom to monitor the group discussion and reminded some students to speak in English. The students sitting next to me were speaking in Cantonese, but they shifted to English when Jing walked to them and then returned to Cantonese when she moved to other groups. She stopped the discussion and asked each group to report what they had discovered. Three students served as the spokesmen for their groups; I noticed that two of them had volunteered the answers several times. In the whole session, most students looked passive and quiet.

I noticed the way Jing asked questions and the way she treated the students' answers to her questions. Although the topic and content were related to cultural issues, most questions for the discussion were about the facts and information in the audio-visual material; they were good enough to check the students' listening comprehension, but not really open-ended enough to invite students' opinions. Similar to Song, Jing provided the 'right' answers to a couple of open-ended questions, blocking the opportunity for the students to think and discuss critically the cultural issues they had just seen and heard.

In the interviews, Jing talked about her purpose for the course. "For this course, I think, I should cultivate the students' listening and speaking skills. And at the same time, I think I should enhance the students' cultural awareness." Explaining how she improved the students' listening and speaking skills, she claimed that her teaching was no longer spoon-feeding the students with the linguistic knowledge of English language; instead, she paid more attention to teaching strategies. "I use a movie clip to lead a topic; you know, they are very interested in watching movies," she said. She also integrated listening and speaking practice in her class:

> Before we conducted the oral activity, I would let the students listen to something, just for information on a certain topic. Through listening, the students can get some information, and they also learn some words and expressions based on the information. I sometimes let the students imitate the oral activity in the video or audio material.

Jing's description of the procedure of teaching was consistent with my observation of her class. Compared with her early teaching, she now considered how to arouse the students' interest in learning, how to facilitate their listening comprehension, and how to give the students oral practice by using the information and the language from the listening materials.

Then I asked her about her purpose for organizing group discussions in her class. She explained: "Almost in all the oral activity, I ask the students to tell their opinions and to share their opinions." I noticed that she used the words "oral activities" to respond to my question about group discussion. Then I asked her what she would do about the students' opinions in group discussion, she said,

> I would make comments. Sometimes I just ask other students to make comments. I never say this is right or this is wrong. I think [their] ideas are important, our course is just let the students show their opinions to cultivate their critical thinking.

 I saw the gap between her claimed attitude towards the students' opinions from their group discussion and my observation that she had provided 'correct' answers to the open-ended questions for discussion in the class. During my observation of her class, I did not see much sharing of ideas by the students in the group discussion. Jing was probably not aware that her 'correct' answers actually blocked the students' opportunity to express their ideas. Because she understood group discussions as "oral activities," she would take the students' act of speaking more seriously than the opinions and ideas they expressed in their speech. Her purpose for the group discussion activity seemed to be for oral practice rather than for cultivating the students' critical thinking and sharing of opinions; expressing opinions and sharing ideas was more the by-product of the oral practice.

According to Jing, her other purpose for this course—enhancing the students' cultural awareness—also served the goal of improving their listening and speaking skills. When asked about what culture she wanted her students to be aware of, Jing replied: "Mainly American or Western culture." She explained that knowledge and understanding of American culture would help to improve the students' oral English and listening comprehension because the news from the Western media contained the Western and American cultures, customs, and perspectives. She believed that if the students had a good knowledge of Western cultures and perspectives, it would be easier to understand the news and to talk about the issues by using the vocabulary that was used in the news.

The interviews with Jing confirmed my observation that her teaching was focused on English listening and speaking skills. She aimed at improving the students' ability to understand, and their skills to talk about, the issues reported by the Western media. The questions she asked the students to answer were about the facts and information of the

news report, and the group discussion was for their oral practice of the vocabulary and

expressions in the listening material. The cultural content, perspectives, and attitudes that

constitute the text of news report were narrowed down to the facts for the students to

grasp with their listening skills, the knowledge for them to know about, and the topics

and vocabulary for them in their oral practice. In this course, the listening materials, rich

in cultural content and controversial in attitudes and perspectives, served more as a

grinding stone to sharpen the students' listening and speaking skills than as a sounding

board to stimulate their critiques and opinions.

Conceptual Change

Similar to Song, although Jing had to use different teaching methods at AU, she

did not feel any shock at changing her methods in the new environment. Rather, she felt it

a natural process to shift to the communicative teaching in the classrooms.

> When I [previously] taught in that university [in Northwest], I also tried the
> communicative method, so that's not something new for me. So I think I can
> quickly get accustomed to the students here [at AU], the teaching circumstances
> here. In terms of teaching method, I don't think there is a shock.

However, she did not employ the student-centered communicative method in all the

courses she taught at AU. In the interviews, she repeatedly pointed out that her choice

about using CLT depended on the course she taught:

> Actually, it depends on what kind of course you teach. For example, the course I'm
> teaching now, I have to use the communicative approach because it is listening and
> speaking, you know, [so] the teacher shouldn't talk all the time.

She believed that CLT was only suitable for the teaching of listening and speaking skills.

This belief was no different from her early belief that CLT could only be applied to the

listening and speaking course. Since she had used oral activities in her previous

university, she thought that her teaching at AU was no different, just that she had to use

more variety of CLT activities now than in the past. It seemed that such a change in her

teaching could take place at the technique level, that is, the use of new techniques to

organize her classroom teaching, rather than involving changing her conceptual beliefs.

She viewed the difference in her teaching as the more extensive use of the CLT

techniques to organize more "different oral activities" than in her previous teaching

context. This could explain why she did not feel any shock or uncomfortableness at using

the CLT methods in the new teaching environment at AU.

Jing showed an inconsistency between her knowledge about CLT theory and her

beliefs about language teaching and learning. On the one hand, she had a fair knowledge

about CLT in regard to the purpose of language learning and the approaches to language

teaching.

> In my opinion, why do we learn language? Because we want to use language to
> communicate. That is very important. We want [out students] to learn the language,
> to use it, so the most important thing is that we should have our teaching student-
> centered. In this way, the students can really communicate in class, because we try
> to imitate kind of authentic environment for the students to use the language in class.

However, her knowledge of communicative teaching theories did not represent her

general theory of language teaching. "We should have our teaching student-centered"

was only applicable to the courses for listening and speaking, not to other courses. In fact,

she divided the language courses into two types: one course for knowledge and theories

and the other course for skills; and she used different approaches to teaching different

types of the courses.

> For some other courses I taught, for example, translation, advanced English, it's
> actually teacher-centered, because the students have little experience in translation.
> They need the teacher to give guidance and [want] the teacher to introduce some
> basic skills of translation. [It's] teacher-centered.

Deep in her beliefs, teachers were still the knowledge givers when teaching anything concerning knowledge and theories, and the teacher-centered lecture was the most effective approach for transmitting knowledge to students. The courses such as Advanced English and Translation dealt with knowledge of the English language and with translation theories and skills, which she believed were external to the students. To teach the knowledge-based courses, she would use teacher-centered lectures to pour knowledge to the empty vessel of the students. She took the course for listening and speaking as being skill-based; to teach this course, she believed she had to use more student-centered aural and oral activities and encourage the students to learn by imitating the speech of English-speaking people or by imitating her demonstration of skills. From her narratives, it is clear that Jing understood student-centered teaching as "the teacher should not talk all the time"; she took communication as aural and oral interactions, and she interpreted CLT as the teaching of listening and speaking skills through aural and oral activities. Compared with her early views of language teaching, she did not have much change in beliefs and conceptions. Her acceptance of student-centered communicative language teaching was more at the technical level than at the conceptual level. She focused her teaching on training the students' listening and speaking skills, not on developing their viewpoints and attitudes; and the learning activities, such as group discussions, only served the purpose of oral practice. She just modeled the CLT methods, but she had not yet seen the philosophies underlying student-centered learning and communicative teaching.

In a reflection on her role in the classroom, Jing said that she had changed a lot in her understanding of the teachers' role now. Recalling her early beliefs, she said:

> When I first began to teach, I thought the teacher just played the role of knowledge provider, teacher should be very knowledgeable, [and] there was no chance for students to challenge the teacher because the teacher should dominate the class. I think I should know everything. I just held such a concept.

Now, fully aware that the students are exposed to all kinds of information, she realized that it was impossible for her to know everything. She elaborated the teacher's role and teacher-student relationship in a communicative classroom:

> The teacher is a kind of . . . . Sometimes the teacher may play a different kind of role: sometimes to be a coach, sometimes [to be] a director, organize the class. Sometimes the teacher and students work together, to learn something, to discuss something, to share opinions.

Nevertheless, this acceptance of the new concept of the teacher's role did not replace her deep-rooted image of teachers at once. Consciously or unconsciously, she tried to keep the image of herself as a knowledgeable teacher in her classroom. For example, she tried to answer individual students' questions and provide correct answers to the discussion questions. In the interview, she admitted that she would still feel embarrassed and awkward if the students asked questions or said something beyond her knowledge.

> Sometimes a student mentioned something I never heard of. For example, a student mentioned in my class GPS [global positioning system]. I never heard of it. I felt a bit embarrassed. I said, "Oh, teacher can't know everything." Try to keep [my] face.

Rationally, she knew that she was no longer the knowledge provider and that she had learned something new from the students; nevertheless, she still felt "losing face" in a situation like this. After all, her image of teachers was challenged in the open classroom where the questions and vocabulary from the students were not as predictable as in a teacher-centered classroom.

When asked about her view of a good language teacher, she said that knowledge and teaching method were the most important qualities. She stressed the importance of knowledge:

> To be a good language teacher, first of all, you should have a good knowledge of language you are teaching, for example, intonation, pronunciation, articulation. Those are very important. . . . Knowledge in language, and also in the different kinds of things you are trying to talk in class.

Without such knowledge, she asked: "How can you influence the students?" Deep in her beliefs, a good language teacher should be a role model for students, who should have a good knowledge of the English language, be a proficient language user, and have the knowledge of various topics and courses. She believed that only when the teacher kept a privileged position in all kinds of knowledge could she/he effectively influence students' learning. Her actual attitudes towards the teacher's role and knowledge in students' learning were not qualitatively different from her early belief that the teacher should know everything.

The innovation in the English language programs at AU enabled Jing to learn about cooperative learning, a new concept to her and her colleagues. Coming to see the potential of cooperative learning in the classroom activities, she started to consider how to enhance the cooperation in learning through group work and pair work. "If they have a good sense of cooperative learning, they will cooperate with others well," she said. "You know, some students do not like to cooperate with others." She hoped that her teaching could influence the students' attitudes in such a way that they would develop a sense of cooperation through group learning in the class. As the major goal of Jing's teaching was to develop students' listening and speaking competence, she paid attention to the cultural content and the listening and speaking skills that students were supposed to master.

Influencing students' attitudes toward peer cooperation was one of Jing's intentions; however, it has not manifested in her classroom to date. Her sense of cooperative learning could be seen as a potential direction in which her beliefs about language teaching could develop over time.

Reviewing Jing's conceptual change, I find that her beliefs and conceptions of language teaching had shifted from "imparting" and "transmitting" knowledge to "facilitating understanding" and "student-teacher interactions/apprenticeship." Such conceptual change stayed within the category of teacher-centered conceptions of teaching and learning and spanned to the Transmission Category. Her fundamental beliefs about language teaching and learning were still rooted in the traditional, teacher-centered philosophy, and she had not completely moved away from her teacher-centered conceptions of knowledge, teaching, and teacher's role in students' learning. It was noticeable that she had accepted some of the theories and rationale of the student-centered communicative language teaching; they had influenced but not yet replaced her deep-rooted beliefs.

Factors Contributing to Change

Jing thought that three factors contributed to her changes: (a) her graduate study; (b) the difference in students at AU, who were more challenging; and (c) an environment of innovation that made her think deeply about teaching and learning.

Jing attributed most of her progress in teaching to her study in the Master's program. She said: "In my M.A. program, I read a lot of books concerning teaching and teaching method." However, from my interviews with her and my classroom observation, I found that there were some discrepancies both between her knowledge about CLT and

her actual use of it and beliefs about it and also between her knowledge about the teacher's role in student-centered, communicative classroom and her actual adherence to the teacher's image in the traditional classroom. I think that think she might need to take time to adapt the theories and the suggested methods.

The different qualities of the AU students drove Jing to use more variety of teaching methods. Jing soon found that the AU students, unlike the obedient students she had taught in her previous university, were more challenging in their learning.

> The students here [are] really different from the students in [the] Northwest area of China. The students here, generally speaking, are very active. They are more demanding than the students in [the] Northwest area. Maybe the students here pay more attention to . . . not knowledge; maybe [the teacher's] ability or teacher's teaching method, they think, is the most important thing.

Perceiving that the AU students had higher expectations of her teaching methods, she had to pay more attention to improving her teaching strategies and employing more various CLT activities than she did in the past. Jing failed to realize that it was the students' learning autonomy that made them different from her earlier students; unfortunately, she interpreted this learning autonomy as a demanding requirement for teaching methods. To meet the perceived requirement, she managed to change and improve her teaching techniques, without reflecting on what was behind the students' requirement and what change had taken place in the teacher-student roles in learning.

The curriculum change in her faculty provided an environment where the new concepts of teaching were introduced to the teachers by means of workshops and seminars.

> The leader and faculty try to change the teacher, the way of teaching. . . . They provided a lot of ideas that have influence on our teachers, the teachers in this faculty. I think it's a good idea, though sometimes it's very hard to put in this unit of teaching. But I try to think of it.

Jing thought seriously about applying the new ideas to her teaching. Instead of her

focusing teaching on explaining the language points and literate comprehension of the

text information, she started to think about the objective of each unit and how to teach it,

and she started to see a bigger picture of teaching.

Conclusion

Song and Jing had similar teaching experiences in inland China, where the

traditional practices of langugage teaching remained, that is, teacher-centered lectures

about words, grammar, and sentence structure. Students respected both teachers and their

knowledge, and they seldom asked questions in class. Either CLT was assumed to be an

imported approach not applicable to the Chinese context, or it was assumed to be

employed only in some special situations. Both Song and Jing believed that CLT methods

meant the use of classroom activities and games for the purpose of improving students'

oral English skills.

AU proved quite a different context from their previous institutions in two aspects:

the innovative environment and students' autonomy of learning. To cope with the

teaching here, Song and Jing organized various classroom activities and tasks for their

students' learning. However, the interviews and classroom observations indicated that, to

a great extent, their fundamental beliefs about language, language teaching and learning,

and the teacher's role and relationship with students remained unchanged. They still

believed that teacher-centered lectures were more effective to transmit knowledge of

language and comprehension of reading materials and that CLT activities were only

effective for oral practice. Theoretically, they understood that teachers were no longer the

knowledge authorities in their classrooms; however, in practice in their classroom

instruction, they tended to keep the self-image of teachers as the ones who stand on the high end of knowledge and know the right answers. They employed various CLT activities, but they did not really comprehend the set of conceptions of language, teaching and learning, and teacher-student relationship underlying the CLT activities.

The conceptual development of Song and Jing can be illustrated by Table 6.1 which is extracted from the writer-developed conceptual framework (see Table 6).

Table 6.1

Conceptual Development within the Propositional Paradigm from the Teacher-centered Category to the Transition Category

Grammar-based Approaches (Propositional Paradigm)		
Teacher-centered Teaching		Transition Stage
Grammar-translation Method	Structural Approach	Functional-notional Approach
Imparting knowledge	Transmitting structured knowledge	Teacher-student interaction/apprenticeship; Facilitating understanding

As compared to their earlier teaching careers, they had obvious differences in teaching techniques and methods, and they had already achieved some conceptual shift from imparting and transmitting knowledge to facilitating understanding and teacher-student interactions. However, this conceptual change occurred within the beliefs of the Propositional Paradigm, from the Teacher-Centered category to the Transition category, which does not indicate a profound conceptual change in their fundamental beliefs about language teaching. A metaphor may better describe their status of change: By adopting CLT activities, they had one foot stepping forward and their other foot was about to move

but had not yet left the ground of their early beliefs about teaching, learning, and teachers and students. They were on the way to change.

Bearings Lost and Bearings Regained

This section reports the instructional and conceptual development achieved by Murong, Lin, and Ouyang. These three teachers all experienced the shock of losing their identities as language teachers when they began to use the new textbook and alternative teaching activities. After painful reflection on their beliefs of language teaching and learning, they came up with a new understanding of what it meant to be a teacher.

Murong's Story

Murong got her Bachelor's degree in English language after four years of study in a normal university in the Southwest of China, and then she got a job teaching college English at her home university. In 2000, after teaching for four years, she began a Master's degree program in American Studies at a university in another province. Three years later, she graduated with a Master of Arts degree and was hired to teach in the Faculty of English Language Education at AU. By the time of the research, she had taught at AU for two years.

In Murong's university days, two courses impressed her the most. One was "Intensive Reading," an important course throughout the four years of study for English major students. The other course was "Listening." The objective of Intensive Reading was to have the students learn vocabulary and grammar, understand the literate meaning of texts, and achieve accuracy in reading and writing. In the Intensive Reading classes, her teachers usually read the text sentence by sentence and explained new words and grammar in length. The students did not need to comment on the author's opinion or

think critically; they just needed to understand the literal meaning of the article. In Murong's undergraduate years, the training in the Listening course was tough and boring, but effective. Her Listening teacher asked the students to listen to the news from the Voice of America (VOA) and then dictate some of the new items. Murong learned a lot from the Listening course. She was impressed by her listening teacher who was strict with the students, yet caring and devoted to teaching. She thought he was not only a great teacher, but also a helpful friend to the students.

Early Teaching Methodology

After graduation, Murong was assigned to teach at her home university. "It was an inland city, and basically, we don't have many changes. I mean, how my teacher taught me, I would teach the same way to students," she recalled. She was assigned to teach the "Listening and Speaking" course to the adult learners. Because of those students' low English proficiency, she copied the teaching methods from her previous Intensive Reading course and Listening course.

> Usually they couldn't understand the textbook, so what you have to do is to explain the words to them, and also then explain the sentences to them, and tell them how to paraphrase the sentences.

> I also did the same thing as my Listening teacher did to us. I recorded the news at home and brought the tape to the classroom, and I asked the students to some questions to test their comprehension, and sometimes I asked them to do the dictation [the students write down what the taped reporter is saying].

At the same time, she made some innovation to her teaching of speaking skills by organizing various activities. To help her students get involved in the oral activities, she had to move around the classroom, participate in the student groups, and become involved in discussions and debates. "At that moment, in such an inland city, not much of a developed city, you see, very few teachers could do that at that time," she said. The four

years of teaching adult learners was an unforgettable experience, and she was well known for teaching "Listening and Speaking" in her university and in her city.

The most impressive experience in her early teaching was the harmonious relationship she developed with her students. Such teacher-student relationship was naturally built up and easily maintained in an inland university. She recalled: "In the past, especially in the inland of China, the students always respect teachers; you don't have to consider maintaining a very harmonious or a very friendly relationship, because they respect you, whatever you say." It was her belief that the students' obedience in the classroom meant respect for the teacher. It was true of her experience: "The students were so obedient that they accepted anything I taught in the classroom." She was respected by her students, most of whom were older than she. "I was warmly accepted by the students, very warmly accepted," she recalled. "We were not just the teacher and students, we were friends."

Although Murong used oral activities in her early teaching, her instructional methods were heavily influenced by her university teachers who had taught in the traditional way, and her beliefs about teaching were traditional and teacher-centered. She used the Intensive Reading methods to facilitate students' understanding of the text, and she used the oral activities to train their speaking ability. The harmonious teacher-student relationship was based on the well-defined and self-evident roles of teacher and students in the context of her university. In the classroom, she played the role of authority, deciding what the students would learn and how they would learn it, and the students accepted her teaching and respected her knowledge. Although a friend to the students, she was first of all a teacher in the hierarchy of the teacher-student relationship.

Current Teaching

By the time of this study, Murong was in her third year of teaching Comprehensive English at AU. The textbook for this course, *Viewpoints*, was organized around the topics voted by the students, including anti-terrorism, technology, beauty pageants, the job market, and the environment. The textbook also provided reading and audio-visual materials that contained controversial perspectives. The purpose of this course was to help the students improve their English proficiency and communicative competence through reading and listening to the related materials of different viewpoints, initiating group discussion and independent thinking, and expanding their worldviews. In her class, Murong taught word study, grammatical analysis, analysis of reading material, listening and speaking, and writing. The classroom activities that I noted in my observation notes included word games, in-class presentations, pair work, group discussions, dictations, and teacher lectures.

When I sat in her classroom, Murong was teaching the unit on the topic "Beauty Pageants." She spent some time working on the words and the complex sentences in the text. "Are you clear about this sentence?" she asked, as she picked out a long sentence and asked the students to analyze it. "Read it over, and I'm sure you will get the meaning clear," she encouraged them. Giving them a couple of minutes to read the sentence, she asked them to point out the main structure and the parallel or the subordinate relations based on the grammatical functions of the clauses, the gerunds, and the participles. After helping the students became clear about the complex structure of the sentence, she explained the meaning of the whole sentence and why the author wrote that way.

After working out the difficult points in the text, Murong suggested some words via PowerPoint, words about people's physical features, such as their hair styles. Then she assigned the task: The students were to work in groups to describe "who is he or she in the class." In this activity, the students had to use the words and expressions that they had just learned from the PowerPoint and from the text. Murong walked around, checking on how the students were working, explaining something, or occasionally providing descriptive words such as "oval shape." Then she asked each group to read their description and the other students listened to guess who was the person that the group was describing. The students laughed a lot in this activity. One student used the word "white" to describe someone's skin. Murong corrected him with "fair skin" and explained why "fair" was a more appropriate word because "white" had cultural sensitivity when it was used to describe skin.

After the word study in groups, Murong led the students to the text again. This time, she put up on the PowerPoint screen the structure of the article in a tree chart. She explained how the author introduced the topic, constructed the thesis, and developed the argument.

