TEACHER DEVELOPMENT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN CHINA: BASED ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN NEW ZEALAND

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Suxia, Gao

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ABSTRACT

This study inquired into English language teachers' beliefs and practices in China and in New Zealand, and explored the process of using New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices as a stimulus in promoting and developing Chinese English language teachers' understanding of English language teaching and their practices in the classroom. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted respectively in both China and New Zealand from May, 2007 to November, 2007. An action research was conducted in China, which lasted about four months with three cycles from March to July in 2008. Two English language teachers with the students in their class participated in the action research. The goal of the study was to identify the role that New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices played in helping Chinese English language teachers develop their teaching beliefs and practices so as to promote their students' communication competence in the target language.

On investigation, it was found that New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices played a positive role in helping Chinese English language teacher participants develop their teaching beliefs and practices. They provided Chinese teacher participants with new angles to think and reflect their own teaching beliefs and practices, and provide teacher participants with implications to be creative in the construction and reconstruction of new beliefs and practices.

However, it was also found that in learning and using New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices, Chinese teacher participants had to consider the contexts within which their teaching occurred. It was proposed by this research that during the cross-cultural transplantation of teaching beliefs and practices, cultural congruence and pedagogical reconciliation had to be achieved. Without regard to the Chinese educational culture, values, expectations, and Chinese teachers' expertise, the change would be superficial.

This study embraced a positive attitude toward using beliefs and practices from other culture(s) in Chinese English language teacher development and proposed it as an effective teacher development mode for China's English language teacher education programme.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the origins of this research project by presenting my personal account of learning and teaching English language as a student and a teacher in China and my learning experiences in New Zealand. It is followed by a description of the sociocultural contexts of English language teaching in which this study is conducted. Finally the chapter outlines the research aims and an overview of this thesis.

1.1 The origins of the research project – problem identification

This research is motivated by my personal English language learning and teaching experiences as a student and a teacher in China, and my learning experiences in New Zealand. In China, my first contact with English language occurred at the beginning of middle school. In my memory, I was a diligent student full of curiosity in the English language. At that time, I liked English language so much that every day I spent lots of time in vocabulary memorizing and grammar exercises. Whenever a new lesson was taught, I would try to remember all of the words or even recite the whole text. This habit remained even in my university study. In my mind, at that time, learning English language meant vocabulary, grammar and lots of exercises.

In 1993, I went to Hebei University as an English language major. I had thought that English language teaching and learning in a university would be different

from that in secondary school because there was no great examination pressure. However, it was almost the same as I had experienced in secondary school. University lecturers spent most of the time using the textbook and detailed analysis to help us to understand the language. In oral English classes, pattern sentences or models were provided for students to practice and memorize. My 10 years' learning experience as a student shaped my beliefs about English language teaching and my expectations involved new words, reading, grammar illustration, sentence structure analysis as well as answering questions from students.

In 1997, I began my teaching in a vocational college. The leaders in this college paid much attention to English language teaching. As a new teacher, I was required to visit the classes of my experienced colleagues and they also attended my classes with the aim of helping my teaching. I found that the teaching modes and patterns that my colleagues recommended to me were exactly the same as what I had experienced as a student, that is, textbook-centred, grammar-centred, and teacher-centred. I tried to work as hard as my colleagues to be a 'good' English language teacher. I analyzed grammar and sentences in detail as much as possible, sparing no efforts. I answered all of the questions from my students with full enthusiasm. This state lasted until I came to New Zealand.

From 2004 to 2006, I studied for my Masters Degree of Education at Waikato University in New Zealand. In this period, I had different learning experiences and experienced different teaching. Although it was a short period compared with

the time I spent on my learning and teaching in China, it was a very significant experience. At the beginning of the study, I found that my 10-year English language learning experience and 7-year teaching experience did not prepare me for the studies in the Western education system. What the teachers in New Zealand provided was not what I had expected. There was no right answer to each question. There was no concrete teaching content to memorize. Sometimes I even doubted whether I could learn something. However, as my study progressed, lectures, seminars, and group work provided me with systematic understanding about teaching and learning. I came to make sense of the activities I experienced in New Zealand as well as their significance. I came to know that teaching cannot be simply reduced to knowledge delivery from teacher to student. During this period, I not only experienced New Zealand teachers' teaching but also began to rethink traditional teaching in China and even began to doubt some of my taken-for-granted teaching doctrines.

One question confused me for a long time, and that is, what makes teaching different between China and New Zealand? In other words, what underlies the differences between teaching in China and New Zealand? I searched for the answers. Being an English language teacher, I was interested in and curious about my colleagues in New Zealand. I paid much attention to their teaching activities, and found there were differences in teaching pedagogy, classroom management, and the relationships with students between Chinese and New Zealand teachers. I believed there must be something underlying the differences but I wondered what

made the differences. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) reminded me that belief is a central factor influencing human behavior and thinking. And, teachers' beliefs have a significant impact on their teaching practices and strongly influence the enactment of a prescribed curriculum (Roehrig & Kruse, 2005). Hence, exploring both Chinese and New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and their practices was the original motivation for this research. Since，I am a tertiary English language teacher in China, I would like to investigate English language teachers in tertiary situation. In addition, I hoped that the findings about New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices could be used as a stimulus for Chinese English language teachers to develop their understanding of teaching and their teaching practices to improve learning outcomes. Any problems existing in their using and applying the New Zealand beliefs and practices would be investigated as well so that some possible solutions to these problems might be explored.

1.2 Sociocultural contexts of English language teaching and learning in China

This section describes the sociocultural contexts of English language teaching and learning in China with the aim to provide a basis for better understanding the situation in which this study was conducted. The sociocultural context consists of the educational reform trends of English language education in China as well as the educational cultures which influence English language teaching and learning in China. It is argued that China's English language education reforms ignore the professional development of Chinese English language teachers, and the

sociocultural contexts in China (Geng, 2007; Ji, 1997; Liao, 1996; Yang, 2000). It is also argued that China's traditional teaching and learning culture plays an important role in shaping Chinese English language teachers' beliefs and that the educational culture influences their understanding about English language teaching and learning in class (Xia, 2002; Xu, 2008). It also argued that two preconditions of China's English language education reforms are to make Chinese English language teachers the agents of change and to consider the influence of Chinese educational and cultural contexts on the teachers' beliefs (Li, 1999).