In the following session, Murong asked the students to do in-class presentations and to practise listening. When the class began, two students presented on the topic of the "beauty pageants." They explained what a beauty pageant was, what the contestants did, and what questions they wanted to ask the candidates competing for the top spots. During the presentation, there were some interactions between the presenters and the audience through questions and answers. After the presentation, the audience commented on the presentation, giving comments such as "too fast" or "no eye contact." Murong made

comments in more details, such as stops and the rhythm in speech, the wrong

pronunciation of some words, and the lack of deep-discussion questions, such as "why

questions." I noticed that she emphasized deep discussion in their speech; she had a

similar requirement for the students in the other two classes she was teaching: having

some in-depth analysis or discussion in their presentations.

After the students' presentation, Murong played a piece of an audio-visual news

report for listening practice; it was an item by the BBC about a beauty pageant in Russia.

Unlike the conventional process of selecting beautiful women by a panel of expert

'judges,' this beauty pageant selected them by the number of votes from the public, who

turned out to make an ordinary-looking woman their "beauty queen."

Before playing the audio, Murong explained some of the words and expressions

that would appear in the listening material, such as "abuse" and "propaganda." Then she

listed some questions that the students were supposed to answer after they listened to the

news report for the first time. The students answered some of the questions after the first

listening, which indicated that they had got the general information from the news. Then

she listed a few other questions on the screen for the second listening. She played the

video the second time, stopped and repeated some parts, and pointed out something to

draw the students' attention. The following quote is from my field notes from my

classroom observations:

> She explained the words and expressions in the BBC new report, such as "reconcile
> the image and reality." She then explained the reality of Russian's [physical] build.
> Because of the long winter, people prefer to stay indoors [without] many outdoor
> activities, and their diet depended too much on flour and potatoes; in reality,
> Russians are not consistent with the image of the beauty queen. Then she asked the
> students to notice the slogan that said "Barbie Go Home" and another picture on
> which a crocodile was swallowing a Barbie. She pointed to the skinny beings that
> held the slogan and explained: "That's the sacrifice that women made to make

themselves close the Barbie shape." She asked the students: "What does Barbie mean?" some students answered: "American culture or standard." "Right!" she said. "That's the American sense of beauty, and few women could reach to that standard. So Russians wanted their own beauty and beauty image, that is, be yourself and be happy."

The students showed great interest in her explanation and some volunteered to answer questions that she raised. They looked very attentive. (Field notes: Murong)

I was impressed by the in-depth explanation and analysis that Murong made. She not only taught the students how to catch the facts and information, but also helped them understand the cultural meaning in the listening material and guided them to think critically about the reported event.

In the follow-up interviews, Murong explained how she came to the way she was now teaching. She had experienced a big transition in teaching methods when she began to teach at AU; the first year teaching was full of shock, frustration, and negotiation with the students. When she started to teach there, she referred to a lot to her previous experience of teaching oral English.

When I came here, [I had] some kind of shock. Here, the teaching method [is] quite different from the method that [I] have learned or have used in other [places], because here, the students are much more open and quite talkative, they like to talk, and they quite like to be listened to instead of listening to. So when I came here, some of my colleagues told me: "In order to make your classroom interesting, you probably have to create a lot of activities, to get the students involved in." So, that's what I did in the first year.

Organizing a lot of classroom activities was not unfamiliar to Murong because that was what had made her a successful language teacher in her hometown university. Nevertheless, the AU students were not happy with their learning at the end of the term.

But at the end of the semester, the students complained that they learned nothing. Although they enjoyed the class [activities], they didn't see they made any achievement or they made any progress through their English study.

After one year of teaching, Murong came to see what the students really needed and wanted to learn: They were interested in learning activities that were cognitively challenging. She adjusted her teaching objectives to meet their needs. She explained:

> Through last year's teaching, I learned what is really important for the students, and what the students are really interested in. For example, if you give an article to the students, what they are interested in probably is not the words, [but] the idea inside the sentence beneath the lines. . . . So this year, I would continue doing such kind of thing, helping the students improve [their] comprehension.

In the second year, Murong decided to make some changes. "I reduced the activities," she said. "In fact, I paid more attention to language points." She called this change going "back to tradition"; but it was not simply back to the structural methods that her teachers had used in the Intensive Reading class.

> I didn't explain those words to the students one by one. Instead, I [told] them how to comprehend the complicated sentences, how to understand this passage, and how the author organized the whole article, and how the author put this idea into words in a very good way. So I shifted my attention to this side.

She claimed that her learning experience came to shape her way of teaching. She combined her teachers' teaching with her personal learning experience to create a new way to teach her students now.

> When I was a student, the teachers asked us to do translation or to paraphrase the sentences or to tell the meaning of the specific words and phrases. Well, they didn't pay much attention to the structure and the organization of the article, and they didn't pay much attention to authors' opinions, like why did they write the article. Now I think my focus is a little different. I not only focus on those words, in fact, I didn't pay much attention to those words, but if I think those words and phrases are important, I will pick them out and spend more time talking about them; but I would also focus on the structure and organization of the articles, and the authors' purposes [for] writing those articles. And at the same time, probably I will organize some activities to facilitate the students' understanding of the authors' ideas.

Obviously, her teachers' approach to teaching was more structural at the sentence level, whereas Murong's teaching was at the discourse level, with the focus on deep analysis of

the meaning of the text, the organization of ideas, and the author's opinions and purpose for writing the article. Her approach was more analytical than structural.

When asked about the purpose of analyzing the structure of the complex sentence in class, Murong said that she wanted her students to learn how to understand the meaning of a complex sentence with their knowledge of grammar. "I do not tell them *about* grammar," she explained. "I tell them how to use their grammar [knowledge] to understand something." In her class, grammatical analysis was not the objective of learning, but a means of reaching for the meaning hidden in the complex structure of the sentence.

> So, I told them they could use English grammar to help them understand the author's idea. I gave them some examples, probably one paragraph or one long sentence as an example to show them how to make use of the grammar to understand. It worked out very well, because after the class, some students came to me and told me that they never did that before and it was really helpful.

Recognizing the students' knowledge of grammar, Murong taught them how to make use of what they already knew to find out what they needed to know. Actually, teaching the students how to learn was the rationale for her analyzing the complex structures in class.

When I asked her why she had required the students to have deep discussion or analyses in their presentations, Murong talked about how the students' in-class presentations would help their learning at a deep level and improve their writing. The basic purpose of the in-class presentation was to enable the students to practise deep analysis and extend their understanding of the topics that they had learned in class.

> And for the presentation, the original purpose is to link what they have already learned in class; the presentation gives them the kind of topics to help them have further understanding about [those] topics.

She associated the in-class presentation with writing, believing that the students should

learn how to organize their ideas and make in-depth analyses from doing a presentation,

and, in turn, they would improve their writing.

> Essentially I will point out to them: "If you gave more deep analysis, your presentation will be better." Why did I point out this? Because I think that it will be good for their writing. When they write something, usually they know those kind of regular things such as beginning, body part, and conclusion, but the major part is the body part, [and it has] to have more details and deeper analysis of that phenomenon. So that is why I want to call their attention to this part.

She wanted the students to apply what they had learned in reading—deep analysis and

linking of ideas—to their presentation and to their writing. Murong explained that

although presentation skills were also what the students should learn, the skills and

techniques were not the ultimate purpose of practicing; she agreed that by doing the

presentation the students could practise their oral expression in English. However, from

my observation and from her narratives, her emphasis was more on the analysis and

organization of ideas in presentation than on oral practice.

Looking back at her teaching at AU in the past two years, Murong was satisfied to

see that the transition of her teaching methodology was successful. The students stopped

complaining; instead, they accepted her way of teaching and felt that they learned.

> So that's why the students like this kind of thing, because they think it really helped them learn something, and they feel they have learned something. They are very happy to see that something they learned before helped them to learn something new. So I think that's the difference.

Although she called her transition of teaching methodologies as going "back to tradition,"

she also sensed that her teaching was different from the traditional methods that her

teachers had used to teach her. She was teaching the students how to learn, helping them

understand the content at a deep level, and encouraging them to make meaning of their

learning in presentations and writings. Her teaching had developed from a simple version of CLT—oral communication—to a more comprehensive version of CLT, that is, teaching to develop students' integral ability to communicate in English.

Conceptual Change

Murong felt that she made some progress after teaching at AU because she had developed her own ideas about teaching and learning. The biggest change, she said, was that she seriously took into consideration the students' needs, interests, and requirements for learning. "I think that is the biggest change, the major change," she claimed. "Most teachers would learn this after they came here. You always have to consider the students' needs, their demands, or their feelings and emotions."

Compared with the students in her previous university who had been happy with whatever she had taught, Murong found that the AU students were more independent in learning. She had undergone hard lessons to learn the importance of students' needs and interests in effective learning and successful teaching. In her first year at AU, the students refused to debate the topic "Terrorism" that she had assigned. They complained that the articles were difficult to read and they had no idea about what to say on the topic; for a while, the classroom was out of control. Facing the students' resistance, Murong had to give up the debate activity. "I was really very . . . [awkward], I don't know how to describe my feeling at the moment," she recalled. "I don't know what I said, but anyway, my face was very red." From this classroom incident, she realized she was not the sole decision maker about what to teach and how to teach. "I think, sometimes [if] what you teach is far away from the students' expectation, they probably will not just show their opinions, they [will] want to totally change the class."

At the same time, she also tried to convince her students to accept her idea of what to learn and how to learn. While listening to her students' feelings and what they thought better learning was, she also believed that they needed to learn from a teacher's knowledge and learning experience. "Now I think I have experience; at least in language teaching I have [gained] more experience. I will consider my experience; at the same time, I [will] consider their consideration and make some kind of compromise." Her teaching was a compromise between her students' concerns and her own beliefs of language learning and teaching.

Another change that occurred to Murong's beliefs was the re-examination of the purpose of language teaching. In her negotiation with the students, Murong began to re-think about her focus of teaching, the meaningfulness of classroom activities, and what the students really needed to learn. Although group and pair work was an important indicator of CLT and she was good at organizing such classroom activities, she became more cautious when employing those activities. She believed that the activities must be for the purpose of learning, not for fun, nor for speaking only. She stated: "I would reduce those activities or I would even give up those activities that have nothing to do with language or are completely for fun or for entertainment." She once gave up a group discussion on the topic: If Bin Laden were caught, how would you put him on trial? She explained: "I gave up this activity because I think it was completely. . . . They could practise speaking, but it was completely for fun. It doesn't make much sense." Instead, she replaced the group discussion with an article about terrorism and anti-terrorism:

> That article talks about the bombing of an American embassy, and also the bombing of clinics in the America. They [students] didn't know why, and also they even didn't pay much attention to that. I think, it is a part of [the] American culture or American society. It could also help them to understand that kind of Christian

Fundamentalism and Muslim Fundamentalism, the difference and similarity between them.

She believed that it was more meaningful for the students to gain a deep understanding of the topic than to ask them to speak on something about which they did not really know or they did not really have any insights.

Murong gradually identified the problems that the students had in learning: insufficient English vocabulary and reading comprehension at the literal level. She therefore adjusted her teaching objectives to solve these problems. "To most of the students, vocabulary is a big issue, a big problem," she said. "Building up vocabulary is one of the tasks, one of the big targets." She added into her teaching content the lexical knowledge about the formation of English words. "I hope they do not have to refer to the dictionary all the time and they could try to guess the meaning based on the prefix and suffix or something like that." She believed that an increase of vocabulary could improve the students' fluency in reading and writing. Fluency of reading and writing constitutes an important part of communicative competence. The problem of literal reading comprehension was, at least in part, the result of the long-time exam-oriented practice in English language teaching in Chinese secondary education. To compete for higher educational opportunities, the students learn to sort out the facts and information in the reading materials and check the right items in the multiple-choice exercises; they did not really think about the meaning between the lines. She elaborated:

> In reading a passage, most of them [students] would say: "I got it; I got the idea of the passage." But [if] you point out: "Now look at the second paragraph; tell me what the author is trying to say here, they will be confused. So I think that is what I'm trying to do now, [improve] *comprehension*.

Throughout the interviews with Murong, the words "understand" and "comprehension" frequently appeared in her narratives about teaching. Her term *comprehension* meant in-depth understanding. I could perceive that *comprehension* represented her beliefs about teaching and learning at a deep level, and this term was actually manifested not only in her teaching of reading and writing but also in her teaching of listening and speaking. It explained why she guided the students to understand the symbol of Barbie in the listening practice and why she repeatedly asked the students to include some insightful discussion in their presentations.

After one year of struggling to survive at AU, Murong came to understand how a harmonious teacher-student relationship was constructed. While teaching in her previous university, she already had a good relationship with the students and knew the importance of this kind of relationship to successful teaching. However, that kind of harmonious teacher-student relationship was naturally and easily built because of the traditionally defined and well recognized roles of teachers and students in her school and in society. The AU students shook her taken-for-granted beliefs about the teacher-student relationship, and the new teacher-student relationship in the AU context made her feel extremely uncomfortable. She found that the students did not follow the teachers all the time; they had their own opinions, let the teacher know how they liked the teaching, and resisted some teaching material or classroom activities.

> Here, the students think differently. They have their own opinions. They tend to be very independent, and they have their ways of thinking. You have to consider that, and you can't just impose your ideas or your styles on them. If they cannot accept your style, or if they disagree with your idea, they will think of some other ways to change that.

Murong at once felt lost and frustrated. She took the students' independence as disobedience, their resistance to her teaching plans as "rebellion," and their complaints as "no respect" for teacher. She missed the good, old days in her home university where "they [the students] regarded you as their friend, and they also respected you as a teacher." Compared with those students, she explained that the AU students "probably respect [teachers] to a certain degree, but not so strong." She laughed and said: "I didn't mean they needed to respect me as if I were a kind of authority, or a kind of expert or whatever, but you know, sometimes [they were] more direct [expressing their ideas]." She came to accept the concept that a harmonious teacher-student relationship had to include the teacher's consideration of and respect for the students and their needs. She learned to consciously develop and carefully maintain a rapport with the students so that the classroom teaching could be effective.

> You have to place yourself at a very good position. I mean, sometimes you have to regard yourself as a teacher, but most of time you have to treat yourself as their equal. So I really didn't think too much of my teaching experience. I think, subconsciously I learned this kind of thing [treat yourself as their equal].

Looking back at how she regained her bearings in classroom, she noted: "I [previously] knew the relationship between teacher and students is very important, and now I still hold this kind of view. Nowadays this view, I think, is truer than before."

The negotiation and communication between Murong and her students enabled her to re-examine her role in classroom, and she found herself playing a much more complex role as a teacher than in the past. She clarified that her new role was composed of two parts: a language instructor in specific and a teacher in general.

> I think I'm still a language teacher; I think I have to help them improve their language skills. But I know I'm also their elder sister or something like that. I have

> to tell them how to survive in this society, how to have a very successful relationship with other people. I'm quite clear about these two tasks as a teacher.

Her role identification was associated with her image of a good language teacher.

> I mean, a good language teacher should be a good language user; his [or her] language proficiency should be good. And then he [or she] should be a good teacher; a good teacher certainly means his [or her] attitudes toward students, teaching skills, and other things.

Her image of a good language teacher derived from her learning experience in her university days. She admired her Listening teacher because he was serious with learning, knowledgeable, caring, and helpful to students. "Although he was strict [with learning]," she recalled, "he was quite willing to talk with you, to know your problems, and to try to help you with your problems." To some extent, the Listening teacher gave her a role model of a language teacher for her to follow.

Murong's belief about the dual responsibilities of a language teacher enabled her to treat the students' use of language not simply from the linguistic and strategic perspectives, but from the perspective of their attitudes toward the world around them. Once in a listening practice, a student needed to listen to the tape one more time; he said to her: "Replay it!" Murong felt uncomfortable with the way he made the request. According to her language-learning experiences, the student should have learned to say: "Can you please" or "Do you mind"—the kind of basic English both as sentence patterns and as communicative strategy in his elementary English education. She perceived that his inappropriate use of language was not caused by his insufficient English proficiency. Diagnosing that his inappropriate request was actually related to an unconscious neglect of respect for people in his social behavior, she corrected the student by demonstrating how to make a request in a polite way:

> If I were you, I would say: Would you please replay the tape? Then he repeated my sentence: "Would you please do that?" I said: "Yes, I'm quite willing to do that."

It was classroom incidents like this that made Murong better understand her role as a teacher. "Being a teacher, you don't just deliver knowledge, but you also need to tell students how to be a person," she stated. "That's why we have those different kinds of activities—to tell them something: to be cooperative, to listen to someone, to learn to accept criticism and different opinions, something like that."

After two years of teaching at AU, Murong's methodology and her beliefs about language teaching have changed. To her, the word *negotiation* meant the struggling processes that she was trying to find the right path; the word *compromise* meant a kind temporary certainty in the negotiated curriculum after a painful shift in her beliefs about teaching, learning, and teacher-student relationship. In this negotiated curriculum, both she and her students co-defined what to learn and how to learn and co-constructed a harmonious relationship. She re-conceptualized the role of students and the role of the teacher and regained her bearings in classrooms teaching. However, her regained certainty in classroom teaching was temporary because she was still struggling to make sense of the innovated curriculum. "I was really confused," she complained. "I didn't know what I was talking about: Am I teaching language, or am I teaching politics, economics, laws, or something like that? But I was just teaching those things in English. I was really confused." Although she claimed that she found the focus of teaching—knowledge and skills of language and in-depth comprehension, which did meet the objectives of the curriculum—she was still struggling to find balance between the prevailing dichotomies in language teaching: teaching the linguistic knowledge and oral skills the English language or teaching the content that the English language carried.

When Murong interpreted her change of teaching methods as going "back to tradition," she did not realize that she had matured in beliefs and conceptions about language teaching. Superficially, she moved to lecturing a bit more than in the oral class, but the aim of her lecture was to increase the students' ability to use English and to improve their comprehension of the reading materials, the organization of ideas, and the views of the authors. Although facilitating understanding was a major objective of her teaching, she also encouraged her students to think in depth and independently, and she influenced their attitudes toward the world through genuine communication and group learning in the classroom. Her current teaching was fundamentally different from the classic structural approach that aims at a literal comprehension of an article and a mastery of the mechanical structures of the language. Now, in her conceptions and beliefs, CLT has outgrown the simple oral activities; it was growing more complex with multiple dimensions that included linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, communicative strategies, and social competence. In her beliefs, the students had their say in her curriculum, and their needs and interests had special weight in her decision making. Now, she made the students more centered in her teaching than she had done in the past, when she simply arranged the oral tasks and had the students talk most of the time in oral activities. Comparing her early beliefs with her current beliefs about language teaching, she has achieved some qualitative changes—she stepped out from teacher-centered teaching and arrived in student-centered teaching, although occasionally feeling confused and uprooted with every step forward.

Factors Contributing to Change

Murong stated that it was the learning atmosphere of AU during the past two years that improved her teaching. To be specific, she learned from her colleagues, from her students, and from her reflection on her own teaching.

Murong appreciated the open and supportive relationship among her colleagues in the Faculty. She said: "When you come here, [all] your colleagues will tell you what you should do and what you should not do, those basic rules about teaching here." She shared with them her problems in teaching, learned practical strategies for classroom management, and won their emotional support when she was feeling frustrated. Insisting on observing her colleagues' teaching on a regular basis, she learned various teaching techniques and strategies from them. "Each year, I could sense the weak point of my teaching, and each year I also needed to see how other teachers help the class, so that I could make use of those strong parts. I already learned from other teachers to compensate for the weak part in my class [teaching]."

The pressure from the students also motivated Murong to change her teaching, although the pressure was not pleasant.

> If they [students] are not satisfied with something, they will protest. They will talk to the leaders; they will tell you directly or indirectly; there are some other ways. So, you have to think about that. I think, any teachers in such circumstances will change their ideas about teaching.

But Murong was really happy with the new knowledge she gained from teaching and from working with the students. "If we have a new subject, probably it is not within your knowledge; you have to learn that, and you have to share your knowledge with students. And also, probably the students know more in this aspect. When you teach, you are also learning."

Murong felt that at AU she was learning all the time. "I learned more here. I learned more and I gained more in knowledge, from the students and from other teachers, [and] from other media." Surprised at how much she had learned and how much progress she had made in teaching in the past two years, she claimed that learning was the most helpful thing to her teaching. "Here, I have a very strong feeling towards the sayings: 'Learning is life-long' and 'to live and to learn.' I think it's the portrait of life here."

<div align="center">*Lin's Story*</div>

Lin went to a university located in her home city in Northwest China in the early 1980s. She studied English for four years in the Department of English Language and Literature. After graduation, she was assigned to teach English in a heavy machinery institute in another city. One year later, she transferred to her home university and taught college English there for ten years. In 1997, she moved to Guangzhou and taught college English at AU to the non-English major students.

Lin attended two Master Coursework Programs (non-degree programs) and a short-term language teacher training program. In 1991, she went to an English Teacher Advanced Program at a university in another city, which provided the in-service language teachers one year's coursework in the Master's program in linguistics and applied linguistics; Lin got a certificate and went back to her home university. Later, she took another part-time Master's course in applied linguistics at AU while teaching full time there. In the summer of 2000, she attended a one-week training program in Beijing to learn how to use the *New College English* textbook.

Early Teaching Methodology

Lin's learning experience in her university strongly influenced the way she taught college English teaching in the first few years of her career. In her undergraduate courses, her teachers lectured most of the time; she learned by listening to them and by doing a lot of homework. The first step she took in classroom teaching was to transfer the "apprenticeship of observation" of her teachers (Lortie, 1975)—she simply taught the way she had been taught. She explained: "You did not know the new teaching methods; you used the way your teacher taught you." She described the teaching methods as "traditional": "We didn't have classroom activity; the only activity was to let the students answer the Yes/No questions, or translate the sentences, or read this paragraph for me." Teaching the Intensive Reading course also contributed to strengthening her teaching methods. "You didn't have to use other methods, you just tell the meaning [of words, sentences, and text] to the students," she said. The textbook suggested what to teach and how to teach, so that Lin had little space to use alternative methods in her classroom. As for the students, "they were more like a container [of knowledge]," she recalled. "They only needed the teacher's idea, but the teacher never thought about the students' ideas."

Nevertheless, Lin still tried some "new way" to put her "new idea" in the classroom. By "new idea," she meant introducing cultural information "between the lines." She believed that her students should know something about the culture related to the English language and learn to appreciate the beauty of this language. "The textbook was so hard for me to put my new idea into the classroom, but I still tried to give some vivid explanation or introduction about Western culture. From the passage, we could enjoy the literature, the beautiful language," she said. In methodology, she lectured to

"give" the students the cultural meaning of the text, and she tried to help the students understand the text beyond the literal meaning and grammatical structure. Referring to the conceptual framework shown in Table 6, her teaching and beliefs about teaching fell into the Teacher-centered category in which she transmitted knowledge, facilitated understanding, and thought of students as passive receivers of knowledge.

Current Teaching

By the time of this study, Lin was teaching the Comprehensive English course to first-year students. The textbook for the course was *Transitions*—a new course book developed by the Faculty of English Language Education for the first-year students. The goal of this course, as the title of the textbook suggests, was to help students make a successful transition of learning strategies for studying English language at the university. The students were expected to learn English language and skills through cooperative learning, such as group or pair work, role playing, and in-class presentations. In our interviews and casual talks, Lin repeatedly mentioned the language activities she used in her classroom teaching. At the time, she was teaching all her classes on the North Campus of the university, where the classrooms were like a lecture theatre—long rows of unmovable desks and chairs fixed to the floor and students sitting in their seats facing the chalkboard. Lin disliked this style of classroom because it was inconvenient for class activities.

Lin intended to have her students learn through classroom activities. Although the classroom setting made it hard to break the students into groups from time to time, she still used some activities to carry out the learning tasks. She paired the students to work out the reading comprehension questions, put them into groups to discuss the authors'

viewpoints, and exchange their dictation scripts for peer correction. What impressed me was how she taught the topic "Group Discussion" by assigning the students the task of group discussion:

> She briefly explained a few words that often describe the behavior of group members, such as "aggressive" and "dominant." She talked about the expressions people often use in group discussion, such as "I'm afraid I didn't catch your second point" or "Generally, I agree with your point, but my concern is . . ." Then she assigned the task of group discussion. The students left their seats to sit with their group members and selected a topic from their worksheet. They discussed it for ten minutes. In each group, one student was responsible for taking notes, the others discussing in English and contributing ideas. When time was up, Lin asked the spokesperson of each group to report the group's discussion to the class. After each report, she commented a bit or asked a couple of questions. (Field notes: Lin)

I found that Lin's focus was not on the explanation of the words and sentences in the text "Group Discussion," but on the appropriateness of language use in the group discussions. She taught the students how to express agreement and disagreement, and she let them learn by participating in a group discussion, so that they could experience how a discussion proceeded, and how it was sustained through appropriate language interactions amongst the group members.

It was not that Lin did not teach new words or explain the difficult sentences; vocabulary was still a part of her instructional content though less important. However, she gave more attention to how the students used the words they learned than how large a vocabulary they memorized. Instead of "telling the students twenty uses of one word," she required them to remember one usage of each word and use the exact words in writing, in classroom activities, and in daily life. She said that the best way to learn new words was to use them through meaningful communication and discussion.

In the classroom, Lin did not follow the sequence, content, and activities as they were arranged in a unit of the textbook. She said she "stood outside the textbook" from

time to time. She re-arranged the teaching activities according to the students' needs and

requirements or according to her understanding of the teaching material. She told me a

plot of her classroom teaching:

> The unit [in the textbook] arranged a dictation exercise, but that dictation is very
> long; I don't think of it as [being] a proper exercise for students to do in classroom.
> So I gave them a dictation of vocabulary, 20 words. I just did some change. I said:
> "Ok, try to use each word and make a sentence; if you can not, write out three
> phrases using this word." I want the students to know at which level they use their
> vocabulary. Some students just remember the Chinese meaning. I told them most
> of time it was meaningless if you can not use them [vocabulary]. I think this kind of
> exercise is proper, you know, and definitely helps students [learn] to master the use
> of the vocabulary. The long passages of dictation will make the students feel tired
> and bored after three sentences because they [can't] listen for so long a time, trying
> to write [down] everything.

Instead of viewing the textbook as the authority and following every bit of it, Lin now

stood outside of it as an inspector and repaired it as a co-writer. She ignored some

prescribed content in the textbook if she felt it was not appropriate, and she added content

that she thought was more practical to the students' learning. By tailoring the materials,

she made teaching more adaptive to the students' needs and to the situation of learning.

Even if using the material from the textbook, Lin would not always follow the

highlighted content; in her metaphor, she "got up from the textbook." In one of my class

observations, Lin was explaining some terms that were not marked as difficult language

points in the textbook. For example, she spotted the terms IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and

EQ (Emotional Quotient) that appeared in a reading exercise; she illustrated the terms in

this way: "High IQ helps you find a good job, but good EQ leads you to promotion and

success." When I asked why she spent time on such non-difficult terms, she explained: "I

always get up from the textbook and tell [the students] many things behind the language.

If I have a different understanding or my personal idea, I will share [that] in classroom

with my students." Aware of the students' bias toward academic achievement because of

the fierce competition in their educational experience, Lin shared with them her attitude

toward balancing their IQ and EQ development and her expectation that they gain an

integration of academic and social abilities. "I'm quite independent of the teaching

material now," she said. "I can decide what I will teach according to my classroom

situation."

On several occasions, Lin mentioned the in-class presentation. I got to know that

it was she who had developed the module of the in-class presentation. She told me how

she developed this activity from a "news report"—an oral classrooms practice wherein

students report a piece of news that they had extracted from media. She reminisced:

> One student's news report gave me a surprise. She made a research about the laid-off workers in the textile factories in Shanghai. She collected data from media, put the charts on the blackboard, and gave a very good presentation and analysis. I was very excited at such excellent work she did. Then I thought, maybe other students would report news like this, that is, they should not only report what happened, but also comment on it, and analyze it.

> At the time, I was auditing a foreign professor's course on management. He was teaching how to make presentations in business management. I was interested in the checklist that he made for presentations and asked for a copy. I modified it a bit and made it a checklist for the presentation task in my class. Later, a professor came to inspect my teaching. I read his evaluation checklist and found that it was even more detailed in requirement. I gradually realized what a good presentation should contain. So I modified my presentation checklist again based on the evaluation checklist and got it fixed now.

> Soon the classroom presentation was promoted in our faculty. People came to observe my class. The format, including the students' self-reflection and teacher's feedback, these procedures were adopted by other instructors and were used in their classrooms.

Lin explained how she set p the presentation task. She would put the students into groups;

each group chose a topic they were interested in and conducted research on it. In each

session, one group would present their topic to the class—ten minutes for presentation

and five minutes for questions and comments from the audience (including the teacher).

Lin pointed out that a fifteen-minute presentation would enable the students to learn more than studying vocabulary and analyzing grammar and structures from the textbook. To prepare for a presentation, they would have to read extensively from all kinds of media, get information relevant to the topic, write the draft paper, practise oral work, think about interacting with the audience, and design the visual aids, such as PowerPoint slides and posters. They would also learn how to cooperate with one another to complete the task.

I observed a session when Lin was giving lengthy, detailed feedback to the students who had made their group presentation in the previous week. She had a notepad on which she had written down specific "shining spots" and problems of each group. Her comments included every aspect of group presentations—topic, organization of content, cooperation of the group members, pronunciation, eye contact with audience, design of visual aids, and effect of background music. The students listened carefully and attentively. It was obvious that they cared about the teacher's feedback and suggestions about their work. In the follow-up interview with Lin, she justified her lengthy talk for the perceived expectations from the students:

> I think that the students prepared (for their presentation) for so long, they worked so hard for a long time, and they tried their best to show their performance in the classroom. Surely they really care about the teacher's responses to them. So I have to give them more detailed feedback. I think the students are very happy if the teacher could notice, even some little points. They know the teacher observed them and noticed every detail they made; [they know] the teacher cares [and] feels happy about their improvement. The more detailed feedback, the better, I think.

In the feedback class, Lin did not stop at pointing out the technical merits and problems in the students' work; as well, she showed her appreciation for their efforts, her close observation of their performance, and her care for their progress in English. Not only did

her lengthy comments meet the students' expectation for a detailed feedback to their

work, but also it further encouraged their learning.

Lin said that she was trying to make her teaching student-centered. To do so, she

no longer dominated the class by lecturing most of the time as she had done in the past. "I

try to arrange students to talk no less than half of each session," she said. Nevertheless,

the length of her talk and students' activities would depend on the classroom dynamics—

the students' interest and her perception of their need for supervision. She acknowledged:

"Maybe sometimes I talk much more, sometimes students talk much more. It's not that

balanced each time."

In classroom discussions, Lin encouraged the students to talk. Making herself an

organizer and a participant, she did not establish her voice as being authoritative. She

joined in the student groups, listened to them, discussed their ideas, and encouraged them

to speak their views out to the class. Many topics for discussion were controversial, such

as "Terrorism," "Beauty," "Freedom," and "Job and Career," but she never imposed her

viewpoints on the students, nor did she give 'correct' answers. She explained:

> As a teacher, I never say: "No, you are wrong." I would say: "Maybe you are right
> according to your experience [and] your understanding. But my idea is like this . . .,
> my understanding is this way, so you can judge."

She thought she was more like a seminar leader than a teacher, and her role was to inspire

thinking and open discussion. "We are just discussing problems in English," she laughed.

"We just try to find a way to solve the problem in English, in this language."

When Lin talked about her teaching, the word *attitudes* repeatedly appeared in her

narratives. By *attitudes*, she meant the culture, values, ethics, perspectives, and opinions

that are hidden between the lines of a text and behind the forms of the language. To Lin,

teaching reading was to help the students understand the *attitudes* that the authors had in their articles. When asked about her priority of instruction, she said that the attitudes behind the language and text stories were the most important for the students to learn and understand:

> [I believe] people's differences come from their understanding of the world and from their attitudes towards the world, not totally from [their] knowledge difference, right? But attitude is everything. So I always encourage my students: "Attitude towards the world is everything." I think I outweigh this area [rather] than other areas in my teaching.

Lin believed that to understand attitudes in English texts was a way of broadening one's vision of the world. This was Lin's utmost goal of language teaching, as she explained: "Learning English, I often tell my students, is not the purpose; learning English is [to open] a window to see the world." From this window, the students can appreciate the beauty of the language, learn different cultures, and see the world from the different attitudes embedded in the learning materials.

At the same time, Lin expected the students to develop their own attitudes toward the world and toward the learning of the English language. She explained: "I try to influence the students according to the text, with my understanding, influence them with what proper idea we draw from the text we learn, what we reflect from this passage." She guided the students to see what people did and how they felt in the text stories, and asked "How [do] YOU feel after this [reading or listening to this passage]?" She also shared with the students her attitude, believing that a "teacher's attitude is also a window to think about the problem and to look at the world." With an emphasis on the ideas in the text's story and students' making sense of those ideas, Lin spent time explaining the cultural issues in the story to facilitate their understanding.

Not only did Lin guide the students to make sense of the attitudes in the reading materials, but she also tried to transform their attitudes towards learning. When she had new students, she found that a lot of them were not interested in learning English: "Most students think that it's a course and they have to pass it and finish it after they come into the university. They think that's a burden, a lot of homework." She tried to arouse their interest by showing them the beauty of English, pointing out the cultures and viewpoints that were expressed in this language, and building their confidence to use it. Gradually she saw the difference; she said:

> The students first looked at me with doubtful eyes. I actively worked with them, [but] they just showed cold eyes to me sometimes. But I know what they were thinking; I can feel it from their eyes, from their expression. I do not expect that they change immediately because people's minds are not easy to change; they change little by little. One student, at the beginning of this term, wrote a short message to me: "Teacher, I hate English. I have to sit here because I need to have the score. Otherwise, I would never stay here." But at the end of the term, he said, "Even though I don't like English, English is not as terrible as before."

Lin's teaching was fruitful. When she took over the class at the beginning of the term, most students could hardly talk in English—"broken sentences, a lot of grammar mistakes, a lot of hesitation." After some time, she observed the progress her students had made in their English. "Most students, after one year or a half year in my class, feel differently. I can see the sharp difference," she said.

Looking back at her teaching career, Lin said that her classroom teaching was "totally different" from the past. Now she used a variety of classroom activities to involve students and to encourage them to learn by using English in communication. In terms of instructional content, she had already shifted her focus from the linguistic knowledge of English language to the deeper meaning underlying the text. In the classroom, she no longer made didactic lectures to impart language rules and cultural

information to the students; instead, she encouraged the students to explore answers and make meaning of what they had learned. Her relationship with the textbook was no longer passive, and she had gained autonomy to tailor it to serve her instructional purpose and to meet the needs of students. Her purpose for teaching was not to pour the knowledge of English into students' minds, but to expand their perspectives and transform their attitudes toward the world and learning. She believed that she had moved away from the traditional approach to teaching, claiming, "Now, I get rid of their [her teachers'] way."

Conceptual Change

Lin has changed her conceptions about what should be taught, for what purpose, and how to teach it. She believed that she had given up the traditional teacher-centered conceptions and accepted the learner-centered ones. She understood student-centered teaching as taking into consideration the students' needs and interest in learning.

> I think the first thing is to try to understand the students—[their] needs, demands, what they expect from the teacher. I think that is very important. Usually, at the beginning of each year when I teach the new students, I use some survey to make sure [of] what they need, what they want to learn from me. So I think my teaching should accommodate this.

To accommodate the students' needs, Lin believed that teaching must be open to their interests and flexible enough to allow spontaneous change. She illustrated her point with an event in her classroom.

> We had a topic about music. Actually I know nothing about music, but the students know more about music than I. They told me what was classical music, pop music, and even [how] pop music can be classified into so many categories. I know nothing about that. Most of the time they dominated the class; they had a lot to share in the classroom. Ok, [I] let them go. I think I'm just like stupid, but I'm happy that they know a lot and we can share.

Lin had to change her plans and hand the class over to the students who directed the discussion by themselves, taught one another, and shared their knowledge. She retreated to the position of a learner in the classroom and learned from the students.

Lin's beliefs about the goals of language teaching were also totally different from those of her early teaching career. In the past, her teaching goals were to help her students master the linguistic knowledge of English and relate some cultural knowledge through the English language. Now she had social and educational goals knitted into her goals of language teaching.

> From discussions, from group activities, from all kind of activities we had, I want my students to have confidence about their oral English . . . [and have confidence] in learning in general. They know how to learn English, you know, how to view in English [and] culture. From the language they would see so many things.

In Lin's eyes, group learning activities were not solely designed to improve the students' oral proficiency, but also for their cognitive development: increasing their confidence in learning, changing their attitudes, and expanding their visions of the world by having them see various perspectives through the "window" of the English language. She even associated the language-learning experience with the formation of students' personality, that is, confidence, positive attitudes toward learning, and broad views of the world.

As to what to teach, Lin had quite different ideas than in the past. Language points and grammatical structures were no longer the focus in her teaching. Instead, she adjusted the content of her teaching in accordance with the curriculum objectives, her investigation of the stated needs of her student, and her understanding of language learning. She assumed that the students should have the ability to solve most of the linguistic problems by themselves.

> I [think] if they think this word is really important, they can check it out because they are adults. I told them: "If you think you need to know this word, but teacher didn't explain, you can check [in a dictionary]. Why rely on the teacher all the time?"

With the assumption of the students' ability and autonomy, Lin oriented the teaching content to the deep meaning of reading materials—the cultural issues, values, and viewpoints hidden in the text—and to the communicative skills both in oral and writing. By teaching communicative skills, she tried to improve the students' behavior in social communication through CLT activities. She expected her students not only to be well trained in oral and written language but also to improve their social abilities in interpersonal communication.

For a while, Lin was confused about the shifted focus in her classroom instruction. Although language points were not the focus of her teaching, she still sorted out from the reading materials a few difficult words and structures that the students might have problem with. It frequently happened that the discussions involved all the students and became heated and interesting.

> We are sometimes just discussing about problems in English. We are just talking in English, try to find a way to solve the problem in English, in this language. I guess my teaching is more like solving some problems, the problems in their mind, or helping them to understand something in their life.

> At first I said [to myself]: Oh, I didn't teach my students new words today! For a long time I'm wondering: *What am I doing? Is this an English class*? It's a kind of puzzle in my mind for so long.

Lin was not sure whether or not her teaching was off track. She felt better after getting some positive responses from a foreign professor who inspected her teaching. "Now I accept my idea. I said [to myself]: OK, *that's a way* [*of my teaching*]."

Lin also changed her beliefs about the roles of teacher and students in the classroom. In her early teaching, her relationship with the students was simply

'knowledge giver' and 'knowledge receiver.' Now, while acknowledging that she still

gave knowledge in a way, she stressed her multiple roles in classroom.

> Now I understand that teacher's role is not just be the teacher, but can be an organizer, guide, helper, friend, councilor, you know. So I never say that I am a teacher and you are a student and I'll tell you what [to do, to think]. I trust them and regard them as my friends or as my children.

As Lin treated the students as equals, her communication with them was more like an

open conversation in and outside the classroom. But she was also strict with their

learning.

> So I think, sometimes I'm very friendly to students, like a mom, but sometimes very hard [on them], [saying] that you have to do it in this way because this is the only acceptable way for you to do that. You can have your own way of writing or your imagination of writing, but the structure [for an essay] usually is like this.

She combined guidance and instruction in her teaching and made herself a friendly and

demanding teacher who was caring about the students and yet challenging them to learn.

Ten years earlier, she would have felt uncomfortable if her students had some

different ideas from hers. Now she no longer took herself as the authority of knowledge,

and she had well accepted the concept that a teacher is also a learner. "If [students'

questions are] beyond my knowledge, I would say, OK, I would learn it and I would

check it after class. You know, this is quite normal." At the same time, she recognized the

students' knowledge and encouraged them to be confident in their learning.

> I often encourage my students and say that you know much more than your teacher, because you have your discipline of learning, you have English knowledge, and you teacher may only know English and how to teach English.

Realizing that her knowledge was limited and she had a lot to learn, she warned her

students not to rely on her answers and encouraged them to explore alternative solutions

as independent, creative, and autonomous learners.

Factors Contributing to Change

Lin attributed her development of beliefs and methodology to her personality: she

was a close observer and a conscious learner.

> I think that's because I really observed . . . really paid [my] attention to that. I really stand in the other's position and begin to realize that [my] role has changed. Maybe before I just thought that "I'm a teacher, I know much more than you," so I only considered the teacher's role. Maybe I didn't realize that, but it could be true. But later, I began to realize: "Oh, students can be so capable, so imaginative." I began to realize that, I began to observe them, I began to understand them, and [then] I began to think in their way. So that might be the change.

She learned from that student who made an oral news report into a presentation, and she

learned from her colleagues to shape the module of in-class presentation. It was the

learning process that enabled her to reflect on her role as a teacher and the role of

students. Because she closely observed her students, she could understand their needs and

find their abilities and creative potential.

As Lin's classroom practice has changed from teacher-centered lectures to more

student-centered activities, she experienced the confusion that was brought on by the

conflicting beliefs being rooted in the two different approaches to teaching. Lin felt both

excited and puzzled at the new visions of language teaching. On one hand, she was proud

of having stepped away from her "traditional" way of teaching and having embraced

student-centered teaching; on the other hand, she was not quite sure how effective her

new ways were for teaching and, with vocabulary and grammar no longer the focus of

teaching, what linguistic objectives she should demand the students to reach. Sometimes,

because "the meaning is so meaningful" in reading material, both Lin and the students

became engaged in discussion without leaving enough time to study the new words or

explain the complex sentences in the text. After a heated discussion, she walked out of

the classroom feeling confused: "*Is that an English class? What am I doing, teaching English or just talking in English?* " She tried to look both forward and backward to find a balance between her broader goal of teaching and the established objectives of classroom instruction of linguistic knowledge. Now she is more comfortable with the idea that she is not merely teaching but is working and learning something new together with her students by using the English language.

Ouyang's Story

Ouyang studied English language and literature in a university in Southwest China. After she got her bachelor's degree in the mid 1980s, she stayed in her home university to teach college English. In the mid 1990s, she moved to AU and continued to teach college English. In 2000, she started her part-time study in a Master's program at AU; she took thirteen courses in linguistics and applied linguistics and wrote a thesis, and in 2003, she was awarded her Master's degree. The graduate study enabled her to gain certain research competence: She could read and understand the statistical reports published in language testing journals, and she also had a couple of articles published in academic journals in the area of foreign language teaching and testing.

Early Teaching Methodology

Ouyang described her home institution as being traditional in teaching and learning. "Traditionally, teachers give knowledge, explain a lot about language knowledge, something like that," she recalled. Teachers lectured on language points and sentence structures from the textbooks. She explained: "We were supposed to teach Intensive Reading: a lot of phrases, words, word derivation, translation exercises, so on and so forth." The students learned by listening to the teachers' lectures, doing linguistic

exercises, seldom asking questions. As a novice teacher, the context felt isolating for her because she could hardly get any support from her colleagues. "We did not have much discussion about how we would teach one lesson, how we conducted the classroom activities. No, we would not talk about that." She had to learn to teach by herself. "It was not easy," she said. "You could not fall back on any person. You learned from your own experience."

When she started to teach, she focused her teaching on the language points, grammar, and vocabulary exercises. She found that most of the students were not very interested in the English language. "They passively received whatever you taught," she said. "Since English was not their major, their learning purpose was to pass the CET-4." The learning atmosphere in her classrooms was dull, and she decided to make a change. "I felt the students didn't show much interest in this kind of teaching. I had to arouse [their] curiosity, [their] interest. I expected that every student [should show] great concern or great interest in what I was talking about."

She started to use some classroom activities such as pair work and discussion, although she had never heard anything about CLT. She would ask the students what they thought about the title of the text; she would combine the language exercises with explanations of the language points; or she would ask the students to make their own sentences with the words they had just learned. She found that the students got more interested in learning: "Everybody was involved; everybody listened to my explanation and took notes, and then some asked me questions after class." She tried to explain the word *involve* to me: "I consider this [student reaction] as a kind of involvement, but not as actively as the present students [at AU]."

However, she did not go far with the change in her classroom teaching. At that time, she believed that the purpose of language teaching was to help the students master the knowledge of language.