1.2.1 Educational reform trends of English language teaching in China

English language education has a long history in China and the whole history can be summarized as a history of "learning" from and "borrowing" from western countries. English entered China in the late 19th century during and after the Opium War (1840-1842) (He, 2005; Lam & Chow, 2004; Yang, 2000). From the very beginning, English language teaching and learning in China was for national service ends (Lam & Chow, 2004), which could be seen from the philosophy of *Tiyong*, with the English meaning of 'Chinese essence in foreign bottle' (Turner & Acker, 2002). This philosophy was proposed after China failed in the Opium War and the philosophy indicated that Chinese doctrine played an essential role in determining China's destiny, while those advanced technologies from western countries were followed and adopted in order to rescue China from its declining tendency in the late 19th century. In this way, English was regarded as the bridge and tool to access Western technology and science expertise. The *Tiyong*

5

philosophy has two major implications. One is that the indigenous culture of Confucianism was in a weak position in the rivalry with western cultures; the other is that the traditional culture had to undertake the function of being the carrier of Chinese values and identity although it is in a weak position. However, according to language acquisition theory, culture learning is at the core of foreign language learning because "culture and language are seen as closely interrelated, and culture as present whenever language is used" (Newton, Yates, Sheam & Nowitzki, 2010, P.5). That means, when English language is learnt, its culture is learnt as well. It is commonly agreed by the literature that the process of learning a foreign language is a process of interculturality (Newton et al., 2010; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Sercu, 2005), during which, language learners have to develop the awareness of culture, reflect their own culture, learn a new culture, negotiate and reconstruct their identity during the interactions between the two cultures (Kramsch, 2000; Lantolf, 2000; Sercu, 2005). From this perspective of intercultural language teaching and learning, English language teaching and learning in China put Chinese English language teachers and students in the middle of Chinese culture and the culture underpinned by the English language. And the inability to achieve conformity between indigenous culture and the English language culture (as indicated by the *Tiyong* philosophy that Chinese culture occupied a leading position in English language teaching and learning) resulted in the failure of English language education in the late 19th century (Turner & Acker, 2002).

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, China entered into the period of nation-building. Because of the Cold War between the East and the West, China confederated with the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Thus, Russian became the main foreign language in schools. However, even during this period of estrangement with the West, the government did not completely ignore the value of English language as a means of access to technology and science. English language teaching was limited to being delivered for an English major in foreign language institutions for the purpose of translating and interpreting imported technical and scientific manuals (Adamson, 2004; Yang, 2000).

From the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to 1976, the end of the Mao era, China never stopped learning from the western world. Pepper (1991) regarded the movement to "learn from the Soviet Union" as an indirect imitation of the capitalist West because the Chinese official rationale was that the Soviet Union had absorbed the best of the western technology and science and it was a short cut to learn from the Soviet Union directly. As with the earlier attempts in education reform pre-1949, the Soviet education model was transplanted directly without consideration of Chinese contexts. The entire Chinese education system was reorganized to conform to that of the USSR. In this way, education reforms in this period ignored the sociocultural contexts in China and the incongruities were inevitable (Yang, 2000).

In addition, during this period, the struggles between indigenous and international systems could still be seen in education policy and practice. In spite of the transplanting and borrowing from the Soviet Union education model, the indigenous system still dominated the education practice. Turner and Acker (2002) argued that during this period Chinese education reform took place at the macro level and little attention was paid to pedagogical practices. The lack of alternative models left many of the educators as Confucian-educated and conservative. Thus, during the early years of the PRC, integration of indigenous cultural tradition and external education system also failed (Yang, 2000).

In terms of English language teaching and learning, in the 1950s, when the Soviet education model, curriculum and teaching pedagogy were borrowed, Grammar-Translation became the dominant approach (Yang, 2000). Western teaching pedagogy was abandoned. After the Sino-Soviet split, in the 1960s, China once again set its sights on the West. This time the Audiolingual Method was employed from the USA. This method emphasized imitating and memorizing dialogues and sentence drills. According to Xu (1993), the Audiolingual Method views language as a set of habits, and pattern drills are designed to train students on basic grammatical structures with the purpose of allowing students to form correct speaking habits. Many of the Chinese English language teachers used this method to improve students' oral skills, such as pronunciation. In the early 1970s, China regained its legal position in the United Nations and relations with the West were resumed. English language came back into school curriculum. However, it was

still regarded as a political tool and no functional use was required. The general objective of the English curriculum was "for students to acquire a working knowledge of the language without acquiring foreign ideas" (Yang, 2000). As He (2005) claimed, the long isolation of China from the outside prevented students from the functional use of English in their study and work.

Since 1976, the end of the Mao era, China has stepped into a new era. The urgent need for economic development led to the implementation of China's open-door policy after 30 years of isolation. In order to catch up with the advanced nations, the Chinese government set up a grand plan aiming to realize agricultural, industrial, national defense, and technological modernizations. The focus of government was shifted from political class struggle to economic building. At the same time, the leader of the Chinese government, Deng Xiaoping, raised his famous Dengist pragmatism. China not only began to respect western ideas but was also willing to absorb various philosophies. In the area of education, western teaching theories were re-evaluated. English language, as the tool and means by which to connect with the western world, was once again established as a dominant language in foreign languages taught in the school curriculum. With China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), English was no longer simply a subject in schools. It was not only a tool for the nation's modernization (Yang, 2000) and a key to wealth and prosperity (Li, 1999), but it also played an influential role in individual development (He, 2005; Li, 1999; Yang, 2000). Nowadays, with English language becoming one of the three required courses in

secondary school curricula and College Entrance Examination, it is a ticket for an individual's social mobility and academic development (He, 2005; Li, 1999; Yang, 2000).

The socio-political and economic changes since 1976 have made English language teaching and learning no longer a foreign imposition as it was in the 19th century but a public and government imperative (Li, 1999). Meanwhile, the functional use of the English language began to gain more and more attention because student learning outcomes were not adequate for China's economic development (Yang, 2000; He, 2005). In 2007, the Chinese government launched a new document which emphasized the importance of functional use and communicative competence in tertiary English language education (Jian, 2008). Students are also required to pass the National Band Examination, otherwise they cannot obtain their bachelor degree certificates. This series of education policies was aimed at the situation that Chinese students' communicative ability in English could not meet the demands of China's economic development, which, from another point of view indicated that China's English language teaching needed changing and the traditional teaching could not satisfy the developmental needs of society (Li，1999; Zhou, 2005; Zhang, 2007). At the individual level, English language proficiency is regarded as the key to promotion, employment, and academic advancement (Li, 1999). Therefore, it is imperative to improve the functional use of English language for both Chinese economic development and individual development.

However, while China wishes to improve the English language competence of Chinese teachers and students, there are many problems and dilemmas in China's English language education. On one hand, the curriculum requires meaningful communication as the primary goal of English education. To achieve fluency and acceptable output, the English syllabus calls for the study of foreign language education theories and a synthesis of Western and Chinese teaching styles. Increasingly, new teaching methods are being introduced into China and some of them are favored by Chinese English language teachers, for example, the Communicative Approach. On the other hand, the adoption of a foreign teaching strategy itself is a challenge to traditional teaching styles. Like the previous education reforms in China's history, the vestiges of traditional education are still reflected in current English teaching practices. For example, in some schools and colleges, the Grammar-Translation Method still prevails and students still spend most of the time on rote memorization and mechanical exercises (Zhou, 2002). The characteristics of China's English teaching are still teacher-centred, textbook-centred and grammar-centred (Yang, 2000). This is of concern because if the traditional teaching and teaching beliefs do not change, it will be hard for China's English language education to achieve its desired results. In other words, if China's English language teachers do not develop their traditional practices and teaching beliefs, Chinese students communication abilities in English might not be improved fundamentally (Xu, 2008; Zhou, 2002).