> We thought that we were just language teachers, and all we had to do was to teach them the language material, to learn some phrases and some words, to be able to do the exercises, to know the language points, and know how to translate the sentences from Chinese to English. More weight was put on the knowledge of the language.

Another reason for being unable to make too much change in her teaching methods, as she explained, was that "teaching content and teaching methods were only confined to the textbooks." Compared with her colleagues who would lecture throughout the session, she thought her teaching was innovative in some way; however, her teaching was still in the category of a traditional approach to teaching and "more weight was put on the knowledge of language." She summarized her teaching methods this way: "I did not have much change [from] the traditional way of teaching, but I really adopted some interesting activities."

What made Ouyang proud was her relationship with her students. She was a caring teacher in her early teaching career and tried to help the first-year students get used to life and study in the university.

> They came to a new place to study independently. They needed somebody to guide them, to give them a friendly hint or something like that. I was an English teacher, and I tried my best to give them friendly help as I could. So I think the students had a good relationship with me. That's what impressed me most.

She gave them guidance about how to survive the university study even though she was not their academic supervisor. The good teacher-student relationship was established not only because she made her classes more interesting but also because she cared for the

students in her classroom teaching. In her memory, the most impressive teaching experience was the friendly teacher-student relationship.

Current Teaching

By the time I observed her class, Ouyang was teaching the Comprehensive English course to second-year students, using the textbook *Viewpoints*. She taught all her classes on the South Campus of the university where the classrooms were equipped with multimedia systems. She got into the classroom five minutes before class and directed the students to arrange the desks in a double U shape: two rows close to the left side wall, two rows to the right side wall, and two rows at the back of the room. She usually started her class with listening practice, students' presentations, or mini-talk in groups. My observation notes indicated that she used a variety of classroom activities, including in-class presentations, pair and group work, dictations, translations, and lectures.

Ouyang warmed up the students with a five minute listening practice. The listening materials she brought to the class were almost current with the latest news reported by the Chinese and Western media. When I observed her class for the second time, China had just launched the Shenshou-6 Spacecraft.

> (Before the class began.) The students were watching the Chinese CCTV news broadcasting of the launch of Shenzhou-6 Spacecraft. Then the class started, and Ouyang played a tape of the American CNN news report of the launch.
>
> Ouyang played the tape, stopping it from time to time, and she asked the students to take down some key words such as "launch, human courage, threat, involve, blast, orbit, broadcast live, manned spacecraft." At the same time, she analyzed the points of views of the CNN. (Field notes: Ouyang)

In another session, Ouyang downloaded the live BBC news directly from the internet in the classroom.

> Five minutes before class, Ouyang was downloading the BBC radio news on the control panel. She asked the students to take down notes from BBC news. She said: "It is also a real challenge to all of us, including myself." She asked the students to tell what events were reported in BBC news. Some students caught some words. Ouyang listed what they got on the whiteboard: "peace talk, murder and assassination, bird flu, hurricane." (Field notes: Ouyang)

Obviously, these warm-up exercises were not for listening for accurate information, but for listening for main ideas and points. She introduced a website for ESL learners where the students could find the transcripts of the news they had just heard; she also encouraged them to transcribe the news in English and post their transcripts to the website.

After the listening warm-up, the class moved on to the students' presentations. A group of students (two or three) presented a topic that they had prepared, and this was followed by the questions and answers between the audience and presenters, the presenters' self comments on their work, and the teacher's comments. After the presentation, Ouyang led the class to the theme of the unit: beauty pageants. She first checked the students' reading assignment by asking them to explain the meaning of a few words and expressions in the text. Then she played the video about the beauty contest in Russia, which was described as a democracy by the BBC news report. After helping the students understand this piece of news, she took out a photocopy of *The New York Times* report about China's Super Girls Campaign. Similar to the beauty contest in Russia, the Super Girls Campaign selected talented women pop singers from the grassroots who had survived many rounds of contests by votes directly from the audience and pop fans, not from a group of musicians and vocal specialists. *The New York Times* called it the twilight of democracy in China.

The students showed great interest in the topic of the Super Girls. They were very attentive to how the Americans commented on the Super Girl campaign. Ouyang read a small part of the Times report, and chalked a few hard-to-understand sentences on the whiteboard. She pointed out that the article was from the perspective of the American media and that the U.S. and China did not agree on the issue of democracy. (Field notes: Ouyang)

She then asked the students to discuss in groups some questions related to the topic, such as "What can a beauty pageant represent?" and "What are its social values?"

Her teaching of this class progressed smoothly. I was impressed with her natural and smooth transitions from one activity to another, and she looked very confident leading the class throughout a series of tasks to the end of the session. She guided the students from listening and speaking tasks to translation and writing practice, from reading to serious discussion on the related topics. In the follow-up interviews, Ouyang attributed the flow and smooth transitions in her classroom teaching to her preplans and her sensitivity to and flexibility about the dynamic changes in the classroom. She explained:

I'm familiar with the whole stuff [that] will be covered, and then I organize my teaching: what material I would talk about, what activities I would add, and how to move from this activity to next one. Some activities are rough, pretty rough in my mind; I did not like to make [specific] plan ahead of time. Once I make some plans ahead, usually I leave them away, and I'm teaching according to the different classes.

She did preplan her teaching and design the learning tasks and activities based on the content of the texts, but she kept her plan open and flexible to the classroom situations. Very often in the classroom, she had to give up the activities specifically planned beforehand; instead, she had to pick up some spontaneous activities.

Claiming herself an experienced teacher, she had certain autonomy from the madated textbook. "I know the textbook editors have their own way or method

connecting the materials. But in [specific] classrooms, [learning] was different from the

arrangement in the textbook." She rearranged the teaching materials based on her

knowledge and according to the students' learning styles and needs. She organized

teaching by adding to, deleting, and reordering the text materials, making the teaching

materials more genuine to the social environment and the students' experience. She

added live CNN radio news reports about China's Shengzhou-6 spaceship, Hurricane

Katrina in New Orleans, bird flu, and the Super Girls Campaign so that the students could

listen to what was happening concurrently in the world and examine how other people

looked at those issues. Most importantly, the authentic materials could shorten the

distance between the learning activities in classroom and the practice in the "real" world.

No longer confined to the textbook and its suggested teaching activities, she believed that

the teacher should be the "boss" of the textbooks: "You are the boss; you have the say

[about] what to use and what not to use in your classroom; you should not be controlled

by the textbook."

I noticed that Ouyang used less PowerPoint in the class than most of her

colleagues that I had observed. She explained that PowerPoint could limit her flexibility

in the class. "I think those PowerPoint slides can really control my activity. I have my

own way to teach; I don't want to be controlled." She was critical of the overwhelming

use of PowerPoint in the classrooms in her university. For one thing, "the students are fed

up with PowerPoint" because "they have too many activities based on PowerPoint

instruction." For another, "the teachers rely too much on PowerPoint. It seems that they

make everything ahead of time, and they don't write on the whiteboard or blackboard."

She claimed that "PowerPoint should have more meanings" than replacing the chalk.

Given that Ouyang was comfortable organizing various language learning activities for her classroom teaching, she was not sure whether or not she could call her teaching CLT. In her classrooms, linguistic knowledge was still important for the students to learn, although the explanation of words and structures was no longer the only content as it had been in the past; in her words, "not much weight is put on language points, but on provoking critical thinking." She preferred to term her teaching method a "critical thinking-provoking method." Although she sometimes pointed out to the students the beautiful use of words in the text or assigned grammar practice, she would associate those language points with the students' life experience so that a task did not simply involve the students in linguistic drills, but it often provoked their serious thinking.

Ouyang elaborated her "critical thinking-provoking method" with a story of teaching the subjunctive mood with a "time tunnel task." The subjunctive mood is a difficult grammatical item for Chinese students because there is no similar complex structure in the Chinese language. Upon learning that some students met the AU alumni on the university's anniversary celebration during the past weekend, Ouyang asked them to imagine themselves as the homecoming alumni in the year 2015 anniversary. She required that they work in pairs and describe their life and professions in the future tense and with specific words. Then she asked them to think about their possible regrets up to 2015 in specific words and to tell their regrets to the future students on campus using the subjunctive mood. Finally, Ouyang drew the students back to the year 2005 and asked them to talk about how to prevent those future regrets from happening by using the future tense. During the exercise of taking a trip to the future and back again in a time tunnel,

Ouyang found that the students were seriously thinking, talking about their regrets, and making plans.

> So when I asked them to make a list of [their] regrets, and then asked them to come back to reality to the year 2005, everybody, after they finished this activity, jumping from 2005 to 2015 and back to 2005, everybody sat there silently, thinking for one or two minutes.

The task was genuine and related to the life of the students. It was not just for oral practice of vocabulary and grammar, but it helped the students feel their possible future regrets more fully than any warnings that they had heard from parents or had read in books. Ouyang observed that they were thinking seriously about how their current efforts and decisions might affect their life and profession in the future, and what responsibilities they might take for themselves from now on.

Compared with her early teaching career, Ouyang claimed: "[My] teaching methods and teaching activities [have] changed a lot." Now, she organized the students to learn through classroom activities and tasks. The focus of teaching was not on language points any more, although she sometimes explained the linguistic and structural difficulties in the reading materials. Because she was comfortable handling many various teaching materials, she no longer viewed the published textbook as the authority; instead, she tailored it to her instructional needs and to the students' learning interests. She is also flexible with the preplanned activities in classroom teaching. Her current teaching was qualitatively different from her teaching in the far past or even five years earlier. The classroom activities she had employed in the past were "superficial"—for arousing students' interest or for surviving the challenging environment of AU. The activities she currently used in the classroom were to encourage critical thinking and change her students' perspectives about themselves and their relationship with others. She expected

that the activities would not only help her students improve their English proficiency but also enhance their responsibility for themselves and for the society.

Conceptual Change

Ouyang found that she had quite different views of language teaching and learning since she came to AU. "I'm really aware of the change, the conceptual change," she stated. Her current views of language, learning and teaching, and teacher-student relationship indicate that she has undertaken a significant change in her beliefs and conceptions of language teaching.

Ouyang viewed "what language is" differently. "In the past, I thought it [language] was knowledge, knowledge of the words, knowledge of phrases and structure," she said. Consistent with this belief, she had taken teaching English language as transmitting to the students the tacit and discrete language points. Now her view of language was different: "The subject, I can say, is not a knowledge subject. It's a kind of skill subject." Believing that language was the skill of using words and grammar knowledge, she emphasized the "tool" function of language: "We train the students to use the language as a tool to think about the world, to think about themselves."

Accordingly, Ouyang developed a deeper and broader view of learning.

> Learning, in the past, according to my understanding, [was] the students learn in my class those language things. They can write, they can translate the sentences correctly, they can write a good summary of a passage, [and] they can use the grammar, sentence structure, and phrases correctly. That is what I understood learning in the past.

Now she believed that learning should include what to learn, how to learn, and where to get knowledge.

> But now, I think learning is a bit different from that kind of learning. Now I think learning involves academic comment on the presentation; learning here now not

only means the language points you learn from several passages, not just means you learn several phrases, or you learn how to work with dictionaries, find collocations and derivations. Learning involves cooperation, you learn how to cooperate with your classmate, you learn how to respect, [and] you learn how to learn.

She wanted her students not only to learn the knowledge of English language, but also to acquire other skills such as how to learn in cooperation with peers, how to respect and be respected in team work, and how to be independent learners. She held that "Learning is a broader term" and that while students learned English language, their intelligence and personality grew and developed integrally.

Ouyang still maintained a very good relationship with the students, but now the foundation for this relationship was broadened: Not only did it contain her caring for the students as in the past, but it also contained her appreciation of and respect for them as creative human beings. In Ouyang's eyes, students were not passive learners who just listened to teachers, but they often surprised her with their brilliant answers and insightful perspectives.

I often tell the students: "You have so many brilliant brains, but I just have my brain. I can only ask one or two questions, [and] some of the questions are really simple." But the answers the students wrote, the answers the students spoke are really beyond [my] expectation. Sometimes, I was really amazed: wow! The students are so creative!

Her appreciation of her students for their brilliance, capability, and creativity saturated her words.

At the same time, she had to re-think her role as a language teacher. Fully aware of the students' ability to learn and to access rich resources for language learning, Ouyang again felt the pressure of "what to teach." She pointed out that, exposed to various English media and learning resources—internet, TV, books, newspaper,

magazines, and dictionaries—the students became less dependent on textbooks and the

teacher's lectures to learn the knowledge of English.

> If the students are self-disciplined enough, they don't need a language teacher how to learn. They can learn much better than the teacher can teach them, from so many resources—internet, library, all kinds of books, even examination books. Even if we use some published textbooks, they have so many reference books. And those reference books are more elaborated than [what] we teachers can do in the classroom. They can study by themselves.

She explained that that was why she did not teach too much about linguistic knowledge.

The recognition of students' knowledge and capability, together with the changed

learning environment, challenged Ouyang to think about such questions as: What does a

language teacher teach now? What knowledge should a language teacher have? How to

face the challenge? Now that her focus of teaching has shifted from language points to

"how to learn and how to think," she felt that her knowledge of language and linguistics

was not enough because language teaching required a broader knowledge base than just

the knowledge of linguistics. Aware of the gap between her existing knowledge and the

expanded territory of language teaching, she urgently felt the need for learning. She was

frank with her students when she could not answer their questions: "In this situation, I

would put myself on the same position with my students [as a learner]."

However, reducing the linguistic content could make her feel that she lost her

identity as a language teacher. Sometimes, after walking out of the classroom and feeling

dissatisfied with her teaching, she asked herself "*What did I teach?*" She told me another

story of her teaching to illustrate that she did not teach much of the language. A student

who had never spoken English in public had a very hard time presenting his topic "The

Greek Philosophers." He tried his best, only to be frustrated to see that his terrible

pronunciation and broken oral expression made his presentation hardly understood.

As a teacher, you should encourage, you should inspire. When he went back to his seat, [it was] my turn to make comments on this presentation. "Everybody, you have your talents," I said. "For example, you, the presenter, you have problems with English pronunciation; it does not mean that you are not capable in some other fields. You are a great thinker! Thank you for bringing us this good topic. Even though we do not understand much from your speech, we can understand from your slides."

So I re-played his slides to the students. The presenter first had asked the students a few questions: What do we live for? Where are we from? Where are we going to? How do we understand the world? I showed slides of the the different answers from some Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato. So I asked the students: "What do you live for? Try to think as many nouns as possible." Well, they started to think. "We live for love," "We live for life," "We live for being ourselves," "We live for being discovered," a lot [of answers]. After four or five minute discussion, they could answer the questions. Very creative answers! Finally the class ended with a heated discussion on those questions.

After the class, the presenter came to me. He said, "Thank you, teacher. I am [very] much moved. My classmates answered those questions, and they showed great interest in what I prepared." Later, I got an email from him. "The class will be the transitional point, the turning point for my whole life." [That was] the first sentence! "I don't know what the problems [are] with my speech organs, but I have never ever opened my mouth to speak in English. This is the first time," he said. "And it will be my start."

Although feeling encouraged at seeing how her students started to change and become more confident and motivated to learn, in reflective moments, Ouyang still asked herself about what language knowledge and skills she had taught to her students. In an email to her students, she wrote: "As a teacher of English, I really don't know what I can teach you because you have abundant information and materials from the internet. So who needs a teacher of English?" A response from a student touched her: "Nowadays, we do have access to various learning resources, but we still need teachers. When teachers are there, we feel safe." This message made her see the irreplaceable role of teachers in the time of the explosion of knowledge and information. Drawing from her experiences, she re-identified her role as a friend and a helper to the students in her classroom:

I think, the teachers nowadays should be more of a guide, a friend, a really true friend who is ready to help those who are learning their way, learning to work their

own way. Teachers are friends, experienced friends, of course, to offer help, to offer guidance. You are not teaching actually. Not a dominator any more.

Locating her role as a true and helpful friend to the students, she gave them a "nudge"— a supportive and cooperative environment that she set for learning to take place.

Ouyang used the phrase "big change" to describe her different views of teaching profession. In the past, she had taken teaching as a job to make her living and "teaching is a survival skill." Her intention of using tasks and activities, as she put it, was "merely for language learning." Now she acknowledged that teaching was a "noble profession." She said to her students: "I think every one of you is unique; every one of you will take the responsibility of the country, of the development of the country in the future. So it's my responsibility to inspire you to be responsible citizens." Because of this changed vision of teaching profession, Ouyang felt that "the activities are beyond the language learning." When the students were involved in classroom activities, she monitored their work and balanced accuracy and fluency in their use of English. At the same time, she encouraged their learning, inspired their thinking, and changed their attitudes toward themselves and the world around them. She took language teaching as "helping, guiding young people grow and develop in the right way."

Now Ouyang enjoyed teaching and thought of it as a life-long career. She still remembered an essay "Why I Teach" in the old *College English* textbook that she had taught many years before, in which the author describes teaching as the work of creation: "Being a teacher is being present at creation, when the clay begins to breathe. . . . I teach because, being around people who are beginning to breathe, I occasionally find myself, quite magically, catching my breath with them." She said that was exactly what she thought of teaching now. By teaching, she helped the students change and find their

potential—language abilities, attitudes, confidence, and personal integrity. As well, she

found herself changed in teaching methodology, beliefs of teaching, and understanding of

being a teacher.

Factors Contributing to Change

Although Ouyang started innovations in her classroom after arriving at AU, it was

in the past three years of curriculum reform in her faculty that she had a deep change in

teaching and understanding of teaching.

Starting teaching at AU, she was forced to change teaching methods to survive the

pressure from the new context. She found that the students at AU were very different

from the students in her former university because the AU students had much higher

English proficiency even at the beginning level. She did not need to explain in length the

new words in class because most words in the textbooks were not new to them.

> I was forced . . . to try various activities. That [applying activities to the classroom]
> is the kind of surviving skill I was forced to; otherwise, I felt that I would be kicked
> out. [The administrators would say:] "What were you teaching? You didn't teach
> anything new." So I felt the pressure.

In her first few years at AU, she had changed her teaching methods in the classrooms, but

not much change occurred to her beliefs and conceptions of teaching.

But the reform of the college English programs at AU, which started in 2001,

made her feel the pain of change. The innovation of the English programs was

implemented by using the new textbook *Transitions*. Based on the ideas of student-

centered teaching and cooperative learning, *Transitions* consisted of five units about

learning strategies in university, such as how to manage time, make presentations, and

participate in group discussions. Unlike those commercially established English

textbooks, *Transitions* did not have a vocabulary list and a set of linguistic exercises for

each unit; instead, it suggested tasks, classroom activities, and open-ended questions without 'standard' answers. The new textbook stirred up the teachers' beliefs and taken-for-granted practice of language teaching and learning. She explained: "When I first used the textbooks, such as *Transitions*, I was puzzled and frustrated." She asked herself: "*Am I teaching English?*" Frustrated and angry, she suddenly felt that, even after teaching English for fifteen years, she did not know how to teach.

But after three years of inquiry, observation, reflection, and teaching, Ouyang came to understand the curriculum change from her personal experience. She came to question herself: How much language could a teacher teach students? She actually was reflecting on how much language that students had learned from her classroom instruction even if she insisted on teaching vocabulary and grammar and giving the right answers to the language exercises. She realized that, with certain English proficiencies and full exposure to all kinds of reference books and learning media, the students had became less dependent on the teachers' lectures and textbooks in term of learning the knowledge of English language. While putting more weight on provoking students' thinking, she came to accept the rationale of the new textbook *Transitions*. This process from resistance to acceptance took 3 years, and it was a "very, very suffering process," as she said.

After three years of painful reflection and struggling, Ouyang found that the new ideas of teaching and learning, such as cooperative learning and collaborative teaching, had taken root in her routine classroom instruction. She described the reform with a metaphor: "I think that [the curriculum reform] is a kind of swirling water, but on the whole, it is moving forward." She thought she "was a little bit afloat on the whirl," and

she "jumped out and looked at the direction of the reform from the distance." She admitted that the reform was successful to a certain degree. "Anyway, whatever suffering they [teachers] are experiencing, they are moving forward, not backward," she concluded. "The whole direction is to the right way."

By the time of the interviews, Ouyang still had a lot of questions about the new textbooks and complaints about the curriculum implementation in her faculty. She was still struggling in the whirling water yet moving forward with pains and gains.

Conclusion

Murong, Lin, and Ouyang started their teaching in their hometown universities in the inland of China. They were all affected by the grammar-based approach that featured teacher-centered classroom. Their teaching methods and beliefs about language teaching were not challenged until they came to work at AU where they had to face curriculum change and different students.

They organized various classroom activities and involved students in cooperative learning processes. Their teaching was less focused on the structured and discrete knowledge of language, and they put more emphasis on how to use English for communication and how to see the world in English. Murong led her students to find the deep ideas of the reading materials, so that they could learn independent thinking in their presentations and writing in English. Lin cared about the "attitudes"—how students understood the cultural and political perspectives expressed in the text and what viewpoints they had toward similar issues. Ouyang tried to provoke students' critical thinking—how they viewed the world and themselves. All three teachers believed that they did not just teach the mechanical rules of language, but they taught students how to

learn and how to develop integrally. They all connected the objectives of the classroom activities with their long-term goal for their students and expected to establish them as "persons"—people with good social and moral behavior—by going through the process of language learning. They recognized the students' existing knowledge and capability for learning. They saw their own limitations as language teachers and, therefore, viewed themselves as learners. They realized that it was students who made learning happen and, as teachers, they created opportunities for students to learn, encouraged them to learn, and guided them toward what to learn and how to learn. Compared with their beginning beliefs about language teaching, they have achieved some significant and qualitative change from the traditional teacher-centered teaching model to student-centered teaching model. Their conceptual development is illustrated in Table 6.2, which is extracted from the writer-developed conceptual framework (see Table 6).