History is like a mirror, which provides us with meaningful enlightenment. Through reviewing the English education in China, it becomes apparent that China's English language teaching practices need changing along with Chinese English language teachers' beliefs. Firstly, English language teaching and learning are deeply influenced by China's social, political and economic factors and the changes in Chinese society and economy require changes in English language teaching (Li, 1999; Zhang et al., 2008). As indicated in the history of English language education, the purpose of English language teaching and learning changed with the development of China. Before 1976, the purpose of learning English language was to translate and interpret western technology and science. However, since 1976, functional communication has become the main purpose for Chinese students to learn English language (He, 2005 Ho, 2001; Yang, 2000). Chinese traditional teaching which pays close attention to translation and grammar cannot satisfy the new communicative purpose (Xin, 2006; Zhang et al., 2008). Hence, the new social and economic contexts lead to the need for changes in English language education.

Secondly, this thesis argues that teacher beliefs and thinking are ignored in China's English language education reform. The review of English language education in China indicates that English language teaching reform is top-down. That is, English language teaching reform in China is controlled by central government. It is always the official authority that asks for the change, for example, changes in new pedagogy, new teaching syllabus and teaching materials in order to achieve

new learning outcomes. In other words, what China's government is asking for are new practices in English language teaching. However, teacher beliefs about teaching are ignored. Chinese English language teachers are required to obey and adopt the reform policy. Under this education system, teachers are not allowed freedom of choice and teacher thinking is ignored. Teacher development is also ignored. According to Bell (2005), curriculum development should be linked to teacher development and teacher development "is usually required before any difference in the students' received curriculum is noticed by students" (p.183). From this perspective, in China's English language education reform, there is always a tension between teacher development and curriculum development. Emphasizing teaching practices and ignoring English language teacher beliefs is one of the characteristics of China's reform of English language teaching. In this thesis I argue that the changes concerning Chinese English language teacher thinking and beliefs are needed.

Thirdly, the influence of the Chinese traditional education culture on teacher beliefs and the inadequate student learning outcomes make it necessary to change and develop Chinese English language teacher beliefs. Teacher beliefs about teaching refer to

> their judgments about the effectiveness of teaching as intervention, their
> estimates of personal influence upon student learning, their beliefs about the
> extent to which they posses teaching competencies, as well as the criteria by

which they evaluate their own teaching and themselves as teachers.

(Dunkin, 2002, p.42)

Teacher beliefs play a central role in their classroom teaching practices. Therefore, considering teacher beliefs, teacher thinking about teaching, and the influence of China's traditional culture on teacher beliefs becomes the key to China's English education reform. Likewise, to change teacher beliefs becomes a precondition for Chinese English language teachers to improve Chinese students' functional communication abilities in order to meet the demands of Chinese social and economic development. The doctrines and influence of Chinese traditional education culture on English language teaching will be discussed in the following section.

1.2.2 The culture of learning influencing English language teaching in China

The culture of learning is a very important concept in people's interpretations, and perceptions of teaching and learning (Brown et al., 1998; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). A culture of learning not only defines the frameworks of role, expectations, values, and beliefs about successful teaching and learning, but also influences the process of teaching and learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). English language teaching and learning in China is an intercultural process. This process, according to Newton et al. (2010), involved "the development of a deeper awareness of one's own language and culture as one is learning the target language and culture, and understanding the dynamic interplay between them" (p.3). Thus, it becomes essential to review Chinese learning culture, to explore how it

influences Chinese English language teachers' beliefs about teaching, and what kind of attitudes they should have toward their own culture in English language teaching. In this section, I will firstly explore the influences of the Chinese traditional culture of learning on English language teaching and learning with the focus on how the culture works on Chinese English language teachers' beliefs, roles, pedagogies, and expectations. Then, I will discuss the concept that culture, including the culture of learning, is not static but dynamic. This will be illustrated by the current culture changing trends in Chinese educational contexts. On this basis, I will raise my argument that Chinese English language teachers should be aware of the limitation of Chinese traditional culture and become open-minded to absorb the quintessence of Western English language teaching and learning culture.

Confucianism is the cornerstone of Chinese culture and it has dominated the content of traditional Chinese education for centuries (Zhang, 2008). According to Lu (2002), Confucianism has been the most prominent philosophy and cultural ideology for Chinese people since the Han Dynasty (202B.C.---220). It is commonly agreed that Confucian values are influential even in Chinese modern sociocultural attitudes towards teaching and learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Li, 1999; On, 1996; Shi, 2006; Turner & Acker, 2002).

The Confucian tradition defines teaching practices as *jiaoshu*, the study of canon of texts, and *yuren*, the cultivation of moral self, which exerts an influential role in

the forming of Chinese teachers' teaching beliefs. For most Chinese English language teachers, teaching means teaching from the textbooks. Based on this traditional norm, the social expectation for a teacher is to transfer the knowledge from books to students. Thus the social role of a teacher described by cultural norms is as a knowledge transmitter, an expert and an authority (Brooks, 1997; Cortazzi & Jin, 2001; Li, 1999; Shi, 2006). Central to this belief is that "teaching is a process of transmission, and that knowledge is something external to students that can be transmitted by teachers" (Gao & Watkins, 2001, p.38-39). Influenced by this culture, teachers are expected to be knowledgeable and learned. Therefore, to have a deep knowledge of a subject becomes the most important norm, while, pedagogical skills of arousing interest are given less attention (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Socialized into this culture of learning, Chinese students are required to be disciplined and attentive, taking notes, and memorizing (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

Besides *jiaoshu*, another important responsibility that Chinese teachers have to undertake is *yuren*. Teachers are responsible for guiding students' behaviors and set themselves as an example. Compared with Western teachers, whose perception of professional responsibility focuses more on instruction and classroom management, Chinese teachers assume more responsibilities for student behaviors both inside and outside of school environments (Ho, 2001). The role of Chinese teachers, as defined by Confucian culture, is an authoritative position in teacher-student relationships. Confucianism emphasizes social order through the maintenance of hierarchy in human relationships and conformity to prescribed

social norms and rules of conducts (Lu, 2002; Peng, 2007). In China's education contexts, teachers are regarded as an authoritative parent and students must respect and obey them. This relationship inevitably and traditionally leads Chinese people to the assumption that a good teacher must be knowledgeable and a good student must be diligent and persevering (Shi, 2006). Most of the literature argues that the roles of teacher and students overlook the need to take into account students' own opinions, reflective thinking, critical and creative abilities (Ho, 2001; Lu, 2002). The result, as Ho (2001) argues, is that education becomes the means to ensure the students' conduct meets the external moral criteria, while their internal needs, feelings and aspirations are ignored. This relationship is also an important reason why Chinese English language students regard memorizing and reciting English vocabulary as the main learning strategies.

Confucianism calls for social harmony, which shapes Chinese interpersonal communication norms (Peng, 2007). For Chinese people, it is their responsibility to fulfill their social roles and maintain harmonious social relations. Hence, China is typically characterized as "being collectivist in nature" and "placing more emphasis on the group rather than the individual good" (Watkins & Biggs, 2001, p.8). In China, people pay much attention to their public image and great significance is attached to protecting one's *lian*, 'face' (Peng, 2007). This cultural orientation can be seen in China's English language classrooms. For example, in order to avoid mistakes or loss of face, teachers may refuse to try new teaching pedagogies. Peng (2007) also argues that Chinese students' inactive participation

17

in oral communication in language classrooms is linked to their cultural heritage. He claims that face-protection, for some Chinese students, is the main reason inhibiting them from speaking up. From the above discussion, it is clear that the doctrines of Confucian culture conflict with western language acquisition theory which advocates effective language acquisition is born in social interaction and authentic communication instead of mechanical language drilling (Kelen, 2002). Turner and Acker (2002) point out that it is the fundamentally inward-looking nature of scholasticism in the Confucian education system that has confounded China's ability to participate in international economic and industrial development. Therefore, in my experience, it is very important for China's English language teachers and educators to learn from western English language teaching and learning culture to overcome barriers from Chinese traditional culture since some of them negatively influence Chinese English language teachers' teaching beliefs, their teaching practices, and students' development of communication competence. It is not the intent of this research to state that Chinese English language teaching is inherently deficient, rather that because of changing circumstances and expectations, the beliefs and practices of Chinese teachers are in need of development.