Table 6.2

Conceptual Development across Paradigms from the Teacher-centered Category to the Student-centered Category (A)

Grammar-structural Approaches (Propositional Paradigm)			Communicative Approaches (Process Paradigm)
Teacher-centered Teaching		Transition Stage	Student-centered Teaching
Grammar-translation Method	Structural Approach	Functional-Notional Approach	Task-cased/Content-based Language Teaching
Imparting knowledge	Transmitting structured knowledge	Teacher-student interaction/ apprenticeship; Facilitating understanding	Helping students develop expertise; Negotiate meaning

While involving the students in activities and in exploration for answers, these three teachers always asked themselves questions, such as: "What am I teaching?" For a while, they lost their old bearings of language teachers because questions like this confused them throughout their years of teaching. Murong was struggling to balance the students' needs for learning and her ideas about teaching. Lin felt puzzled after the students dominated the classroom discussion so that she did not have a chance to teach them some new words. Ouyang felt she did not teach the knowledge of the language after she helped a student survived a classroom presentation, which became "a turning point in life" to that student. Their inquiry into "What am I teaching" accompanied them when they adopted the new textbook or when they had successful or unsuccessful classroom activities. By reflecting on their teaching, change took place in their beliefs and conceptions in the dimensions of language, teaching, learning, and the roles of teachers and students, and they reclaimed their bearings as language teacher in the new student-centered classroom.

From Language Teacher to Curriculum Developer

This section illustrates Yuan's significant conceptual change from teaching as facilitating understanding, which falls in teacher-centered teaching, to the full development of learner-centered philosophy.

Yuan's Story

Yuan got her Bachelor's degree in English language from a university in Beijing in the early 1990s. After her graduation, an engineering institute in Southwest China offered her a position to teach college English to undergraduate students. After teaching there for 5 years, she got an opportunity to study in a Master's program in the United

States. Her field of study was diagnostic reading and information processing, and most of the courses were related to linguistics and applied linguistics.

The two years of the Master's program enriched Yuan's knowledge and her life experience. In addition to the expertise she gained from her academic study, she also learned self-reflection from a group of her friends who reflected on their behavior on a regular basis. She thought of it as a good habit and has regularly reflected on her study and teaching since then.

After finishing her study in the United States, Yuan began to teach at AU, where she taught Comprehensive English and Process Writing, and she co-developed the course book *Transitions* with her colleagues.

Early Teaching Methodology

During her second year of her undergraduate study in Beijing, Yuan started to tutor foreigners who wanted to learn the Chinese language. Most of her students were international students studying in her university or foreign staff working in Beijing for their international companies. "That's my part-time job," she said. "I taught them Chinese—characters, how to spell [write] them, and culture." To make language learning easier and more interesting, she related the words and texts to the Chinese culture and to whatever art crafts she had at hand. Sometimes her students suggested what to learn. "They would [require that] I teach some songs so that they got familiar with the pronunciation. I [often] told them something related to culture and background. " Learning to teach by teaching, she became an effective tutor, and gradually, she took more students. She was grateful for those three years of part-time teaching Chinese. "When I really started full-time teaching, the first three years [part-time] teaching in my

university was a kind of teacher training." This informal teacher training, as she reflected, "actually formed a part of my beliefs [of teaching]."

After graduation, when Yuan taught English in a engineering institute in a southwestern province in China, she found that the context was isolating for a new teacher. "When I was working there, no one came over to help me, so it was very hard [at the beginning]," she remembers. Upon coming to that institute, she asked to observe an experienced teacher's class, but her request was turned down. The first day teaching was not easy: "I was very nervous; I wrote down every sentence I would like to say. And, I almost read all the sentences there."

Drawing on her Chinese language teaching experience, she survived teaching college English as a novice language teacher. In that environment, her teaching was basically lecturing about knowledge of the English language.

> At that time, we used the textbooks from Shanghai. [In] that book, [each unit had] a long article and you had to analyze everything. I was trying to explain those things in various ways and trying to get them related to [students'] background knowledge.

She taught vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures, and she also tried to explain the language points in various ways and relate them to the cultures and the students' background knowledge, the way she had taught the Chinese language. As to using the CLT activities, she said she included "very minor [CLT methods], because that atmosphere didn't encourage [me] to do that. I just tried a little bit."

Current Teaching

Yuan joined AU after finishing the Master's program in the United States. By the time of my research, she was teaching the Comprehensive English course to first-year students. The textbook for the first-year students, *Transitions*, had been developed and

edited by Yuan and a group of teachers. At the same time, she opened a "Process Writing" course as an optional course for the third-year students. I observed her Comprehensive English class.

Yuan taught her classes on the South Campus of the University. When we got into her classroom, the students were already sitting in seven groups. Yuan introduced me to the class and told them the purpose of my visit, and the students applauded to welcome me. From my classroom observation and her narratives in the interview, I found that she organized her teaching with a series of group activities and projects. Her lectures were short and amid those activities and could be grouped in three themes: (a) "prelude reading," (b) explanation of some vocabulary and text, and (c) comments on students' performances in group activities.

Yuan warmed up her students with a five-minute "prelude reading" at the beginning of a session. On the big screen, she showed a short paragraph from a novel or from a magazine article that had some virtues in the use of words and description. I wrote in my field notes:

> She read the short passage on the screen, stopping from time to time to explain some words and expressions or to paraphrase a sentence. She also asked the students to pay attention to some vivid use of words. This warm-up reading went fast. She did not explain every new word. I noticed that she slipped over a word that was even new to me. (Field notes: Yuan)

Yuan explained her two purposes for the "prelude reading": She meant to arouse the students' interest in extensive reading and to show them how to read. She said that she did not expect the students to memorize the words that she had explained, but expected them to pay attention to some good use of words in the text. She said she meant to skip

the explanation of some new words in the paragraph so that the students could learn to guess the meaning of a new word in its context.

The "Prelude Reading" was followed by a classroom presentation. A group of five students made a drama presentation on the topic "Life after Class."

> A student served as the chairman, and four students represented four types of attitudes to study. Each made a short speech on how she/ he spent a day. A student showed the investigation result—a survey they made among students about what they do after class and what they think of the life in university. Each student presented a part of the research findings. They ended their presentation with questions and answers: an interaction between the presenters and audience.
>
> Yuan commented on the presentation—design, procedure, research, conclusion, suggestions. Her comments were to every detail, so that the students could see the strong and weak parts of the presentation. (Field notes: Yuan)

It was my impression that the presentation was well organized and designed, and each student was fluent and intelligible in pronunciation. I was impressed by the students' active participation in the activities and their attentive look when Yuan was making comments on the presentation.

Yuan lectured some to explain vocabulary from the text. She spent about ten minutes on teaching the new words or the lexical formation of vocabulary. She started a group activity for word study, in which the students brainstormed to pool the words for the facilities and services of the university; then she picked out some words from the pool and from the text to explain.

> Yuan was explaining words and terms about school facilities that the students chalked on the whiteboard. She used gestures, pointed to the facility in the classroom, or showed the pictures in PowerPoint. When she came to the word "plug," she pointed to the plug of the TV, and said, "You can turn on the TV after you plug this in the outlet." So the students learned both words: "plug" and "outlet." (Field notes: Yuan)

By using lexical knowledge, cultural difference, gestures, and pictures, she made her explanation simple, direct, and information rich. She also connected the meaning of the words with students' life experience, so that they could perceive the meaning and make sense of the words. I wrote in my field notes:

> When explaining "extrovert," she wrote "introvert" on the whiteboard, saying: "Some people are shy or not open and seldom talk, so the teacher has to call (nominate) him or her to answer the questions." The students quickly got the meaning of both words" (Field notes: Yuan).

Yuan also tried to introduce the cultural differences hidden in words. When it came to "student residence," she showed on the screen a picture of a student residence in a North American university, telling them that the residence buildings there were usually named after the alumni who donated the buildings. From the PowerPoint slide, the students got to know that alumni donations were an important part of funding for most American universities, different from the Chinese universities that are totally financed by the provincial and central governments.

Another time, after my observation, Yuan told me that she made some changes to the teaching plan that she had made the previous night. She said she usually prepared more than one set of lesson plans to teach the same content to different classes. Her explanation was that students in different classes were different in learning styles, so her teaching had to address those differences. Even teaching one specific class, she often made changes to her teaching plans before entering the classroom or right in the classroom.

> Sometimes I changed the whole assignment on the spot. The planned assignment was abandoned. It's impossible not to change, because the students could have some dynamics and progress you didn't expect when designing the class. (Casual Conversation: Yuan)

She showed her class agenda on the PowerPoint screen, so that the students would know what to learn and work on, but she often replaced or added some activities in the process of instruction. Her flexibility to the class dynamic fully involved the students in learning. I was impressed that the students were very attentive to their teacher's talk and to their peers' speech; not a student spoke in Chinese when in group work, even when Yuan went out to call for technical support to solve the computer failure in the classroom.

The first time I walked into Yuan's classroom, I noticed that the desks were arranged in seven groups, and each group had five or six students sitting around the desks. Many learning activities were conducted through group work, such as presentation, discussion, role playing, vocabulary practice, and peer writing evaluation. Frequently there were competitions among groups and cooperative group work with another class. For example, each group worked together to find out the vocabulary for the university facilities and sent a representative to chalkboard what they had found. Or in the "House Fair" task, each group found the vocabulary for a house and designed the living room, bedroom, washroom, dining room, and kitchen; they set up a booth to introduce the functions and designs of their house, and negotiated the price with the customers— students from another class. To complete a task, the students had to work cooperatively both in and outside class. It was impressive that every student was involved in learning, and each looked attentive either when working individually or with peers.

After class, Yuan told me that she asked the students to change their group members at every learning unit in the textbook, and each student would be in five different groups in the whole term, so that they could know everyone in the class. In the follow-up interviews, she justified her regrouping of the students.

> I ask the students to group with different classmates. For every new unit, they have new group members. [It's] very important that they can construct their own experience because they have to communicate in different ways. So I'm trying to explore their courage, and they can try new things. That's my understanding of their construction: doing things by themselves, trying new things, new partnership and new activities.

I found that, compared with other teachers, Yuan had higher requirements for the students' social behavior in classroom activities did than her colleagues. She commented on students' classroom activity from two aspects: language and social behavior. Like Lin, Yuan took notes in detail when the students were making presentations or working in groups, and she would point out their strong points in the organization of content, presentation technique, and oral work, but she paid more attention to what the students could learn in the process of the classroom interactions. Several years ago, she noticed a phenomenon when teaching a class of top students in the university. She recalled: "I [taught] some very top students, top of the top. They could speak very good English, but their interpersonal skills obviously were not as good as their academic ability." A similar problem appeared in another class of A Group students whose English proficiencies were much higher than the average students in the university, but who showed lower interpersonal skills. In an inter-class activity, she observed that her students were unwilling to talk to the students from the B Group.

> I found that when B class students came over and talked with the A class students, they had much better social ability. They could very easily start a conversation. But the A class students, when they heard their [B class students] English, one top student said: "What are you talking about? How can you speak that kind of English?" I was very upset.

In her comment on their performance, she let the students know that she was very unhappy with their behavior in the activity. She talked about Gardner's multiple intelligences and pointed out that every person had certain abilities and was worth other

people's respect. She told them that successful interaction with other people did not solely depend on English proficiency or academic excellence, but that interpersonal ability was even more important. Since then, she had paid more attention to the interpersonal ability of the students in learning activities. This concern permeated her narratives throughout the interviews.

It was because of her concern for the interpersonal ability of the students that Yuan wanted them to develop their social competence in the process of language learning. She made this learning purpose explicit in the Peer Comments, a task that she would ask the students to complete in the last class of the term.

> I got my students, each one had a piece of paper, and on top of the paper, they have to write their name. All the desks were put in a circle, and on the desks were the pieces of paper with their names on. Every one, including me, had to write a comment on each paper. My students said, "Oh, it's [group work] again!" I said, "No, it's not again. It has many purposes. First, can you give comments in English appropriately? Second, after one semester of study, how many people do you know? Can you find their good points? If you can not, your social ability needs improving." So they sort of became very serious. They knew that was the point.

The academic requirement of this task was "qualitative output." Yuan emphasized learning process and learning outcomes, in which the students participated in learning, used their knowledge of the English language, and wrote comments in an appropriate style with fluency and accuracy. The social aspect of this task required that the students learn how to function in society through interaction with peers in the learning process. Yuan wanted her students to develop a balanced attitude towards academic study and interpersonal relationships.

Yuan took the students' change as a sign of successful teaching. She expected that after taking this course, the students would improve their attitudes towards learning and towards people. "I think the students, after this course, will be more willing to learn," she

said. "And they will be more tolerant with each other. I view that as a part of success."

She repeated "tolerance" and "respect" in her talks about classroom teaching. "I think

that is what the students should learn in my class: [to] love and respect each other."

Compared with Yuan's teaching in her early days, she had made a lot of changes

in organizing classroom teaching. In the past, she had basically dominated the class with

lectures, and the content of her instruction was focused on knowledge of language. Now

she did not lecture as much as in the past, and she increased the students' time to "do

things" with what they learned. She continued to teach vocabulary the same way she had

taught the Chinese language to the foreign students, but she organized her teaching with

various activities and made the activities flexible enough to involve all the students in

active learning. The biggest change was that she had dual purposes for learning

activities—academic and social-educational. The content of her lecture contained not

only the linguistic knowledge and communicative skills but also the social and moral

values that are manifested in successful interpersonal communication. She expected the

students to achieve the academic objectives and to learn from the process of learning. Her

teaching was more for the intellectual development of the students and for the

transformation of their personal conceptions, attitudes, and values about themselves and

the world.

Conceptual Change

Yuan claimed that she had undergone a profound change in her perspectives of

language teaching and learning. She repeated her statement: "I myself have experienced

dramatic experience in the past five years." She talked about her change in her

understandings of students, teaching, the textbook, and being a teacher.

Yuan depicted herself in her early teaching career as "an experienced teacher with a vague pedagogy of language teaching." In her eyes, knowledge of the English language was discrete and disconnected in separated units. "I prepared for every individual unit," she said. "And I never saw the connection between the units, what the function of those units would be if they come together." At that time, she viewed "the classroom teaching as classroom teaching," taking teaching as the teaching of subject knowledge and skills. She ignored the students' difference in learning styles and in English proficiencies. "I didn't care about the English levels of the students whom I was working with, and I didn't consider the fields of study they were engaged in." She took the textbook as a tool of teaching without seeing the curriculum purpose hidden in it. Looking back at her teaching, she concluded:

> I was an experienced teacher, [and] always got the highest mark in the evaluation of teaching from my students. But I was mainly an experienced teacher, I knew how to handle [teaching], but I didn't have higher perspective . . . I didn't have an overall picture.

After years of teaching, especially after leading the textbook development project, Yuan thought that she had undergone a great change in her beliefs about language teaching. "[My] pedagogy, I think, it's getting clearer"; and her vision of language teaching became broader.

> I could see the curriculum, you know, it was like [having] several patches together, their [students'] major [discipline], their life, and their background. . . . So I didn't view those individual units [as being separated]. When I see the book, I get those units together, plural; those units would go to achieve [my goals of teaching]. I begin to see things [in] integrity.

Her goals of teaching, which she expressed in the preface of the textbook for the course *Transitions*, were two-fold. Academically, the course was to "help the students develop language learning strategies for their university study"; socially and educationally, it was

to make them the "responsible citizens with good morality and life-long learning spirit" (Artifacts: Yuan). To Yuan, language skill and knowledge were just a part of the learning content; the other part of the content was the learning processes, including the processes of participating in the activities and tasks. "[This course] has very obvious philosophy about learning from the process," she stated. "Language ability, we have to focus on that, but the major focus would be on the process. That is my primary focus." As to the learning outcome of this course, she said: "I hope that out from this course, our students learn to be responsible persons."

"Learning in process" was what Yuan frequently mentioned as her "philosophy of learning." She believed that learning was meaning construction from classroom experience. Once students committed to practice, they would shape perspectives and make sense of experience from "doing." With this philosophy, she insisted that students "do things by themselves" in class so that they could "construct perspectives about the experience and about the world." Academically, the students learned English through the process of group work on a task: they had to find information from various sources, read and select information, look up new words in dictionaries, write a draft reports, and present the results orally. Educationally, they could build a sense of teamwork, learn to communicate and cooperate with peers of different talents and personalities, and improve their interpersonal ability. "Learning in process" was best embodied in the students' forming new groups for learning each new unit. Yuan meant to create new opportunities for them to learn from the experience of communicating with different classmates and working with people of different characteristics. She believed that by working with and

learning from their peers of different talents, the students would develop the spirit of life-long learning.

Yuan viewed the students as people who had knowledge and were capable of constructing new knowledge. In her eyes, the students had accumulated a lot of experience and knowledge and they had their own perspectives and ideas about the world. "I'm always very happy if they give different answers. They know I'm open." To encourage the students to have their own answers to the questions, Yuan said: "I'm trying not to impose my standard and values on them." Nevertheless, she tried to influence them with the values that were desired for learning in university. Aware of the problems that the students brought with them to the university after they survived the fierce academic competition for higher education, Yuan said: "Even though they are smart, they may not know how to work with one another." She felt it was her responsibility to guide the students to establish the values of respecting and learning from one another. She told her students: "I am trying to establish a kind of value that you can learn from your classmates as well, not just from me. We are learning from one another, and I learn from you guys." She believed that teachers should influence the students with this learning value: "Teachers should have confidence to impose that value because [the students] did not learn [how] to learn from one another in high school."

Yuan frequently mentioned student-centered teaching as an approach to achieving the goals of the "Transition" course.

> My view of student-centeredness is not in political sense, but I do think, in student-centered way, we do teach more democratically. Nobody has the final say, we have to learn how to negotiate, we have to reveal to them what a real society is, that is, nobody is really superior to others, and we have to convince others by our points and views, not by power. That is what I really mean by student-centeredness.

In her understanding, "Democracy is not completely about political system; it's about people's thinking and ideology." She believed that student-centered teaching could bring about a democratic relationship in classroom: full of valid voices and no authority to follow. In this relationship, the students would have to think independently and judge on their own; they would learn to convince, not force, people to accept their ideas; they would learn to tolerate different voices and learn from their peers in team cooperation. "Students' group work is a very good way to develop tolerance," she said. "No matter [if one's] English is good or not, if someone has ability in some other way, then this person has enough reason to be respected." She hoped that in a student-centered classroom, her students could learn to respect people not for their academic advantage but for their various talents and experience.

Yuan believed that the teacher's role in a student-centered classroom was quite different from that in a traditional teacher-centered classroom. Now, she defined her roles as teacher, organizer, learner, observer, and finder. As a teacher, she aimed to be a good role model of language user, and she taught the students how to understand the world by using language as a tool. She claimed that her responsibility as an organizer was to devise learning activities and to find teachable opportunities in class; she said: "I don't view myself as a resource book, but as an organizer." In the classroom, she did not see herself as a knowledge authority; instead, she felt that she had a lot to learn. "I told them [students] that there were a lot of things I didn't know. I don't think this would devalue myself," she said. She would find out the answers and share with the students how she worked out the solutions to the problems. In her eyes, the classroom was a learning

community in which "teachers and students are . . . advanced learners and intermediate learners." She said that she and her students learned together but at different levels.

Yuan repeatedly emphasized two other roles she played in the classrooms: observer and finder. She strongly believed that "the teachers' role is to observe and explore [the students'] potentials" and "to give them specific suggestions." For example, talking about writing comments for the students after their performance in each test, she said: "Every time, after the oral test, they all were a little different when they saw me. I can see that. They had read my comments, something I didn't say in public, but I told them how good they are, what strength they can further explore." This change was seen not only in their improvement of language skills but also in their confidence that the students newly found in themselves. What's more, this change also embodied what Yuan claimed about her purpose of teaching: "I think my purpose is to encourage students, encourage them to learn more, and make them more willing to learn."

Yuan developed a curriculum perspective about teaching and learning and about teachers and students. She took the use of the curriculum as a learning process in which both the students and the teacher construct their knowledge. She believed that the curriculum was not just for the students to learn and gain knowledge and skills, but also for the teachers to learn from teaching and from working with students. "I don't think curriculum refers [only] to students, but [it] refers to teachers as well." She pointed to the textbook *Transitions* and claimed: "This book is to establish lifelong learners."

Yuan was sophisticated in conceptualizing her philosophy of teaching, learning, teacher, learner, and teacher-student relationship from the perspective of the language curriculum. She conceptualized her understanding of language teaching and group

learning, and she could justify every classroom activity with academic and social purposes. She aimed to transform the students' attitudes toward people and the world through the learning activities and to cultivate their interpersonal ability through classroom interactions. Her curriculum philosophy was embodied in specific language-learning activities, and each learning activity was connected with bigger issues concerning the purpose of education and the improvement of society.

Factors Contributing to Change

Yuan concluded that two factors brought change to her conceptions of language teaching: her personality and her involvement in textbook development. She said she was insistent and reflective, loved learning, and took teaching as a career, not just as a job. She said she was very focused and persistent: "I think my strength is that I can keep going on one thing for a longer time." The two years of life in the United States had some influence on her, especially because she had a group of friends there who met and reflected on their life on a regular basis. "I sat there and talked to them, and I could also reflect on what I did, what I'm going to do now or in the future. I like that." She established the habit of self-reflecting, which later made her a reflective teacher. "I keep writing journals, and even though there might be something I didn't write down, it's in my mind. I would keep thinking whether I did this appropriately or not, so next time I would change it." As well as being thoughtful and self-analytical, Yuan set higher goals: "I think I'm ambitious; I hope I could be a scholar or something." She believed that it was her personality that made her devoted to and thinking about teaching.

I assumed that Yuan's study in the United States had influenced her beliefs about teaching and learning, but she emphasized that participating in the textbook development

had a deeper impact on her beliefs about language teaching. The course book *Transitions*

highlighted the student-centered concepts. These concepts were manifested in the

activities such as open-ended discussions that would involve the students in the

exploration for answers rather than allowing them to expect the 'right' answers from the

teacher. Yuan had never read anything about curriculum theory, but her engagement in

editing the textbook made her "see the curriculum."

> After making that textbook, I really find that I'm a curriculumist [curriculum developer], and my relationship with the textbook and with the curriculum is different. In the past, [textbook] was something just for use, but now I really know what it is and [I] have the sense of the curriculum.

She perceived the educational functions of student-centered learning, and she wove her

educational intentions into the design of the learning activities and tasks in the textbook.

She started to take "doing" a textbook as developing curriculum. She felt that through

developing curriculum, teachers could realize their dream—what society they want to

have, and how they educate students to improve the society.

> Actually, curriculum, I think, is a very good tool to let you reflect, to let others know what your dream is. When you think you have to do something for your students, you will think about what they are going to do after they graduate and what their contribution should be to society. This is very natural [way of thinking]. They have to realize their responsibility. Even though in all population they are a very small part, they are changing [society].

She no longer saw language teaching as the teaching of subject knowledge only,

but she instilled social-educational goals into the teaching materials and learning tasks

and activities. She said: "After this project, I have an overall frame right now, what a

textbook should be like, what is a teacher's role; there's a very dynamic relationship."

She expanded her responsibility from helping students only learn English language to

helping them transform to be good citizens who, in turn, would improve the society. She

broadened her vision of a university education and connected that vision with the course she was teaching and with every learning activity that she designed and implemented in the classroom.

Conclusion

Yuan claimed her great change "from a language teacher to a curriculumist (her own word)" happened since teaching at AU. Interestingly, she did not mention how much her study of diagnostic reading in the United States contributed to her change, except that her life experience there formed the habit of reflection. She believed that what influenced her teaching was her constant critical reflection on teaching, her passion for learning, and her intensive involvement in textbook development. Yuan started to think seriously about the purpose of teaching and learning and about the relationship between teaching language and developing students' views of learning. She brought her thinking into classroom practice and found herself seeing a bigger picture of curriculum. Her beliefs and conceptions of teaching showed significant and qualitative difference from those in her early teaching career. Her conceptual development can be summarized in Table 6.3, which is extracted from my conceptual framework (see Table 6).

Table 6.3

Conceptual Development across Paradigms from the Teacher-centered Category to the

Student-centered Category (B)

Grammar-Structural Approaches (Propositional Paradigm)		Communicative Approaches (Process Paradigm)	
Teacher-centered Teaching	Transition Stage	Student-centered Teaching	
Structural Approach	Functional-notional Approach	Task-based/ Content-based Teaching	Process/Procedural Approach
Transmitting structured knowledge	Teacher-student interaction/ apprenticeship; Facilitating understanding	Helping students develop expertise; Negotiate meaning	Encouraging knowledge creation, conceptual change, intellectual development

Yuan believed that the purposes of teaching, particularly language teaching, were to

change students' attitudes towards themselves and the world, to develop their

independent thinking, to promote their social and moral values, and to prepare them as

the changing power for a better society.

Chapter Summary

I reported three types of conceptual development among the Chinese college

English teachers who participated in my study. Song and Jing were on the way to change.

They altered their teaching methods and had initial yet insignificant conceptual change.

At the stage of imitating the CLT methods, they would achieve more significant

conceptual development over time with learning and questioning their existing beliefs.

Mruong, Lin, and Ouyang encountered conceptual conflict in the process of teaching by

using the new curriculum and using the CLT methods. They went through a 'liminal'

transformative experience, suffering the loss of their original bearings and setting out to explore new ones. Learning, questioning, and reflection were their tools for surviving the curriculum change and for changing their beliefs about language teaching and the role of language teacher. Yuan gained a broader understanding of language teaching by engaging herself in the development of teaching materials. Her beliefs about language teaching were no longer limited to teaching methods and linguistic theories; her conceptual space was expanded to curricular and educational perspectives.

CHAPTER 6

CHINESE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS DWELLING IN

THE ZONE OF BETWEEN

In this chapter, I discuss four dimensions of the zone of between in which the Chinese college English teachers dwelt. The first dimension is the zone between the Chinese and Western educational traditions. The second dimension is the zone between their social, cognitive, and psychological processes of conceptual development. The third dimension is the zone between teaching and educating, which entails identifying the purpose of teaching and the meaning of being a teacher. The fourth dimension is the zone between curriculum contexts: curriculum as plan versus curriculum as lived-experience; and curriculum as being mandated from the top-down versus curriculum as being teacher-adapted from the bottom-up. At the end of this chapter, I discuss the implications of my study and give suggestions for future research of language teachers' conceptual development.

Dwelling in the Zone between Chinese and Western Educational Traditions

In the field of English language teaching in China, there are two misleading perceptions about the context of Chinese education. Some people assume that contemporary Chinese education is dominated by the Confucian educational tradition. Derived from this assumption is the belief that the Chinese educational context excludes Western educational traditions and practices. These views mostly appeared in studies in the 1980s and '90s (e.g., Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; Penner, 1995; Yu, 1984), which I reviewed in Chapter 2, and they became influential when research on

college English teaching in China was rare and in less depth. Those studies attributed the difficult adoption and implementation of communicative approaches in language teaching in China to the Confucian educational tradition, which, they claimed, was incompatible with or even opposite to Western ideas of language teaching (see Penner, 1995; Yu, 1984). The conclusions of those studies highlighted the cultural and traditional characteristics of Chinese education, but ignored the openness of Chinese education to the different or even seemingly incompatible ideas and practices of Western education. The highlighting of cultural differences resulted in an illusionary cultural wall (see Figure 3). Delineating the sources of these misleading perceptions will help us understand the zone between Chinese and Western educational traditions in which Chinese college English teachers dwell when they apply the Western experience of language teaching in their Chinese classrooms.
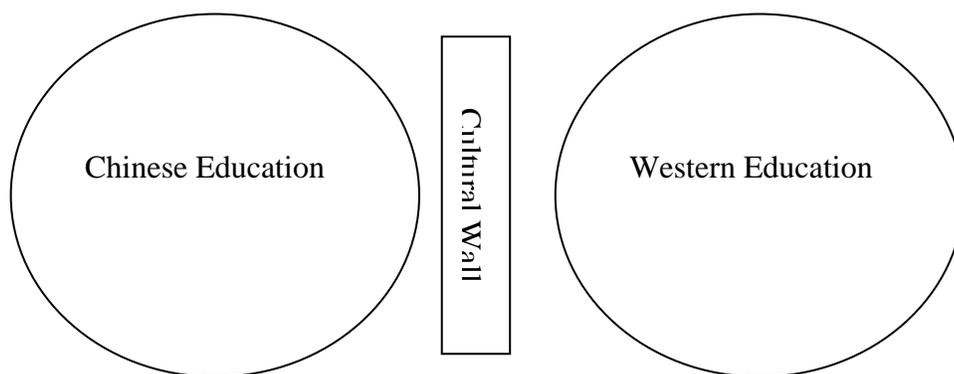
Figure 3. Perceptions of Isolation of Chinese Education

The first misleading perception—that contemporary Chinese education is dominated by traditional Confucian education—was mostly derived from the impressions of Western visitors and educators, particularly English language instructors, who came to

China for a short stay or short-term teaching, ranging from a few months to a few years. They observed the different cultural and educational phenomena and believed that the observed differences represent overall characteristics of Chinese education. Louie (1984) made such a conclusion based on his observations of Chinese education: "To a Western observer, the Chinese classroom impresses with the general discipline of the students, the tendency to rote learning and the teacher as the center of the focus. Such features, even during the Cultural Revolution period, mean an educational system which is basically traditional" (p. 27). People who come to such a conclusion either neglected or had little knowledge of the influence of Western educational traditions and practices on Chinese education in the 20th century. They did not realize the hybridity of Chinese and Western education where some Confucian legacy remains and coexists with the Western influence.

The second misleading perception is the consequence of the first, that is, that contemporary Chinese education has little connection with, or is even opposed to, Western educational traditions. People who have this belief include both Western and Chinese teachers of English. Most Chinese college English teachers, as I reviewed in the literature, did not have teacher training; even those who graduated from normal universities did not learn much about the history of education in their programs except a few courses in language teaching pedagogy and general educational psychology (Adamson, 1998; Boyle, 2000; Cheng & Wang, 2004). Today, learners and teachers in Chinese educational institutions take for granted some well-accepted Western instructional phenomena that are embedded in Chinese educational context, such as grammar-based language teaching and teaching discrete language skills. Chinese college English teachers and researchers tend to believe that such language teaching

methodology is unique to the Chinese traditional practices of education, and they do not realize the similarities in some areas of Chinese and Western educational philosophies, nor do they see the past and ongoing interactions with and integration of Western educational practices in the Chinese educational context. They hardly realize that they have gained part of their educational experiences in the coexistence of Chinese and Western educational traditions and that the problems they have to face in curriculum change also appear in Western educational context.

Such misleading perceptions of contemporary Chinese education deeply affected two participants in my study, Song and Jing, preventing them from adapting the communicative approaches to their classroom instruction. Song attended a one-year Advanced Teacher Training Courses (ATTC) sponsored by the British Council, where he learned the methodology of communicative language teaching and techniques of classroom organization. However, he refused to apply what he had learned to his classroom instruction, explaining that the Western theory of language teaching was not suitable to the context of Chinese classrooms. Jing read about the communicative approaches in her Master's program, and she also doubted that Western teaching methodology was applicable to classroom instruction in China. She limited the use of CLT techniques only to the Listening and Speaking course and continued to use the teacher-lecture method in the 'knowledge courses,' believing that the teaching content was knowledge-concentrated and needed to be transmitted to the students.

Both Song and Jing encountered the 'cultural wall' in their beliefs about language teaching, although the cultural wall was caused partially by the incomplete research in the field of the English language teaching in China and partially by their own incomplete

understanding of contemporary Chinese education. With this cultural wall in mind, they tended to reject or resist using CLT, or they quickly blamed any difficulties in the use of alternative teaching methods on the different cultures of education. Nevertheless, in the innovative context of AU, where student-centered language teaching—a strong version of CLT—was required, they did use CLT methods and student-centered techniques to organize learning activities. However, at the time of this study, they had not fully accepted the conception of student-centered learning and their understanding of CLT was still limited to the practice of oral skills. Their unconscious cultural wall blocked any in-depth reflection about the new approach to teaching, which, in turn, hindered their adaptation of the new methods to their specific classroom situations.

I do not mean that the Chinese educational tradition is not responsible for the difficulties of implementing student-centered CLT in college English classrooms in China. My argument is that the cultural difference of Chinese education is a permeable barrier, not a solid wall. To move through this barrier, Chinese college English teachers need to look for the shared themes in English language teaching in Chinese and Western educational traditions. In addition, they need to sincerely experiment with the alternative way of teaching in the classroom and see how the new methods are accepted by their students and enhance the classroom culture. To combining Western theories of language teaching into specific instructional practices in the Chinese educational context, Chinese college English teachers live in a zone between two educational traditions, where they examine the interaction and conflict between the Chinese way of language teaching and the alternative Western way of language teaching, analyze the commonalities and

differences between the two educational traditions, adapt the Western method to Chinese classroom situations, and expand the new space of language teaching methodology.

Dwelling in the zone between culturally different traditions of education is not comfortable. When their students were allowed to direct the classroom discussion, Murong, Lin, and Ouyang felt off balance because their Chinese traditional teacher's identity was being challenged. They started reflecting the teacher's role in student-centered learning. Such questions as "Am I teaching?" (Lin and Ouyang) and "How do they want to learn?" (Murong) led to more questions about teaching and learning and to deep reflections on their own teaching experiences. They compared the learning effects of the prevailing teacher-centered instruction and the newer student-centered teaching and tried to find a balance. Their inquiry brought them a new understanding of teaching and of being a teacher. They were no longer the traditional teachers of English who lectured all the time and made all the learning decisions for their students, yet neither did they leave all decision making to their students. They became more sensitive to the students' responses and organized learning accordingly, and their teaching was more adaptable to the classroom dynamic. Murong learned the importance of treating the students as her equals by negotiating with them about what to learn and how to learn it; Lin found herself carrying out multiple roles as a language teacher; and Ouyang found that the students were not passive listeners, but were capable and independent learners who needed her to be their guide and counselor. To these teachers, daily teaching was the zone where they mediated the cultural differences between Chinese and Western conceptions of teaching and learning, teacher and learners, and the teacher-learner

relationship. By so doing, they achieved new conceptions of the teacher's role in language teaching, and they expanded the space of professional growth.

<div align="center">Dwelling in the Zone between Social, Cognitive, and Psychological</div>

<div align="center">Processes of Conceptual Change</div>

Learning the experiences of the 6 Chinese college English teachers brought me to a new understanding of the models of conceptual change that I discussed in Chapter 3: conceptual change as replacement of old concepts, as transformation through liminal experience, as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and as extensive growth into new space. Now I realize that these models are no longer separated but are connected and complementary. Based on the connectivity among these models, I conceptualize a new framework to illustrate the social, cognitive, and psychological processes of the conceptual development of the Chinese college English teachers who participated in this study.

The conceptual development of the 6 Chinese college English teachers indicates that conceptual change is more a complex process than a mechanical replacement of concepts; it is a cognitive process of replacing concepts through the psychological experience of liminal transformation. Although starting from different disciplines of research, Posner et al. (1982) and Turner (1980) have clear overlapping connections in their conceptual development models. Both Posner et al. and Turner believed that some crises initiate the pursuit of change; crises here include dissatisfaction with the incapability of one's existing conceptions to solve problems and the failure to find meaning in one's life and work routines. Examining the conceptual change process, Posner et al. focused their observations on an individual's ecological conditions within

which a new, alternative concept, which is called "threshold concept" in Turner's model, must be intelligible and plausible to the individual. Turner's liminal-transformation model was focused on one's psychological processes when he or she passes through the transformative space of threshold and liminality. In his model, one starts conceptual transformation by adopting a new concept and exploring the meaning of that concept. Cognitively, he or she needs to identify the intelligibility, plausibility, and fruitfulness of the new concept based on his or her conceptual ecology. Psychologically, exploring the meaning of the threshold concept pushes him or her into liminal space where he or she experiences the loss of the familiar self and searches for a new self through conceptual transformation. In the language curriculum change at AU, the Chinese college English teachers dwelt in the connections between the cognitive process of replacing concepts of language teaching and the psychological experience of losing their familiar bearings and gaining the new bearings of teaching and being a language teacher.

The expansive-growth-in-new-space perspective suggested by Davis et al. (2008) has certain connections with the ZPD model by Vygotsky (1978) related to learning and development. They both emphasized the role of "good learning" in personal development; that is, learning is not to address one's existing knowledge, but to achieve beyond his or her existing knowledge and capability, to broaden "what is knowable, doable, and beable" (Davis, 2004, p. 184). Vygotsky believed that learning indicates a not-yet matured development or a potential maturation in formation. Davis et al. claimed that learning leads to changing and opens up a new possible space by exploring the current space. Both Vygotsky and Davis et al. paid attention to the collective knowledge and social feature of learning: Vygotsky viewed personal development as the result of

learning in a social context and interacting with one's environment (see also Wertsch, 1985); Davis et al. believed that an individual's learning is an ecological process of exchanging internal information with his or her external environment. Their models of conceptual development complement the models of Posner et al. (1982) and Turner (1980) by highlighting the external context in which personal development takes place and the social influence on personal learning and conceptual growth. In my study, when explaining the reasons for the changes in their teaching and thinking about teaching, all the participants mentioned learning from colleagues and from working with students in the classroom. Their external environment—the new textbooks, tough classroom situations, collegial discussions, and students' response to teaching—provided input to their internal information about language teaching. Instead of traveling on the lonely journey of conceptual change, they from time to time lived in the zone between the external social learning environment and their internal exploration for the meaning of the alternative conceptions of teaching.

Based on the discussion of the hybridity of Chinese education and the models of conceptual development (see Chapter 3), I develop a framework to describe the conditions for and the processes of Chinese college English teachers' conceptual change.

1. Considering that Chinese college English teachers constructed their educational experience in the hybrid of Chinese and Western educational traditions, they are assumed to be capable of learning, understanding, and accommodating the alternative language teaching methodologies across cultures.

2. Chinese college English teachers will have a need for change when they encounter some crises which their existing knowledge and experience are

incapable of solving. Such crises include: (a) dissatisfaction with their current teaching practice and the learning results of students, (b) pressure from the teaching environment, and (c) need for finding new meanings and making new sense of language teaching.

3. Chinese college English teachers may adopt an alternative concept of language teaching such as CLT because its theory appears plausible to solve the problems they have encountered or because it is mandated in the curriculum innovation.

4. Chinese college English teachers learn about alternative language teaching by imitating its teaching methods. Using the alternative teaching methodology pushes them into liminal space where they lose their old ways of teaching and the familiar relationship with students, feel uneasy about the new methods and the different roles, and transform their conceptions through learning in their working environment.

5. Chinese college English teachers learn to adapt the alternative language teaching methodology to their teaching context and, at the same time, they open up to new self-inquiry and consequently expand their conceptual space about language teaching and learning.

This framework not only delineates the processes of Chinese college English teachers conceptual development, but also it indicates the social, psychological, and cognitive aspects related to their change. It is in the zone between these complex aspects that Chinese college English teachers achieve development of beliefs about language teaching.

Dwelling in the Zone between Teaching and Educating

When I was still in the field interviewing the teachers, I noticed that most of my participants frequently associated specific learning activities with some moral or social goals. For example, Yuan, Ouyang, Lin, and Murong all mentioned using some learning activities to change the students' attitudes toward learning, transform their views about themselves and others, cultivate their interpersonal competence, and prepare them to be citizens who have knowledge and skills, moral sense, and social responsibility. In my report of the findings, I show that these teachers who cared about their students' moral growth achieved significant conceptual change toward language teaching and learning. Considering that little previous research on teacher development includes teachers' moral missions, it is worthwhile here to expand on the relationship between language teachers' moral and social expectations of their students and teachers' conceptual development of language teaching.

In general education, teacher change is studied from all dimensions except the moral dimension. Richardson and Placier (2001) reviewed studies of teachers from such perspectives as organizational, biographical, experiential, developmental, cognitive, and psychological development, but these perspectives are not related to teachers' moral intentions and social purposes of teaching. Munby, Russell, and Martin (2002) also pointed out that few studies dealt with teachers' moral and social dimensions when examining teachers' knowledge development. The reason for this omission in the study of teachers' development is probably because of the "instrumental" perspective of teaching and being a teacher (Aoki, 2005). Aoki (2005) pointed out the dominance of the empirical analytic tradition in educational research in North America, which views

teaching as instrumental action and the teacher as an instrumental being but ignores the humanness and social features of teaching and being a teacher. In the instrumental perspective, teaching and learning are about technical issues, not about moral purpose and educational missions; students coming out from such teaching could be what Lewis (2007) termed "excellence without a soul"—a criticism of education in such great universities as Harvard that pursue academic excellence but lose sight of their educational mission.

Although Western positivism and the empirical analytic tradition prevail in contemporary modern China's education, at least in the field of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), the Confucian educational tradition still has some influence on Chinese teachers' beliefs about teaching and being a teacher. Confucian education was for the purpose of transforming morality, and intellectuals were expected to be the role models and have responsibility for the nation. In the Confucian educational tradition, teaching is indispensable to educating, and a teacher is an educator. The responsibility of a teacher was clearly defined in the essay "On Learning from Teachers," written by the writer and poet Han Yu (768-824 A.D.) in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.): "Being a teacher, you preach the doctrines of the Way of the world, disseminate professional knowledge, and resolve doubts." This essay is selected as a classic in the "Chinese Language and Literature" textbook for Chinese secondary school students. It is still advocated today that a teacher should both teach a subject course and nurture students' integrity (*jiaoshu yuren*).

In my study, Yuan, Ouyang, Lin, and Murong dwelt in the zone between teaching and educating. Their educational goals enabled them to design learning tasks close to the

real life of the students, so that their students could learn English through discussing issues of concern and solving their own problems. For example, Yuan did not consider herself a resource book for her students; instead, she encouraged them to learn how to learn by searching for answers through multiple resources and through cooperative learning with peers. She expected that her students should not only learn language skills and knowledge in her class, but also learn to cooperate with people of different personalities, respect people of different talents, and tolerate people of different opinions. Ouyang and Lin designed learning activities through which their students could learn the English language and also establish themselves as knowledgeable and responsible people who know how to behave appropriately in society and take the responsibility for themselves and the country. Murong noticed some problems on campus and made them the topics for discussion in her English class. She claimed that she was a teacher in the first place and then a language teacher. These teachers' moral and social expectations instilled the academic purposes in language learning tasks; they understood that language teaching should go beyond the teaching of linguistic knowledge and oral skills.

Although in the past, little attention has been paid to language teachers' moral goals for students, an initial effort to do so is seen in the study conducted by Wu (2005), who investigated the professional development of Chinese teachers of English. Wu reported that teachers' moral goals for their students make an important contribution to teachers' professional growth. Subsequently, Fox (2006, unpublished manuscript) studied EFL teachers' practice and perceptions in the context of curriculum renewal in Taiwan. She found that some teachers with long-term goals for students developed their students' capability for effective collaboration, stimulated their excellence, and deepened their

learning experience, while some other teachers with short-term goals for students tended to 'teach for the quiz.' She reported that those teachers motivated by ongoing learning and the desire to continually refresh their practice were more inclined to be innovative and to value long-term goals for their students over short-term and expedient ones. Wu's and Fox's studies support my findings that teachers' conceptual development is related to their moral goals for and social expectations of their students, at least in contexts that share Confucian educational traditions.

Dwelling in the Zone between Curriculum-as-Plan and Curriculum-in-Use

In the literature of curriculum studies, curriculum development is usually related to educational policies, curriculum planning, and management and administration; teacher development, however, seems to be in another category of teacher learning, knowing, and cognitive development. Some researchers (e.g., Freeman, 1998; Fullan, 1982, 1991; Markee, 1992, 1997) have pointed out that the two categories of study are related. Curriculum change cannot succeed without teachers' involvement, and its development will not be sustainable without teachers' alteration of beliefs and conceptions of teaching and learning. Teachers' change in methodology and beliefs should be taken as a goal that is of the same importance as the improvement of students' learning. In education, there are different approaches to involving teachers in curriculum change (Aoki, 2005; Freeman, 1998, 2002; Fullan, 1991; Richardson & Placier, 2001; White, 1988). All teachers in this study involved themselves in the curriculum implementation at AU and achieved different levels of conceptual development. It is worthwhile to discuss their involvement in relation to their conceptual growth.