Nowadays, China is becoming an economic super-power on the international stage. English language education plays a significant role in connecting China with the outside world. Meanwhile, it is facing challenges both internationally, and domestically. From the international perspective, with the ongoing economic

and cultural globalism, English language education in China is under pressure from the "evolution of a new transnational culture…driven by the power of 'the West'" (Turner & Acker, 2002, p.11). It means that China's education culture is facing challenges from western cultures. From the domestic perspective, China's English language education reform has lasted for decades. However, the expected results have never been achieved and the changes in China's English language teaching and students' learning are superficial (Geng, 2007; Ji, 1997; Liao, 1996; Yang, 2000). The failures and lessons from previous English language teaching reforms, the new curriculum and new goals with the orientation towards modernization, the outside world, and the future force English language teachers and educators to explore solutions to the dilemmas in English language teaching. These challenges are forcing a rethinking and re-examining of some of the Chinese traditionally taken-for-granted teaching assumptions and beliefs.

History indicates that the prevailing values of traditional Chinese culture have prevented self-reform in English teaching and learning as Chinese culture exerted a great influence on the deep-rooted teaching beliefs of Chinese English language teachers. Therefore, developing the culture of learning and a change in teacher beliefs is necessary before a real change in China's English teaching and learning advancement occurs.

Although cultural change is difficult, it is still possible. Culture is not in a static but a dynamic state. Confucianism itself experienced five stages during its

development process (Shi, 2006). At each stage, its development was connected with other philosophies influenced by social and economic factors. Lu (2002) claims that traditional culture can reinvent itself and can adapt its values to new social and economic goals. Therefore, in terms of changing or developing the culture of learning and a change in teaching beliefs, my view is that Chinese English language teachers should develop critical awareness of the traditional culture. In current English language teaching and learning reform, Chinese English language teachers should have the courage to abandon those out-of-date and rigid doctrines, as well as enhance the advantages of traditional culture. On this basis, they should also become open-minded and learn from advanced teaching theories from the outside world. They should combine the new with the old as well as adjust their teaching beliefs and practices so as to meet the requirement of the economic development in China.

In summary, China's English language teaching needs are changing to meet the country's social and economic development. It is proposed here that real change and advancement in English language education will occur only when Chinese English language teacher beliefs and educational contexts are considered in China's education reforms (Xia, 2002; Zhou, 2002).

1.3 The research aims

This study has arisen from my learning experience in New Zealand as a student and my learning and teaching experiences in China as a student and teacher. It is

designed to explore both Chinese and New Zealand English language teachers'
beliefs and teaching practices, and New Zealand English language teachers'
beliefs and practices are employed as a stimulus to help Chinese English language
teachers develop their teaching beliefs and practices for student learning outcomes
of language competence. Hence, the aims of this research are to:

(1) help Chinese English language teachers reflect and critique their teaching
beliefs by comparing and contrasting them with alternative teaching beliefs of
New Zealand English language teachers;

(2) promote the professional development of Chinese English language teachers
with respect to their teaching beliefs and practices;

(3) explore how Chinese English language teachers develop their teaching beliefs
and practices by New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices with self-creation
within Chinese sociocultural contexts in order to provide some new ideas for
China's English language education development.

1.4 Overview of the study

Chapter One (this chapter) identifies the research problems and provides the
sociocultural contexts related to this study. It outlines the research objective as
well.

Chapter Two reviews the literature of sociocultural learning theory related with
English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning. It critiques the

traditional language acquisition theory that language is an individual cognitive and knowledge-internalization process. Instead, it links English language teaching and learning with its social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts so as to explore the dynamic and complex nature of EFL teaching and learning in China.

Chapter Three provides a review of teacher professional development theory, the discourse of change as well as the main factors which impinge on teachers' professional development. It is argued that teacher professional development is an effective and powerful tool in enhancing Chinese English language teachers' teaching expertise as well as meeting the new goals and standards of English language teaching reforms in China.

Chapter Four describes the methodological foundation of this study. It firstly presents the qualitative research modes as the research design. And then it argues for and explains why certain research methodology and data collection instruments were employed. Data analysis and participants in this research are discussed as well. Ethical concerns and research constraints are identified at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Five focuses on the pre-intervention data about English language teaching and learning in China. In this chapter, the problems existing in China's current English language teaching and learning as well as the significance of English language teaching and learning in New Zealand are identified. The research

questions are also identified at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Six concerns two case studies which explore the process of the applications of New Zealand counterparts' teaching beliefs and practices in Chinese educational contexts. The problems and factors which influence the process of participant teachers are also explored in this chapter.

Chapter Seven analyses the role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice in promoting Chinese English language teacher development. Factors that influence the application and teacher development in practicing new teaching are also explored.

Chapter Eight is concerned with some possible solutions to the problems identified in the application. It examines the importance of teacher development awareness, teacher collaboration and creating a collaborative culture in supporting Chinese English language teachers' improvement in their teaching and profession development. It also concludes the thesis by outlining the implications in this study. The research limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed as well.

CHAPTER TWO SOCIOCULTURAL LEARNING THEORISING

This study employs sociocultural teaching and learning theorising as the theoretical foundation to understand Chinese English language teaching and Chinese English language teachers' beliefs, as sociocultural theorizing has become a powerful interpretive tool for understanding the teaching and learning in a foreign language classroom (Donato, 2000). The purpose of sociocultural theorising is to link teaching and learning activity with its social, cultural, historical, and institutional contexts rather than regard it as an isolated activity. Sociocultural theorising is used as English language teaching in China continues to develop, building on the previous100 year history of English language teaching in China as a "borrowing from the outside". However, superficial borrowing without taking into account the history of China's English language educational reforms and Chinese culture - both ancient and modern - has not achieved success to date (Brooks, 1997; Geng, 2007; Ji, 1997). The implications of sociocultural learning theorising for EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching and learning in China will now be discussed. This chapter reviews sociocultural learning theorising concerning EFL teaching and learning. It seeks to make sense of complex EFL teaching and learning activities by theorising EFL teaching and learning as a social practice (2.1), a cultural practice (2.2), a relational practice (2.3), as well as an individual identity construction process (2.4).

2.1 EFL teaching and learning is a social practice

It is argued in the previous chapter that China's English language teaching is still influenced by traditional language acquisition theory. According to traditional language acquisition theory, foreign or second language learning is regarded as an individual cognitive and knowledge-internalization process, with little importance given to the social in EFL teaching and learning. However, sociocultural learning theorising views the cognitive and the social as two inseparable domains and posits a dialectic relationship between them (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2001). It is commonly agreed by most of the literature about sociocultural theorising that learning is a social practice (Bell, 2005; Donato, 2000; Kramsch, 2000; Lantolf, 2000).

Sociocultural learning theorising claims that learning is social because during the learning process, an individual interacts with other(s) and socially constructs and reconstructs knowledge (Bell, 2005; Donato, 2000; Lantolf, 2000). Bell (2005) points out that "socially constructed knowledge is both the context for and the outcome of human social interaction. The socially constructed knowledge is an integral part of the learning activity" (p.42). That means, individuals employ their personal knowledge and the knowledge socially constructed previously to construct understandings when interacting with others. Within the social contexts, a learner's personal knowledge and social knowledge interact and both of them may be changed during the learning process (Bell, 2005; Kramsch, 2000). Sociocultural learning theorising argues that not only are the personal and social

25

intertwined but that socially constructed knowledge is both the medium for and the outcome of social interaction (Bell, 2005).

However, in Chinese English language teaching, a transmission view of English language teaching is still evident (Liao, 1996; Yang, 2000). This view of teaching and learning dichotomizes the personal and social and ignores "the socially and historically situated nature of knowing" (Bell, 2005, p.40). That is, traditional transmission learning theory, which leads to traditional teaching methodology of transmitting and passively receiving currently accepted knowledge, views knowledge as "real", "true" and "factual" (Bell, 2005, p. 35). However, sociocultural learning theorising questions the essence of knowledge and it denies a direct discovery of "absolute" knowledge because "knowledge is not something in the world to be discovered" (Bell, 2005, p.42). Instead, sociocultural learning theorising argues that knowledge is relative, changing, and constructed socially within specific contexts. Lave and Wenger (1991) point out that there is no general knowledge and the "so-called general knowledge only has power in specific circumstances" (p.33). Their argument indicates that knowledge is socially situated and only when associated with the contexts where it is constructed, does it become available. Sociocultural learning theorising provides us with a new perspective to rethink EFL teaching and learning by connecting the personal and social dimensions of teaching and learning. It implies that EFL learning is not only a language internalization process "carried out solo by an individual" but "a form of language socialization between individuals" (Donato,

26

2000, p 33). The following sections will discuss EFL teaching and learning as a social practice in terms of EFL teaching and learning as a collaborative and participative process, a socially mediated process, a scaffolded practice within learners' ZPD, a situated activity, and a distributed activity.

2.1.1 EFL teaching and learning is a collaborative and participative process

Sociocultural learning theorising views teaching and learning as a social activity and EFL teaching and learning is collaborative and cannot be reduced to implicit and explicit instruction (Donato, 2000; Ohta, 2000). Ohta (2000) argued that language acquisition is achieved through a collaborative process where "learners appropriate the language of the interaction as their own, for their own purposes, building grammatical, expressive, and cultural competence through this process" (p.51). In other words, in the EFL learning process, the collaborative process functions as the social context for interaction as well as the social precondition for knowledge construction.

Vygotsky (1987) employs the terminologies of "intermental" and "intramental" to describe the importance of collaborative process in children's mental development. That is, cognitive processes can occur between individuals on the intermental plane, or within an individual on the intramental plane. According to him, the development process is in the transition from intermental plane to intramental plane, first, the social (between people), then the psychological (within the individual). He argues that "every higher mental function necessarily passes

through an external stage of development because function is primarily social"
and this is also "the process of forming an individual" since the individual
"manifests himself to others" (p.105). His idea indicates that the social and
individual dimensions of human development (learning) are like the two sides of a
coin, they cannot be separated from each other and a collaborative learning format
bridges the gap between the personal and the social.

Vygotsky's view is captured by Wertsch (1995) who claims that "mental
functioning and sociocultural setting should be understood as dialectically
interacting moments, or aspects of a more inclusive unit of analysis---human
action" (p.60). According to Wertsch, although there are individual and social
moments in any action, an action cannot be studied from either individual or
social moments in isolation. Instead, "action provides a context within which the
individual and society (as well as mental functioning and sociocultural context)
are understood as an interrelated moment" (p.60). Sociocultural theorising in EFL
education argues that during the EFL teaching and learning process, learners
engage in external communication and share meanings with others by using the
target language. In the internal dimension of communication, learners employ the
target language to mediate social interaction and cognition (Donato, 2000; Ohta,
2000). Sociocultural theorising provides a new framework for the creation of
learning environments. According to Haenen, Schrijnemakers & Stufkens, 2003),
the learning environment "can be conceived of as a shared problem space, inviting
the students to participate in a process of negotiation and co-construction of

knowledge" (p.246).

The participation metaphor has a significant role in EFL teaching and learning. Bell (2005) uses the participation metaphor to describe the social dimension of teaching and learning. She argues that learning takes place in a co-participation or co-constructivist framework, not in an individual mind. According to her, learning is the increased access of learners to participating roles in expert performances, and learning should be seen as an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice or the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice.

Lave and Wenger (1991) claim that the traditional teaching which focuses on the individual mind and the internalization of knowledge ignores "the nature of learner, of the world" and leaves their relations "unexplored" (p.47). In contrast with learning as internalization, they propose another analytical viewpoint to understand learning, that is, learning as 'legitimate peripheral participation". According to them, learning is located in the social world and legitimate peripheral participation provides the context for learning to occur.

Arguing for the participation metaphor, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) pointed out that the metaphor stresses contextualization and engagement with others. They further argue that when applying the participation metaphor into EFL teaching and learning, the focus should shift from language structure to language use in context. Their opinions confirm that language learning can be viewed as a participation

process. They claim that traditional learning theory emphasizes individual mind and internalization of knowledge, while the participation metaphor stresses contextualization and engagement with others. Only by combining these two issues together, can EFL teaching and learning achieve better results. Therefore, the view of learning as participation can be regarded as the replacement for the traditional teaching view.

The view of collaborative and participative learning is also consistent with what Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) suggest when they say that the purpose of foreign language learning is not to acquire a set of grammatical, lexical and phonological forms of another language, but a struggle for participation. However, in China, according to Liao (1996) and Yang (2000), the grammar-translation method still prevails and students are still positioned as passive learners with most of their time spent on rote memorization and mechanical exercises in most schools. Stressing grammatical usage rather than appropriating the use of language, suggests a view of English language learning as occurring within individuals' minds and the social dimension of learning is ignored. Thus, Liao (1996) describes the results of teaching and learning using the traditional method as being poor. In brief, in this thesis, the researcher suggests that viewing English language learning as a social, collaborative and participative practice will support the development of China's English language teaching and learning.

2.1.2 EFL teaching and learning is a socially mediated process

Sociocultural theorising claims that the human mind is mediated (Lantolf, 2000). Lantolf (2006) points out that human mental function develops through internalization. According to him, internalization is "the process through which members of communities of practice appropriate the symbolic artifacts used in communicative activity and convert them into psychological artifacts that mediate their mental activity" (p.90). Lantolf (2000) argues that in the process of internalization, thinking and cultural mediational artifacts converge. He calls the process "a reconstruction on the inner mental ... plane of socially mediated external forms of goal-directed activity" (p.13). Therefore, during the process of internalization, humans rely on mediated tools, activities, or relationship with others. Similarly, Donato (2000) points out that the intermental and intramental planes are interwoven through socially-mediated activities and the eventual 'individual(s)-acting-with-mediational-means' (p.45). He claims, in both circumstances, individuals move through stages in which they are controlled first by the objects in their environment, then by others in this environment, and finally they gain control over their own social and cognitive activities. This also indicates that individual activity is firstly mediated by others, and once an individual internalizes the external mediation, he/she is able to organize or regulate his/her own mental and physical activity (Lantolf, 2000).