Three Dimensions of Educational Change

Curriculum change is a complex process involving many factors. In his review of the educational changes that took place in North America, Fullan (1991) pointed out three dimensions of curriculum change: (a) the possible use of new or revised curricular materials, such as textbooks or technologies; (b) the possible use of alternative teaching approaches, such as strategies or activities; and (c) the possible alteration of beliefs, including pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new programs. To achieve the intended outcomes, changes are expected to occur on all these dimensions. According to Fullan's (1991) study, few curricular innovations can come to full implementation because, more often than not, change occurs at a surface level: Teachers may use new curricular materials or technologies without changing their approaches, or they may change some approaches without accepting the beliefs underlying the change. Fullan claimed that only when the change takes place in the third dimension—alteration of beliefs—can the innovation be thorough and long lasting.

Three Strategies and Dimensions of Curriculum Implementation

Educational change is viewed as part of social change (Fullan, 1991). Chin and Benne (1976) suggested three types of strategies for the planning of social changes, and their proposals have been used to plan, implement, and evaluate educational changes (see Richardson & Placier, 2001; White, 1988). These strategies are (a) power-coercive strategy, (b) empirical-rational strategy, and (c) normative-re-educative strategy.

Power-coercive strategy imposes change by using political influence, policies, and power elites (Richardson & Placier, 2001). It assumes that knowledge is power and that knowledge people are the power elite. Knowledge is expected to flow desirably

"from those who know to those who do not through a process of education and dissemination of valid information" (White, 1988, p. 127). Empirical-rational strategy assumes that people are rational and will follow their rational self-interest. Teachers are expected to adopt the proposed change "if it is rationally justified and if they will gain by the change" (White, 1988, p. 128). Implementation in this approach usually takes the form of seminars, conferences, newsletters, and resource centers to disseminate information about research and teaching materials (Kennedy, 1987). Normative-re-educative strategy assumes that "people are self-activating and non-passive" (White, 1988, p. 129) and "change is enhanced through deep reflection on beliefs and practices" (Richardson & Placier, 2001, p. 906). This approach involves teachers in planning and introducing the change. The change is not only a behavioral adoption of a specific innovation but also an alteration of experience, values and beliefs of the individual teachers.

The three strategies for curriculum change can lead to teachers' involvement in different dimensions (see Table 8). The power-coercive and empirical-rational strategies express a linear, top-down, and simplistic process of change, naively assuming teachers to be consumers of curriculum knowledge and educational research results. Aoki (2005) criticized implementation in this fashion as "instrumentalism" that views curriculum implementation as "scientific and technological thought/action" and teachers "as rule-oriented, rule-governed beings" (p. 113). The rationale of instrumentalism can be traced to the "efficiency movement of industrial engineering" that reduces human competence to "instrumental action" (p. 113). Teachers are required to achieve behavioral change, such as using new teaching methods and techniques.

The normative-re-educative approach can lead to the third dimension of change—the possible alteration of teachers' beliefs (Fullan, 1991). Teachers do not engage in the change as consumers of curriculum ideas or doers, but as change agents. They work on the new curriculum, identify the problems in their classrooms, think critically, and find solutions to the problems. "Because the change process entails understanding one's beliefs and knowledge and determining whether or not to change them, *dialogue* has been used as a critical element of this process" (Richardson & Placier, 2001, p. 906, italics added). Only when teachers are deeply involved in the change can they achieve alternative beliefs and conceptions of teaching and learning.

Table 8

Strategies for Change and Dimensions of Curriculum Implementation

Strategies for Change	Teacher's Role in Curriculum Change	Dimensions of Change
Power-Coercive / Empirical-Rational	Curriculum user, consumer, implementer	Use of new or revised materials or technologies; Use of new teaching strategies, techniques, and activities
Normative-Re-educative	Involvement in change, commitment to problem-solving; Self-reflection on experience and beliefs	Alteration of beliefs and assumptions; Acceptance of theories underlying particular new programs

Dwelling in Two Curriculum Horizons

In the context of curriculum change, a normative-re-educative approach to implementation involves the teachers in the tension of "two curriculum horizons" (Aoki, 2005, p. 161): curriculum that is implemented top-down as plans, and curriculum that is implemented bottom-up as adaptations to actual classroom situations. "Both horizons

make their claims on teachers, and teachers are asked to give hearings to both simultaneously" (p. 161). Teachers dwell in the tension of the two curriculum worlds in situational praxis such as the classroom, where they understand the curriculum and transform it based on the appropriateness to the situation, act on the curriculum and reflect on their assumptions underlying action, and adapt the curriculum-as-plan to the situation of curriculum-in-use (Aoki, 2005). Conceptual development takes place when teachers dwell in the zone between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-in-use, because the tension "allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck" (Aoki, 2005, p. 162). The Chinese college English teachers in this study, especially those who achieved significant conceptual change, had deep involvement in the curriculum change by living in the tension of the two curriculum horizons.

The English curriculum development in the Faculty of English Education at AU made a top-down and bottom-up context for the college English teachers. The college English programs for non-English major students in Chinese tertiary institutions have to be organized under the guidance of the National College English Curriculum (NCEC), and AU was no exception. The revised version of the NCEC in 1999 suggested communicative approaches to college English teaching to cultivate university students' communicative competence (College English Curriculum, 1999). Instead of using commercial textbooks and teaching materials, the Faculty of English Language Education at AU decided to develop its own set of learning materials under the guidelines of the NCEC to meet the learning needs of the AU students. The teaching material development actually served as a normative-re-educative approach by involving the teachers in the college English curriculum implementation in different ways: a few teachers were

appointed to design and edit teaching materials, while other teachers met in groups to provide feedback based on their use of the new teaching material in their classroom instruction; then the teaching materials would be revised. Four teachers in my study— Yuan, Ouyang, Lin, and Murong—gained significant conceptual change both by developing curricular materials and by using and adapting the materials to their classroom teaching.

Yuan co-edited the textbook *Transitions* for the first-year students' Comprehensive English course and found herself greatly changed in her understanding of language teaching by that experience. As a co-editor, she had to decide on the rationale and theoretical foundation of the textbook and design the structure of each learning unit; as a teacher, she taught each unit and reflected on her own teaching. She listened to the feedback, reflection, and suggestions, even complaints of her colleagues who taught *Transitions,* and she made revisions accordingly. By so doing, she learned from her own teaching and from her colleagues the kinds of tasks that were welcomed by students and how communicative learning activities were more effectively organized in classrooms. Before developing the textbook, Yuan was already "a good language teacher" in her own terms, having effective strategies for teaching vocabulary, reading, and writing, yet, for her, language teaching meant no more than instrumental use of teaching skills and techniques; it meant explaining words and language points in an interesting way and organizing the students to practice what they had learned. By developing learning materials, Yuan started to think further and more broadly about what the students should learn from communicative tasks and group discussions. Reflecting on her teaching, she found these communicative activities often failed not because the students lacked

vocabulary and oral skills, but because they had problems in interpersonal communication: They were impatient with peers who were less fluent orally, showing no respect for different ideas and relying too much on the teacher for 'right' answers and explanations. Yuan realized that communicative language teaching could not cultivate the real communicative competence of the students if it did not include transforming their attitudes towards learning and toward the relationship between self and others. She consciously acknowledged the talents of each of them and how much she learned from their interpretation and insight in the discussions. Turning the classroom into a learning community, Yuan gained a new understanding of CLT from a curricular perspective, that is, every classroom activity had academic and educational purposes; teaching was not only to facilitate students' learning of knowledge and skills but also to shape their personal integrity.

Murong, Lin, and Ouyang gained significant conceptual change by using and adapting the new teaching materials. They were all mindful of their students' feelings about and responses to their teaching and the learning activities that they had selected or designed, and they were sensitive to and to reflective about the experience they shared in the classroom with their students. Murong struggled hard to balance her instruction between her understanding of CLT and the students' expectations of learning. As she was once a successful teacher teaching oral English, she had taken CLT to mean organizing oral tasks one after another. She was frustrated when the learning activities were not successful or even were resisted by her students. She learned to negotiate with them the content of learning and methods of teaching. By so doing, she gained a new

understanding of CLT and built the teacher-student relationship on the basis of a communicative approach.

Ouyang was angry at the new teaching approach because its use made her feel lost for not knowing how to teach after having taught English for 15 years, during which she employed "communicative activities" on her own terms. She resisted the curriculum change by not participating in material development activities, yet she had to use the designated textbooks such as *Transitions* and *Viewpoints*. From time to time, she was frustrated at the new textbook for not providing the standard answers to some questions, and she felt upset about not having time to teach language points after students' group discussions. In teaching the new textbook, she questioned the meaning of teaching and being a language teacher. She gradually re-examined her role as a language teacher when a learning activity changed their attitudes to learning and her encouraging response to a students' work even became an acknowledged "turning point" in their lives. Seeing how her teaching changed her students, she felt herself being changed, too. In her eyes, the communicative activities were no longer just for linguistic and oral practice, but for empowering learning and changing students. She no longer viewed herself as someone who had to pour knowledge and skills into their minds; she now saw herself as an elder friend who guided her students and learned together with them. Critical reflection on her teaching experience and serious inquiry into the teacher's role in learning had deeply involved her in the curriculum implementation.

Lin implemented student-centered teaching by organizing communicative activities, but the first problem she found in her classroom teaching was the students' negative attitudes to language learning. Noticing the "cold eyes" of the students, she tried

all means to increase their interest in learning the English language and guided them to think critically about the viewpoints implied in the text. Little by little, she increased their confidence to use English for simple communication, and seeing the exciting light in their eyes, she knew their attitudes toward learning were changing. Like Ouyang, Lin once questioned her role as a teacher when the classroom discussion was dominated by the students. However, she learned from the lived experience in the classroom with the students that a language teacher should not only be concerned with improving the students' English proficiency, but also and more importantly, with changing their attitudes toward learning and transforming their views of self in relation to the people around them. Similar to Yuan and Ouyang, Lin came to perceive the educational purposes in learning activities. She could not define "student-centered teaching" in theoretical terms, and yet she lived "student-centered teaching" by leading students to thinking about self and others and by making meaning of her role as a teacher.

I have discussed how the Chinese college English teachers developed their conceptions of language teaching by dwelling in the Zone of Between—between Chinese and Western educational traditions, between social, cognitive, and psychological processes of conceptual growth, between teaching and educating, and between the two horizons of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-in-use. Exposed to the hybrid of Chinese and Western educational traditions, these teachers were capable of expanding new space of conceptions of teaching across cultures as long as they removed the cultural wall in their mind, an illusion produced from superficial understandings of contemporary Chinese education. Conceptual development is such a complex social, cognitive, and psychological process that the Chinese college English teachers moved forward by

dwelling in the connected zones of those four dimensions. What is more, the teachers' conceptual development was closely related to their moral and educational goals for their students. In this study, those who made significant conceptual growth (Murong, Lin, Ouyang, and Yuan) broadened their understanding of language teaching by balancing teaching and educating. AU's curriculum innovation created a challenging situation for the Chinese college English teachers, leading them to the zone between curriculum-as-theory/plan and curriculum-in-use. They gained conceptual change through a normative-re-educative process in which they were deeply involved in curriculum implementation. These layers of the Zone of Between provided the Chinese college English the space for conceptual growth and professional development.

<div style="text-align:center">Implications and Suggestions for Future Work</div>

We live in a time of change. In the past 30 years, China has undergone a rapid and profound change from an agricultural country to an industrial country, and this change is accelerating, producing influence on every field of life. *People's Daily*, a major media in China, has reported that China was standing in first place in production of computers and cell phones and in second place in high-tech manufacturing in the world (Jiang & Chu, 2008, April 7). The Chinese college English teachers who participated in my study were exposed to and involved in such a world of change, of which curriculum change was a part. The findings of my research on their conceptual development have implications for ESL/EFL teacher development, teacher education, and language curriculum innovation and implementation, particularly for the ongoing college English innovation in China.

The stories of the six Chinese college English teachers reveal the gradual, complex, and nonlinear processes of conceptual change and professional growth. The

gradual, internal changes in their beliefs contrast with the dramatic external changes taking place around them: the high-speed development of technology, the rise of the new University Town, the magical appearance of the Square of Culture on the campus, and the fast adoption of the innovative curriculum. In such a context, where change is the unchanging topic, the teachers were expected to catch up with the change quickly and effectively. They took up the curriculum change by adopting CLT methods and student-centered learning activities in their classroom teaching; however, they took years to achieve conceptual change and they did so to different extents and depths. Their stories can increase the understanding of curriculum developers, institutional administrators, and other language teachers that deep change in beliefs and conceptions does not necessarily appear immediately after teacher training or the adoption of new teaching methods. Teachers will not achieve conceptual development until they make meaning of the new curriculum on their own and adapt it to their classroom teaching through painstaking exploration, experimentation, and self-reflection. For ESL/EFL teachers in China and in other cultural contexts, the conceptual growth of the six Chinese college English teachers can be a mirror in which they may see similar experiences in their own teaching careers and learn to be more analytical of their teaching practices and beliefs about teaching.

Another implication of this study concerns the preparation of language teachers. The experience of the six Chinese college English teachers exposes the insufficient language teacher education that they have received in China. Their undergraduate and graduate education equipped them with the subject matter knowledge of the English language and linguistic theories, but it did not prepare them to teach English. This was largely because of the prevailing beliefs that teachers were naturally made and that those

with English knowledge and proficiency could teach English well. The narratives of the college English teachers indicate that they valued their working knowledge more than the knowledge provided by their education: They talked more about facilitating learning than applying linguistic theories in their classroom teaching. Murong's words could apply to all of them: "I'm a teacher in the first place, then a language teacher." English language teacher education programs in China should consider adding curricular content regarding the theories of teaching, learning, and curriculum, so that teacher candidates can construct a more complete knowledge base for their language teaching profession.

Considering that students were excluded from this study, I suggest that future research in Chinese college English teachers' conceptual development should include students' responses to the innovative curriculum and to the learning activities designed by their teachers. This is because students' learning and feedback about teaching can be an important part of teachers' decision making and their interpretations of teaching and learning. From students' perspectives, we can see closely how teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning are shaped and reshaped in classroom teaching.

Today it is well accepted both in academic research and in practice that curriculum development cannot succeed without teachers' development. Markee (1992) stated that ESL teachers should restructure their beliefs in order to implement curriculum innovation. During my fieldwork, the Dean of the Faculty of English Language Education at AU also appealed to the college English faculty to change their beliefs in order to follow the curriculum change. Such advocates, however, imply a simplistic, linear sequence of altering teachers' beliefs ahead of implementing the curriculum innovation and thus separate teachers' development from curriculum development. In

contrast, the experience of the participants in this study indicates the dynamic

relationship between teacher development and curriculum development. The teachers

developed their teaching techniques and beliefs when using the curriculum in their

classrooms; at the same time, the curriculum was enriched and developed by the teachers.

Further research is needed to explore the dynamic development of teachers and

curriculum and to develop more profound insights into teachers' professional growth in

curriculum innovation. The findings of such research can inform the sustained

development of second- or foreign-language teachers in the context of curriculum

innovation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Letter of Information for Teacher Participants

Dear Teacher:

My name is Han Han, a Ph.D. candidate in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. I am under the supervision of Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. I am inviting you to participate in my study that is entitled "A Study of Chinese College English Teachers in China—Beliefs and Conceptual Change." The purpose of my study is to explore the beliefs of the Chinese College English teachers in China and the conceptual change they have experienced, or are experiencing, in the process of using the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in their classroom instruction.

My research will last for three months from October to December 2005. During this period, I will conduct six sessions of classroom observation, with two sessions in each month, and 100 minutes for each session. With your permission, I will audiotape your classroom instruction and our casual talks before and/or after each session, and I will take field notes to document what communicative methods you employ in your classroom. I will conduct interviews with you after every two sessions of classroom observation, and each interview will last 45-60 minutes. The time and locations for the interview will be arranged to your convenience. The interviews will be audiotaped with your permission and will be transcribed verbatim afterwards. I will send you the transcription segments, which will be used in my final thesis, for your verification. With your permission, I will collect copies of some artifacts such as your teaching plans, journals, and posters for documentation. The tapes will be erased and field notes and artifacts will be destroyed after the thesis is completed.

There are no known or foreseen risks to participate in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study at any point for any reasons. You also have the right to request removal or revision of all or part of your data. You are not obliged to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide in order to protect your identify and privacy. No identifying information will be included in the document.

All data will be secured in a locked cabinet in the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. Access to the data is strictly limited to my supervisor and myself. I will report the results of the study in my Ph.D. dissertation, and I may also report the results in publications of various types, including conference presentations, journal articles, and books. However, under no circumstances will your name or identifying information be released to anyone, nor will your identity appear in any publication as a result of the study. If you want to obtain a copy of the findings of this study, you can contact me at my E-mail address: 1hh6@qlink.queensu.ca (1 is Arabic number for one), or provide your e-mail address at the bottom of the consent form in the space provided.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Han Han in the Faculty of Education, 011.613.533.6000, extension 75952 or 1hh6@qlink.queensu.ca. You may contact my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler in the Faculty of Education, 613.533.6000, extension 36220 or rebecca.luce-kapler@queensu.ca. If you have any concerns or question about the research ethics of this study, please contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, at 011.613.533.6210 or brunojor@educ.queensu.ca, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson at 011.613.533.6081or stevensj@post.queensu.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Han Han, Ph.D. candidate
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Appendix B

Consent Form for Participants

I, _____, have read and retained a copy of the Letter of Information. I understand that I will be participating in the study entitled "A Study of Chinese College English Teachers in China—Beliefs and Conceptual Change," conducted by Han Han, a Ph.D. candidate in Faculty of Education at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. All the questions regarding the study have been sufficiently answered. I know that by participating in this study, I will be interviewed formally and informally, I will have my classroom teaching observed, and I will provide copies of artifacts such as my teaching plans, journals, and posters. I am aware of the purpose and procedures of this study.

I have been notified that my participation in this study is voluntary. I may withdraw at any point during the study without any consequences to myself, and I am not obliged to answer any question that I find objectionable or that makes me feel uncomfortable. I understand that I can choose to which teaching artifacts to provide, if any.

I have been told the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of all information. If I have questions and concerns about this study, I know that I am free to contact Han Han at 011.613.533.6000, extension 75952 or 1hh6@qlink.queensu.ca, or contact her supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler at 011.613.533.6000, extension 36220 or rebecca.luc-kapler@queensu.ca.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can also contact Dr. Rosa Bruno- Jofré, Dean of the Faculty of Education at 011l.613.533.6210 or brunojor@educ.queensu.ca, or Dr. Joan Stevenson, the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board of Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada at 011.613.533.6081 or stenvensj@post.queensu.ca.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

_____ (Initial) I give permission to have my classroom teaching audiotaped.

_____ (Initial) I give permission to have my interviews audiotaped.

Please keep one copy of the Letter of Information and put the signed Consent Form into an envelope indicated as "Consent Form."

If you want to obtain a copy of the report of this study, please provide your email address:

_____

Appendix C

Classroom Observation Guide

The classroom observation guide is referred to McMillan and Schumacher's (2001) "participant observation grid" (p. 441). The classroom observation will be focused on who, where, when, what, how, and why a teaching activity occurs. More subtle information can be generated from the above six categories of observations.

Classroom Observation Guide:

1. Who is in the classroom?
   - Who is the instructor?
   - How many students are in the classroom?

2. Where does the instruction take place?
   - Where is the classroom located?
   - What are the physical settings for the classroom instruction?
   - What resources and technologies are used in the instruction?
   - How the classroom space is arranged and used?
   - What sights, sounds, and feelings are found in the classroom?

3. When is the class session and classroom interaction?
   - When does the instructor teach?
   - How often and how long does he/she teach a particular class?
   - How long does a session last?
   - When are the classroom interactions? How long is each interaction?

4. What is happening in the classroom?
   Regular and irregular behaviors:
   - What does the instructor doing and say in the classroom?
   - What events, activities, and routines does the instructor engage in?
   - How are the activities organized, explained, and justified?
   Classroom communication and interactions:
   - What language(s) does instructor use for communication with students?
   - What role does the instructor play in the classroom instruction?
   - Who makes what decisions for what?
   Content of the instruction:
   - What topics are taught or discussed?
   - What beliefs do the content of the instruction illustrated?
   - What are the formats and the processes of the instruction?
   - What talks and who listens?

5. How does the identified elements relate?

- How is the instruction routine maintained?
- How does change originate and how is it managed?
- What rules and norms govern the classroom interactions and instructor-students relationship?
- How is the instructor related to his or her colleagues and institution?

6. Why does the instructor organize the classroom instruction as he/she does?
- What meaning does the instructor attribute to what he/she does in classroom instruction?
- What meanings, traditions, values, and world views can be found in the classroom instruction and interaction between the instructor and the students?

Classroom observations will be recorded as field notes. Field notes are dated and the context is identified. I will take detailed descriptive field notes by using some abbreviations, and I will edit the notes right after the classroom observation to make sure that all the observed activities and incidents are recorded. My questions and insights will also be recorded and will be the focus for my observation of the following sessions.

Appendix D

Sample Interview Questions

Questions for early stage interviews:

1. What is your educational background and teaching experience? What academic activities, such as conference, seminars, and research have you been involved in?

2. What teaching methods do you use in your classrooms? How do you describe your current teaching?

3. In your opinion, what is the purpose of the college English teaching? What do you want your students to learn in your classroom?

4. The ____ communicative activity (based on the observation) that you used in your classroom, why did you use it?

5. Would you use this activity in the past, say, five years ago?

6. How is your relationship with your colleagues? For example, the cooperation on teaching between you and your colleagues.