Applying the views of mediation in sociocultural theory to education, the literature claims that teaching and learning is a socially mediated action (Bell,

2005, Lantolf, 2000, Ohta, 2000). Bell (2005) argues that "a mediated action is a human action that employs mediational means, such as technical tools - for example a computer and psychological tools - for example signs, such as languages" (p.48). It is commonly agreed that mediation is active and developmental. Vygotsky (1987) explored the process that young children went through when they learned about colors with the help of a set of colored cards. He found that the older the children were, the less difficulty they had to learn colors with the help of colored cards. Lantolf (2000) points out that mediation develops "from a stage in which any type of assistance was useless to a stage in which external forms of mediation would improve task performance, to a final stage in which external mediation had been internalized" (p.3-4). Wertsch et al. (1995) argue that cultural tools or artifacts play an essential role in mediation. However, these tools or artifacts are powerless to determine or cause any action and can only have some impact when humans use them. Wertsch et al. (1995) suggest that the study of mediation cannot focus solely on the tools involved. Instead, "mediation is best thought of as a process involving the potential of cultural tools to shape action, on the one hand, and the unique use of these tools, on the other" (p.22). Their views echo what Bell (2005) suggests, that is, the focus of mediation is "on human action in context" (p.48). From another point of view, the mediated learning action indicates the close relationship between "social communicative processes and individual psychological processes" (Bell, 2005, p.49).

One of the issues that draw more and more attention from researchers in EFL

education is whether language learners can deploy the foreign language they are learning to mediate their own psychological activity, such as thinking. Vygotsky (1987) reminds us that the core of self-control and regulation is the meaning of a sign rather than its external form. Lantolf (2006) supports Vygotsky's ideas by arguing that externalizing private language and deploying the formal features of any foreign language cannot guarantee learners will successfully solve cognitive problems in the target language. Using the Spanish language learners' experience, Lantolf suggests that during language teaching and learning, if learners focus too much cognitive effort on producing self-directed speech in the target language, then, language loses its function in communication. Lantolf's view exposes some of the deficiencies of traditional and cognition-focused language teaching and learning theory. The traditional language teaching and learning theory has a focus on externalizing the formal properties of language rather than appropriating the meaning and usage of language. One of the likely reasons is that traditional teaching ignores the role of mediation, especially the role of the target language in mediating language learning.

Another issue in EFL teaching and learning research is that classroom discourse, especially instructional conversation, functions as a meditational tool in language development (Lantolf, 2000). This view comes from Vygotsky's idea that conversation is the origin of learning and human development. Instructional conversation provides language learners with semiotic mediation in the language classroom. Donato (2000) contends that instructional conversations are "relevant

to language classroom because they socialize students into language learning in pragmatically rich contexts that facilitate language growth and development and provide opportunities for experiencing how language is used outside of classroom" (p.34).

The mediation aspects of sociocultural theorising provide some implication for English language teaching and learning in China. According to Geng (2007), although great efforts have been made to improve English language teaching and learning in China, the results of student learning have not been "widely accepted by the public up to now" (p.42). The need for comprehension and production of the target language during the process of interactive communications continues to be the main problem confronting Chinese learners (Lin, 2002). The literature about English language teaching and learning in China acknowledges the main reason leading to the above problem is China's traditional English language teaching and learning methods as described earlier (Brooks, 1997; Geng, 2007; Ji, 1997).

Geng (2007) explains that out-dated methods and traditions are prevalent in China's English language teaching and learning. Translation, grammar and structure, the external forms and properties of English language, are still the focus of teaching and learning. Therefore, in China's English language classes, learners do not have the benefit of the practices of employing the target language to mediate their psychological activity, and what they learn is just the external

features of sign, oral skills, such as pronunciation, not the meaning and usage of the sign which is core competence. Furthermore, in China's English language classes, instructional conversations do not have the function of mediating students' language development but only that of transferring knowledge from the teacher to students.

According to Lantolf (2000), in a language class, the instructional conversation is more than "linguistic input be[ing] made comprehensible", it is essentially "social practices of assistance that shape, construct, and influence learning within interactional and instructional contexts" (p.46). These two weaknesses in China's English language teaching (that is, the focus on grammar and lack of instructional conversation) leave language learners to become puppets of the sign. They may also be the main reason that so many English language learners in China are "mute" English speakers. Therefore, it is an important task for English language teachers in China to explore how to use the target language as mediation to improve students' communicative competence.

2.1.3 EFL teaching and learning is scaffolded practices within learners' ZPD

The 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) is a well-known concept developed by Vygotsky (1978) focusing on the relation between instruction and development. The associated concept of scaffolding, in Vygotskian perspective, refers to "the mediated actions of the teacher to support a student to function inside her or his zone of proximal development, which is when a student can

achieve or perform a learnt task, only with help by the teacher" (Bell, 2010, p.11). According to Vygotsky, scaffolding is reduced bit by bit as the learner becomes more and more capable and develops from a lower level to a higher one.

The significance of scaffolding and the ZPD in influencing teaching and learning, shaping and reshaping perception about teaching and learning has been explored in the literature, with Vygotsky (1978) defining ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). Vygotsky emphasizes that mental development and new skills occur in the process of instruction and the interactions with others, especially more capable others. Hence, what an individual cannot do independently today might be completed under the guidance of others. What an individual does today with the help of others might be achieved by himself or herself independently tomorrow.

The ZPD indicates the crucial role of instruction and mediation in learning. Or in Chaiklin's (2003) words ZPD theorising is about the relationship between specific subject matter instruction and its consequences for psychological development. Sociocultural theorising acknowledges that higher mental functioning and human action in general are mediated by tools and signs (Wertsch, 1991), so that minds can better develop in a context of social guidance,

or the 'zone of proximal development', within which social interactions are co-ordinated and individual understanding are constructed by cultural means. Therefore, Edwards (1997) called it a form of apprenticeship in cultural competence. Yu (2004) argues that the ZPD is created by social interaction, but the types of the interaction and the benefits from these interactions are determined by learner's current level of development.

Researchers in this field argue that it is important to note that the ZPD is not a physical place situated in some specific location and time. Lantolf (2000) points out that it is rather a metaphor used to observe and understand how mediational means are appropriated and internalized by students. Chaiklin (2003) defines ZPD as an important place or moment in the process of individual psychological development. However, no matter how scholars describe the term, it is commonly agreed that ZPD is more appropriately conceived of as the collaborative construction of opportunities for individuals to develop their mental abilities, with guidance.

Learning within the ZPD is a gradual process (Brown & Ferrara, 1985). Ohta (2000) writes that the help which leads development does not occur in "a haphazard or random way", but in "an orderly and developmentally sensitive manner" (p.63). Miller (2003), in a literature review about ZPDs in mediating students' meaning making, points out that students' emphasize that it is "over time" that "the dialogic strategies moved inward to become part of students'

repetoires for meaning-making" (p.312).