7. What kinds of support do you get from your institution?

8. What kind of support do you need?

Questions for later stage interviews (the questions can be modified, or other questions can be generated based on the earlier data analysis):

1. What have you learned about communicative language teaching? When and where?

2. What methods did you use in the past?

3. What made you decide to use the communicative methods?

4. How do you use the communicative approaches in your routine?

5. I noticed that you asked the students to (conduct an activity), what do you believe about it?

6. How do you comment on the effect of the communicative activities in your classrooms?

7. What do your colleagues comment on your way of teaching?

8. What teaching experiences impressed you the most in your teaching career?

9. What conceptual change do you think you have made concerning teaching and learning?

10. What factors do you think made you teach fewer language points / or allow students to talk more in the classroom?

11. How do you feel when students ask a question that you did not prepare for or that is beyond your knowledge? What do you think about the challenge like this?

Appendix E

Extract of Observational Notes

Instructor: Ouyang
Date: Oct. 24th, 2005
Time: 10:20-11:50 am.
Place: Rm. E306, South Campus in University Town

Focus my observation:
- *Instructor's feedback to students' speech*
- *Instructor's processing the content—language knowledge*
- *Instructor's response to students' errors, and*
- *Instructor's monitoring students' group work*

Purpose:
- *To understand instructor's perception of teaching, learning, and knowledge*
- *To understand instructor's perception of teacher-students relationship*

The classroom settings:
In front of the classroom is a control panel desk. There is a built-in computer hooked up to internet, a keyboard, a DVD player, and a few USB ports. Left to the control panel is a 54' inch flat screen which is connected with the computer. The desks and chairs are arranged in U shape: two rows close to the left side wall, two rows to the right side wall, and two rows at the back of the room.

10:15 am. Live BBC news
5 minutes before class, Ouyang was downloading the BBC news from the computer in the classroom. She asked the students to take down notes from BBC news. She said it was also a real challenge to all of us, including herself. She asked the students to tell what events reported in BBC news. Some students caught some words and listed: peace talk, murder and assassination, bird flue, Hurricane.

10: 30 am. Students' news report. Students work in pairs. Ouyang moved around to provide support. They had some pieces of news written on their note pad. They either read the news to the partner or tell the news. Ouyang said, "We do not have time to share your news to the whole class. It's totally your personal effort. As long as you keep sharing news like this, you will find yourself learn a lot of things by the end of the term."

10:45 am. Students' presentation. Two students started to present their topic "Greece." The students introduced some information of Greece about geography and population. They mainly introduced the mythology of Greece.

Some students were giving feedback: It would be better to put a story in presentation to make it more interesting, or introduce more history rather than mythology, or put some background music, etc.

Ouyang highly commented on the presenters' interaction with audience: ways they invited questions and the way audience answered were appropriate. Then she pointed out the strong points of the presentation:

- Good opening
- PPT well designed, illustrative, with key information, no complex sentence
- Focus on mythology
- Fluent but a bit faster
- the ending was a bit sudden.

I noticed that the presenters and audience pronounced "mythology" incorrectly. Ouyang mentioned "*mythology*" several times, so that students could hear and repeat the correct pronunciation by themselves.

11:10 am. Text: Beauty
Check students' reading assignment. Ouyang asked the students the meaning of some words and expressions.

She played a piece of video of beauty contest in Russia, which was commented as democracy in Russia by the BBC report. She took out a photocopy of *The Time*'s report about the Super Girl contest in China, a contest to select the best pop singers.

The students showed great interest in the topic of the Super Girls. They were very attentive to how the Americans commented on the Super Girl campaign. *The Times* report called it the initial democracy in China.

Ouyang read a small part of the Times report, and chalked a hard-to-understand sentence on the whiteboard. She said that the article was from the U.S. media, and the U.S. and China were not agreeable on the issue of democracy.

She did not go further on the topic of Super Girl, but led the class back to the text topic— Beauty Pageant. She probed some questions for the students to answer: what can beauty pageant represent? What is its' value? The students were silent, only a few volunteered the answer.

At the end of the class, Ouyang asked the students to review the sentences and the words and expressions in bold font in the text. She said she would give a quiz in the next session.

The class was over at 11:50 am.

Question:
1. *Do you often download news report for English media as listening materials?*
2. *What challenges you when you had the students listen to the live BBC news?*
3. *What do you want the students to learn from making presentations?*
4. *Do you think of using the Time's report about the Super Girl to arouse students' discussion? Or do you want to have a classroom activity based on this Time's report?*

Appendix F

Extract of Interview Transcripts

Interview with Murong (2)
Date: Nov. 24th, 2005, Thursday
Place: Office of Faculty of English Language Education, North Campus

Han   You mentioned that when you were in the university, you had a course Intensive Reading, and the teacher paid a lot of attention to your reading comprehension and authors' opinions or something. So did you see the similarity, or did you just want to translate the teaching of your teacher or your learning experience into your teaching, or into your classroom?

Murong   Yeah, certainly. You just mentioned the similarity between my teaching and my teacher's teaching. There IS similarity but there are some differences, too. For example, when I was a student, the teacher asked us to do translation, or to paraphrase the sentences, or to tell the meaning of the specific words and phrases, well, they didn't pay much attention to the structure and the organization of the article, and they didn't pay much attention to authors' opinions, like why did they write the article. Now I think my focus is a little different. I not only focus on those words, in fact, I didn't pay much attention to those words, but if I think those words and phrases are important, I will pick them out and spend more time talking about them, but I would also focus on the structure and organization of the articles, and the authors' purposes writing those articles. And at the same time, probably we will organize some activities to…to facilitate the students' understanding the authors' ideas. There is some similarity, but there are also some differences, too.

Han   I noticed yesterday in observing your classroom that on the PowerPoint, you demonstrated the structure of the article, how the author's idea is developed and how he makes the argument.

Murong   Yeah, yeah. The first class for that article was in last week. After reading it, first of all, I told the students the general structure of that article, and then I would begin to analyze the article paragraph by paragraph, just focus on the idea and the difficult parts and points that students might think very hard to understand.

Han   I also noticed that you analyzed the very complex structure of the long sentences. So you think that is the difficult point for students?

Murong   Yeah. You know what? This is the unit 3, right? When I was talking about Unit 1, Terrorism, there are a lot of long and complex sentences there, and students find them really hard to understand. So I told them they could use English grammar to help them understand the author's idea. I gave them some examples, probably one paragraph or one long sentence as an example to show them how to make use of the grammar to understand. It worked out very well, because after the class, some students came to me and told me that they never

did that before and it was really helpful.

Han   Don't you think that in their high school, they had a lot of grammatical analysis?

Murong   Yeah, yeah. But it's different. In high school they just focus on the individual part, that is grammar. They just focus on grammar. But not I make use of grammar to help them to understand something. So grammar is not very important, it's just a means, just kind of method to help their reading comprehension. So that's why the students like this kind of thing; they think it really helped them learn something, and they feel they have learned something.

Han   Ok.

Murong   And they are very happy to see that something they learned before helped them to learn something new. So I think that's the difference. Although we are talking about grammar, the purpose is different.

Han   Ok. What's of the purpose of the high school English?

Murong   In high school, the teacher just let them know what is attributive clause, and how to make sentences which have attributive clause, and how to deal with the questions in examinations. But now it's different. I do not tell them about grammar, I tell them how to use their grammar to understand something. You know, when the author uses very long sentence to show his idea, the students feel uncomfortable, and they probably give it up, put it aside, never pay any attention to it, because it's too long, and it's too hard. What I'm teaching is to tell them that they can understand it, and they have this ability to understand it. What they need to do is calm down, use their past knowledge to help them. They can comprehend the author's idea. So I think that's different.

Han   So you inherited something from your past experience, from your teacher, and then you put something new in it.

Murong   Yeah, yeah, probably. (laughing.)

And also, it's my learning experience. No body told me that…, when I read something like that, I use that way to help me understand. I combined my teacher's teaching with my personal experience to teach my students, right now.

Han   Now, when you look back, what is the quality of a good language teacher?

Murong   Certainly responsible … for students, I think, should be number one. . And …, the second is, although he is strict, he is quite willing to talk with you, to know your problems, and to try to help you with your problems.

Han   You mean the personal communication?

Murong   Yeah, personal communication is also important.

Han   You are smiling all the time. I think you have a very good relationship with your students.

Murong   Yeah. If you want to teach well, I think the relationship with students is very

important, very important. You know, to smile to people is very good, making students feel you are close to them, so they are quite willing to open themselves to you and to exchange ideas with you.

Another way is, you have to place yourself at a very good position, I mean, sometimes you have to regard yourself as a teacher, but most of time you have to treat yourself as their equal. So I really didn't think too much of myself teaching experience, but I think, subconsciously I learned this kind of thing (treat yourself as their equal).

Han   So when you are with the students, if you take yourself as their equal, your relationship is much easier.

Murong   Yeah. Most of the time I …I'm friendly to them. But sometimes I'm a teacher and they are students, sometimes the students really don't know what they have to do. For example, I ask them to do the homework, they would always say, "No, we are too busy. Can we do it later?" At this time, I would recognize my other status of teacher, and I will tell them why they have to do the homework right now and not to delay that.

Another example. We have a quiz for each unit. After the quiz, I usually ask them to exchange test paper, and we will grade the test paper immediately after the quiz. Most students just do not like to have their paper seen by other people because they didn't do it very well or for fear that they would be laughed at by other students. But I think it's a kind of challenge to them, even if they didn't do it very well. At least they could see that some people did pretty well in the quiz, at least, they could learn from that. And also, I think, ah…sometimes, I don't know whether it is right or not, most of the students are too self-centered, or too soft, I mean, they can not bear any criticism, or they can not suffer any setback. That is why I want them to switch the papers and to have their work seen by other people, no matter whether their work is well done or poorly done. I don't know. Maybe they have to experience that kind of feeling. If they didn't do the work well, they will be ashamed, no matter by whom—by themselves or by other classmates, which is very important to students, and to children, too. When they graduate from school and come into the society, they would also be criticized by other people. If they couldn't accept the criticism in school, they could not accept any criticism when they are adults. So that's why I force them to do that. No matter it is criticism or praise, they have to accept it. Whenever I asked them to shift the paper with other classmates, they were quite unwilling to do that. They would say, "Just tell us the answers and we will grade our paper by ourselves." At this time, you know, I'm the teacher, I certain have the authority, I have my purpose in asking them to exchange the papers. So I would say, "No, exchange the papers, please." I would suddenly withdraw my smile and look very serious, so they have to do so. But I think it's good for them. And also, I told them to be honest, because everybody is grading other people's paper, and they do not sign their names on it. So I think it's fair, so they have to be honest to the paper and to themselves. I will check the paper to make sure there is not mistake. I told them to be honest, to learn to

accept comments from other people.

Han Well, this story just generated another question. What do you teach in the classroom? I know you teach English. But what are you teaching?

Murong I think, being a teacher, you don't just deliver the knowledge, but you also need to tell students how o be a man. That is what we Chinese always say—being a man. I don't know whether you have this kind of feeling or not. Because I used to be a student, and now I teach my students, I sense the big difference between them and me when I was a student…

Han Two generations of students…

Murong Yes. You know, when I was a student, most students very respected the teachers. We would never be late for the class, and if we didn't feel well, we would ask for a leave. Now, today's generation is too weak, and also they are little bit at their own will. If they want to do something, they wouldn't mind other people's …, just do what they like to do. Yeah, their choice may be right, but may be also wrong. So I think, be to a teacher, I should tell them something like that, how to be man, and how to survive in this society, I mean, to give them some moral lecturing.

Han Ok.

Murong But it's not really lecturing. It's just use of some examples, or use some life lessons to tell them.

Han For example, shifting test papers is to learn …

Murong Cooperation and …

Han …accept negative feedback.

Murong Yeah, yeah.

Han So they can learn and endure the negative opinions against them.

Murong Yeah, yeah. Also, because most of them are the only child in their family, they don't know how to cooperate with their classmates. If I ask them to have pair work and dialogue, some of them prefer to have the talk all by themselves, instead of having a partner to conduct the dialogue.

Han So that's what you said they want to be listened to.

Murong Probably they think: my partner's English is poor, and I don't want to waste any time. Something like that.

Han Ok.

Murong That's why we have those different kinds of activities to tell them something—to be cooperative, to listen to someone, to learn to accept criticism and different opinions, something like that.

Han Is that also the part of purpose for the group work and the activities you set up for the students?

Murong   Yeah. And I also tell you something. I have a student. Once we were talking about something, I forgot what the topic was. I was standing behind him when he was talking. And then he turned back and said something, I think, it was too abrupt. For example, I would like you to replay the listening material. He suddenly turned to me and said, "Replay that!" You know what, it sounded like a command. So I turned to him and said, if I were a student, if I were you, I would say, "Excuse me, would you please…" I told you to use "Would you please …, would you mind doing…." You can use these kind of sentences to express your request or whatever in a very polite way. So I said, "If I were you, I would say: would you please replay the tape?" Then he repeated my sentence, "Would you please do that?" I said, "Yes, I'm quite willing to do that."

You know, I'm trying to tell my students something like that. So sometimes I'm a little confused about that. I don't know what I'm teaching. For example, we were talking about terrorism, technology, something else, right? I think I'm still a language teacher, I think I have to help them improve the language skills. But I know I'm also their elder sister or something like that. I have to tell them how to survive in this society, how to … have a very successful relationship with other people. I'm quite clear about these two tasks as a teacher. But I don't know the other thing, because some of our textbook is talking about very political or very technical things, so I don't know…

Han   What is political and technical …

Murong   For example, terrorism, and also some others. Although the textbook is compiled by myself and by other teachers, mostly I'm a bit confused. I don't know what we were talking about when we choose those materials. I didn't choose all those materials; some other teachers also do part of the work. Sometimes I'm not comfortable to tell the teachers very frankly that this kind of reading materials are not very good because we try to teach the students language things; we are not trying to tell the students …, how to say that?

Han   Point of view or perspectives? Or political things?

Murong   Yeah. I don't know. Especially last year I was too confused, I was really confused about that, because that was the first time for us to teach that textbook.

Han   You mean *Viewpoints*?

Murong   *Viewpoints*. Yes. You know, at the same time, we were compiling (the textbook). I was not quite familiar with that textbook. I was really confused. I didn't know what I was talking about. Am I teaching language, or am I teaching politics, economics, laws, or something like that? But I was just teaching those things in English. I was really confused, especially last year.

But now, after teaching it for one year, I know my focus now, I know … I probably have to reduce something and focus on language or something like that. I mean, now I begin to find my focus.

Han   What's your focus now?

Murong I think I'm still a language teacher, you probably observed that in my class that I … I would reduce those activity or I would even give up those activities which have nothing to do with language or completely for fun or for entertainment.

Han   For example, what kind of activity you …have omitted?

Murong Ah…, a lot. For example, now we are talking about education. The next part is tuition. According to the schedule, actually I designed this unit for the students, I designed an activity that is tuition hearing. Some of the students will be parents, some will be the students, some will be the teachers, and they sit together to talk about the tuition. Now I decide to give it up. Why? When I was compiling the textbook, I think it may be a very good activity. But before tuition, we had another activity: I asked my students to have a simulated open day. I mean, the form is a little similar. Although I design the tuition part, I still decide to give it up.

Han   Ok.

Murong Anther example, I just can not remember what kind of activity I gave up…, yeah, when we talked about terrorism, there is a part talking about Bin Laden, some material about Bin Laden. Some other teachers held an activity, which I had one year ago, but this year I gave it up. The activity is: if Bin Laden were caught, how would you trial him? What kind of sentence would you give him? I gave up this activity because I think it was completely…, they could practice speaking, but it was completely for fun. It doesn't make much sense. I just gave it up, instead, I focused on one reading part, because that reading is important. That reading tells why Bin Laden initiated so many terrorist acts in the America. We could know that through reading that material. And that reading material directly linked to the last part, which is anti-terrorism talking about something the American people have to do after 9/11. I think these two parts are connected. So I gave up that kind of activity because, in my understanding, it was completely for fun. Although they could practice speaking, but…not much…, not really useful. So I gave it up. I focused on that reading and I immediately came to the anti-terrorism, missing some part because I think (it is) not so useful.

Han   What is the anti-terrorism?

Murong It's about …should we launch anti-terrorism war or not, is anti-terrorism war fair or not fair, justified or not justified. It is a very good article. Of course I talked a lot, I spoke a lot because I think the students find it really hard to understand, because they didn't have that kind of background information, such as pro-life and protrial. That article mentioned the fundamentalism…

Han   O… k.

Murong Yeah, you know, in America, those fundamentalists bombed the clinic, the abortion clinic. If you do not tell them, if you just let them go to Google, they might spend a lot of time, and also they might give it up, or they even couldn't

find the right information to help them. Since I know that kind of information, I certainly tell them what happened there. Because that article talks about the bombing of American embassy, and also the bombing of clinics in the America. They didn't know why, and also they even didn't pay much attention to that. But I gave them this kind of information, I think, it is a part of American culture or American society. It could also help them to understand that kind of Christian Fundamentalism and Muslim Fundamentalism, the difference and similarity between them.

That is why now I focus more on language and also help them to understand it.

Han	And also the history and culture in that language.
Murong	Yeah. It's related. So I have to tell them.
Han	But don't you think that you guys worked together on the textbook, because you compiled the textbook [*Viewpoints*] or teaching material?
Murong	Some units I complied, some units were compiled by other colleagues.
Han	I heard that you are responsible for that book.
Murong	Yeah, I have to do most of the job. As for book one, it still…, teaching for one round, I have to decide what should be revised and what should not. I don't know, I have to listen to other teachers' opinions, but we just do not have the time to sit down, talking about that. You know, it really… cost a lot of time. We have spent a lot of time finding those materials, really hard!
Han	I know. It takes a lot of time. You have to get all the material from other group members, say, your colleagues, and then you have to select edit it to decide whether the questions are well designed or not.
Murong	Yeah, yeah.
Han	So you have to filter …
Murong	Yeah, yeah, that's the right word. Yeah, exactly. You know what? I never learned textbook designing, or curriculum designing, I never learn that!
Han	Did you find yourself learn something?
Murong	Yeah, I learned something, but not clear. You know, I didn't have time to make it clear, to have really good thinking about that. But sometimes, I really feel proud of my work. Such as unit 5 Education, it was completely compiled by me myself. I'm really proud of that, no matter it is good or not. I think I did pretty well. You know, I didn't know anything about that. Everything was done by myself—looking for material, designing all those things, finding the right pictures, characters, cartoons for those things. Completely done by myself. So I was proud. You see, everybody was reading that. Anyway, I think it's a kind of work. (laughing.)
Han	Yeah. I think I have to stop here. I don't want your colleagues to wait for you for too long. Next time I will go on with the design of the textbook. Thank you ever so much!

Appendix G

Pilot Coding Report

Pilot coding by Han and HF, a Master's student in the Faculty of Education, Queen's University
Time: March 4th-5th, 2006, Saturday and Sunday
Comparative coding report: March 5th-6th, Sunday and Monday

HF agreed to pilot coding an interview transcript for me. She learned how to code qualitative data in a graduate course Qualitative Research.

I selected an interview transcript, which is medium in length among 15 interview transcripts. I printed two copies of the transcript. Before coding, I briefly introduced my research and the interview questions in the selected transcript. I asked HF to read the transcript and find topics from within participant's talk. I told her that she could segment the transcript and elicit the topics according to her understanding of the transcript text. I provided her with pencils and color markers. We started to code the transcript. Pilot coding took longer than we had expected. We finished coding half of the transcript on Saturday afternoon. HF did the rest of the coding at home on Sunday.

I compared our coding by examining the segmentation of the transcript text. I found that we segmented similar big trunks of the text and we elicited similar "main ideas" from those big trunks of data. I had more detailed segmentation in the big trunks and more sub-topics for the sub-trunks of text. HF's segmentation is more general in bigger trunks, but she also underlined the key words and repeating words, terms, and sentences in each trunk. I found that the underlined key words and terms on her print are similar to those highlighted on mine.

Then I carefully compared our use of words and terms for the topics. I found that the topics that HF gave to the trunks of text are also consistent in meaning to the topics that I labeled to the same trunks on my print, though we were a little different in the use of words and terms. For example, the topic of a trunk on her print is "university environment," the topic of the same trunk on my print is "B.A. university context." I labeled with "B.A" to distinguish this trunk from the later M.A. education that the participant talked in the interview. Similar examples are:

	Topics by Han	Topics by HF
1	Learn to teach	Exploration of teaching method
2	Learn to organize class	Progress/growth (in managing classroom)
3	Construction in group work	(Constructivism)
4	Construction in teacher's guide	Themselves Themselves
5	Motivate students	Excited
6	Group work	Team work
7	Chinese teaching experience	Related (experience of teaching Chinese to foreign students)
8	Involve teachers in projects	Involve

9	Open-ended textbook	Openness
10	Textbook development	Involved textbook development
	Leadership	
	Teacher involvement	
11	Open to teachers' ideas	Encouraging variety (ideas)
12	Goal: flexible curriculum	Teachers' own curriculum
13	Learning as construction	Learn to construct
14	Demonstrate learning from colleagues	Establish open atmosphere
15	Problems of teaching	Teacher change
	English proficiency only	(Tired of learning new things)
	Not enough	
	Learn to teach	
16	Life experience in the U.S.	Overseas experience
17	Need to be respected	Respect
18	Understanding of "respect"	Respect
19	Respect students' knowledge	Respect

Topic (1) "learn to teach" represents the data chunks that the interviewee learned to teach vocabulary by relating to students' prior knowledge and survived the first year teaching English at a university. "Exploration of teaching methods" can express the same meaning. Topic (2) "learn to organize students" tells how the interviewee had a vague idea of organizing learning at the beginning of her teaching and how she was clear about it. This topic can also be taken as her "progress or growth" in classroom management. Topic (12) "Goal: flexible curriculum" refers that the teachers to tailor the textbook or curriculum to their students and, therefore, they developed "their own curriculum."

HF's topic (15) "teacher change (tired of learning)" is different from the topic that I labeled the same trunk of text. This trunk of text discusses problems in English teacher development. Most teachers believed that English proficiency was the most important, but not the sole, requirement for language teachers and they still needed to learn many things related to teaching. Improving teaching and teaching a full workload made them feel tired. The text does not say or imply that the language teachers were tired of learning.

In general, my coding and HF's coding is consistent in segmentation and elicitation of topics. This indicates that my initial coding has an extent of validity and stability.