Most literature or research has assumed that the ZPD necessarily involves interaction between an expert and a novice in which the expert eventually transmits ability to the novice through social interaction (Brown & Ferrara, 1985; Lantolf, 2000). Wertsch (1991) describes three interchanges between a two-and-a-half-year-old child and her mother during a puzzle-copying task. In the first two episodes, the mother responded to the child's questions by using external dialogue and directing the child's attention to the model puzzle. By the third episode the child was consulting the model independently of her mother's explicit directives. The question and answer structure firstly characterized the social dialogue between mother and child on the intermental plane, then, it became, in the third episode, a feature of the child's intramental functioning.

However, Chaiklin (2003) explores the assumption that the ZPD involves interaction between experts and novices in more detail. According to him, although ZPD presupposes an interaction between a more competent person and a less competent person, it is not the competence or knowledge of a person that is important, rather, it is "to understand the meaning of that assistance in relation to" the learners' learning and development. In other words, what is important are the collaborations and help offered to learners. Miller (2003) emphasizes the importance of collaboration between teacher and students, viewing ZPD as an assistive social space, through which "students learn with the teacher and other

students both how to making meaning from literary texts and how to reflect on possible meanings" (p.290). He also mentions that in-classroom collaboration, "functions which have not yet matured" (p.292) becomes the focus of teaching. In order to create such a learning context, teachers may need to rethink the roles of themselves and students and their views about knowing and understanding. Miller regards teaching in ZPD as a challenge to traditional views of teaching. He further discusses that a teacher who is successful in scaffolding students' learning in ZPD，continuously shows their respect for "students' emerging new abilities", provides assistance carefully whenever needed, and allows room for students "to take responsibilities for posing and pursuing questions" (p.296). In other words, "teaching in the ZPD requires personal-emotional relations with students, not simply cognitive attention" (p.312). From this perspective, ZPD goes beyond the scaffolding between experts and novices and it is a construction of learning contexts.

Some researchers have explored the relationship between expert and novice in the ZPD. Lantolf (2000) argues that in the interactions which occur in ZPD, the novice is not a passive accepter but an active learner. The novice does not copy but imitates the expert. Imitation, according to Lantolf, is the key for novice to "transform" and "appropriate" what an expert provides. This imitation works alongside collaboration in the ZPD. Through imitating and internalizing, the novice gains the ability to create. The interaction and exchange between novice and expert, according to Lantolf, is not only guidance but also communication.

Ellis (1999) regards the interaction between the expert and the novice not just as a device that facilitates learners' movement along the interlanguage continuum, but as a social event which helps learners participate in their own development, including shaping the path it follows. Like Lantolf (2000), Ellis also emphasized the positive role of the novice in their own development. Ellis even argues that interaction does not only occur between the expert and the novice but also between or among novices. According to him, the assistance offered by teacher, once internalized by students can be used as a tool to mediate with each other.

The literature also indicates that ZPD is dynamic rather than fixed. Research about language teaching and learning within students' ZPD stresses that in a language class, with their development in the target language, students become more and more capable of scaffolding each other (Donato, 2000; Lantolf, 2000). Thus, interactions which previously occurred between teacher and students began to occur among students (see Donato, 2000). In other words, once the mediations from teacher are internalized by students, their ZPD develops. From this perspective, ZPD is "the place where learning and development come together" (Yu, 2004, P.7) and it is both process and product at the same time (Steven, 2000). Therefore, teaching and learning within the ZPD require language teachers to not only construct the zone of proximal development but also to regulate and reconstruct the ZPD by using their own ways to mediate students' meaning-making (Miller, 2003). Thus, effective teaching should go ahead of learners' development. Within sociocultural theorising, ZPD bridges the gap between

intermental and intramental. According to Donato (2000), ZPD provides both language teachers and students the opportunities to mediate and scaffold each other so as to develop their ZPD respectively. Therefore, their utterances are not only linguistic input but also assistance to scaffold each other. However, Ohta (2000) emphasizes that when bridging the gap between social and personal, it is noticeable that development cannot occur if too much assistance is provided or if a task is too easy. Similarly, Ellis (1999) also argues that scaffolded assistance should be provided only where it is needed.

The significance of the ZPD and scaffolding highlights the uniqueness of sociocultural theorising in contrast to the traditional EFL conceptualizations which overlook the dynamic, interactive and reciprocal nature of language teaching and learning. By viewing language teaching and learning as dynamic and interactive, sociocultural theorising provides a new lens to rethink instruction. It critiques the traditional perspectives of instruction as transferring knowledge to learners. Instead, in a sociocultural framework, instruction becomes mediation and facilitation as well as the construction of learning environment where learning is fostered and language develops.

2.1.4 EFL teaching and learning is a situated activity

Sociocultural learning theorising also regards learning as a situated activity. According to Bell (2005), "learning is seen as a process that takes place in a co-participation or co-constructivist framework, not in an individual mind" (p.45).

Her views about learning emphasize the social space between individuals, a space in which learning occurs. Lave and Wenger (1991), when commenting on some misinterpretations of situated learning, point out that general knowledge is always associated with abstract representations, with decontextualization. However, abstract representations are meaningless unless they are located in specific situations. Therefore, they surmise that "there is no activity that is not situated" (p.33). They suggest a comprehensive view of learning which involves the whole person rather than a person merely "receiving" and absorbing some "factual" knowledge. This view of learning involves "the activity in and with the world", and during which, 'agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other" (p.33). In their opinion, the notion of situated learning functions as a bridge which links individual cognition and social practices. Thus, learning is not situated in social practices but is an integral part of social practice in the world.

Bell and Cowie (2001b) argue that learning is a contextualized and situated activity and they mention that to understand learning, we should think about both the meaning made by individual students and the context in which learning occurs. Their views remind EFL educators of the importance of contextual factors in English language teaching and learning. Figueiredo and Afonso (2006) adopt a simplified model to relate the learner with content and context in a learning event. According to them,

    ·A learning event is a situation where an individual learns.

    · Content is information that has been structured and encoded as text,

multimedia materials, the spoken word of the teacher, or any other means.

·Context is the set of circumstances that are relevant for the learner to build

her knowledge.

(p.5)

They argue that the action of a teacher can "be seen partly as content and partly as

context" (p.5). In a sociocultural theorising, the learning and the context within

which the learning occurs cannot be separated from each other because the

learning is seen as not just embedded in a context, including a social context, the

context is part of the learning (Bell, 2005). The term of "learning community"

(Brophy, 2004; Burden, 2006; Martin, 2007), from the perspective of sociocultural

theorising, indicates that the learning context can be seen as a sociocultural

network which offers opportunities for members to create meaning during social

interactions. The challenge is for EFL teachers to build a classroom learning

community and promote more active student participation, especially for those

teachers who still employ traditional teaching methods in their practices.

Traditional language teaching and learning theorising views learning as being

located within the individual and overlooks the sociocultural learning situation

and context for teaching and learning. In other words, the challenge is for

traditional EFL teachers to take into account the contexts of learning in their

teaching. Contextual factors in second language acquisition include learners'

knowledge about the new language, their learning needs, ways of learning,

backgrounds, culture and ethnicity, motivation, classroom learning activity, and

wider sociocultural discourses (Aida, 2000). The interaction between these factors

adds to the complexity of EFL teaching and learning.

The challenge for traditional EFL teachers also includes developing classroom management practices for building a learning community, which are "teacher actions to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation" (Burden, 2006, p.4). Hence, the challenge for EFL teachers in theorising teaching as a situated practice is to view their students as whole people, rather than as passive receivers of knowledge, who bring their sociocultural contexts with them into the classroom.

2.1.5 EFL teaching and learning is a distributed activity

The situated and contextualized view of learning leads to the view that learning is a distributed cognition and is distributed across people and their context, rather than being limited within individual heads (Bell, 2005). It is not appropriate to see cognition as an activity embedded within individual heads as people "appear to think in conjunction or partnership with others and with the help of cultural tools and artifacts" (Bell, 2005, p.46). Bell proposes that the solo and distributed views of cognition are in a dynamic relationship. Her views critique the dichotomy of individual and social in traditional language teaching and learning theorizing, and support the idea that learning and knowledge are not only socially constructed through the collaborative efforts of learners, but are also socially mediated by artifacts. She claims that in the educational setting, the social environments are not only the contexts of learning, but are actually the meditational tools used by

learners to "contribute to distributed cognition" (p.47).

Viewing learning as a distributed practice suggests that meaningful EFL teaching and learning should go beyond considering only the confines of individual brains, and include joint activity within communities of practice, and mediation with artifacts (Thorne, 2000), and a consideration of the minds, not just the head. Views of distributed learning and cognition indicate that the human mind goes beyond a person and is mediated socially by tools and environments. According to Mantero (2002), these tools allow individual minds to create and recreate their surroundings with the target language. He calls for language teachers to go beyond the human organism and seek origins of conscious activity in the external conditions.

The view of learning as a social practice, including collaboration, mediation, situated and distributed practices, supports that idea that in EFL teaching and learning, the target language, English, is not a set of arbitrary linguistic signs as it is viewed in traditional language teaching and learning theory. Instead, English language teaching and learning is a social activity and cannot be separated from its social contexts in which it is used. Sociocultural theorising also indicates that to develop communicative competence, it is necessary for EFL teaching and learning in China to go beyond the confines of traditional transmission views of learning and link personal cognition with social contexts.

2.2 EFL teaching and learning is a cultural practice

Sociocultural learning theorising not only views teaching and learning as a social practice but it also emphasizes that these practices are mediated by cultural tools, especially language and other symbolic systems of representation, worldviews, and associated ways of thinking (Bell, 2005; Lantolf, 2000, 2006; Steele, 2001; Torres-Velasquez, 2000; Wertsch, 1998; Wertsch et al., 1995). Culture plays an important role in the shaping and formation of mind. According to Edwards (1997), culture is in some sense constitutive of mind and Cole (1995) mentions that culture can "come to color the way we see the 'actual' world" (p.195). Hence, learning is both individual and cultural, and one cannot be isolated from the other. If we view teaching as a cultural practice, we are saying that teachers need to take into account their own and students' culture when they teach. Teaching as a cultural practice can be studied by exploring teaching and learning as enculturation.

The term 'enculturation ' can be used to describe EFL teaching and learning as a cultural practice. Culture, as Steffy (2002) defines, is

> socially learned and shared symbols integrated into patterns of thinking, believing, acting and their material results – permits each human group to pass on to the next generation of its children, along with its biological heritage, the culture-specific knowledge, including acquired identity, essential beliefs, shared values, basic skills and practical know-how, that have become that group's unique and successful bio-cultural adaption.

The process of a culture acquisition may be regarded as enculturation (Steffy, 2002). According to Steffy (2002), the process is dynamic and with modification, because people are continuously learning through daily experiences. Enculturation enables them to not only utilize but adapt their previously enculturated knowledge. However, human beings tend to see the world through the lenses of their own culture and interpret the reality based on their enculturated, culture-specific knowledge (Steffy, 2002).

Language plays an important role in representing and constructing culture. Baker and Galasinski (2001) describe language as the "central means and medium by which we understand the world and construct culture" (p.1). They claim that to understand culture means to "explore how meaning is produced symbolically through the signifying practices of language within material and institutional contexts" (p.4). Baker and Galasinski's comments indicate that language is the carrier of specific culture and whenever we speak a language, we are particularly "speaking" the specific culture embedded within the language. From this point of view, foreign language teaching and learning is an inter-cultural process. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) regard foreign language learning as a "struggle of concrete socially constituted and always situated beings to participate in the symbolically mediated lifeworld of another culture" (p.155). In other words, EFL language teaching and learning is a process of enculturation. Once a foreign language is introduced to students, they are linked with another culture, which might be

47

greatly different from their own culture. Thus, two important tasks that EFL educators have to fulfil are how to help learners to clarify their own culture and how to help learners to understand an unfamiliar culture. Nayar (1986) argues that successful foreign language teaching and learning should "develop an intercultural perspective", understand the culture-specific phenomena, as well as "accept them as equal though different" (p.25). However, Chinese students learning English language will still be drawing upon Chinese traditional culture which plays a crucial role in shaping Chinese people's interpretation about the world (Kelen, 2002).

According to Brown et al. (1998), enculturation can be understood as the process in which learners "use the tools of the domain in the way a practitioner uses them either formally or informally" (p.13). However, to achieve that, learners need to "see the activity from the practitioner's cultural standpoint" rather than explicit teaching (p.13). Based on this argument, EFL language teaching and learning should expose learners to practising the cultural tools in their authentic life world especially in problem-solving rather than providing abstract concepts or examples. Kelen (2002) contends that foreign language learning involves "getting *between* cultures" (p.230). He suggests that "learning to think in a language actually means thinking how to learn a particular way" (p.230). He does not oppose Chinese learners' interests in grammatical accuracy, which, he thinks is helpful to assist them to express their willingness. Instead, he emphasizes that "a stubborn

resistance to the manner of thinking incumbent in the words of a language necessarily slows the student's progress" (p.230).

However, enculturation does not mean that Chinese learners and English language teachers have to submit themselves to English during the language teaching and learning process. Since English became an international language, especially with the rapid expansion of English language teaching, it serves a wide range of communities with different institutional purposes (Widdowson, 1994) and that English is no longer the sole preserve of only the English-speaking West (Kirkpatrick & Chang, 2002; Phan, 2009). Instead, the literature suggests that non-native speakers "develop their own conventions of thought and procedure, customs and codes of practice" and "they in effect create their own cultures, their own standards" for English language teaching and learning (Widdowson, 1994, p. 382). Therefore, Chinese learners and English language teachers should establish a new view which consists of resistance, appropriation, negotiation, construction and reconstruction (Phan, 2009). According to Phan (2009), resistance, appropriation and negotiation does not mean a rejection of English language and its culture, but actively supporting learners' benefits and equality in using the language. In Phan (2004), two Vietnamese teachers' accounts of their own English language teaching was explored. Phan argued that "the practices of teachers vary from one culture to another. What one culture values should not result in devaluing other cultural practices…" (p.57). Hence, resistance, appropriation and

negotiation in enculturation mean active ownership of English language teaching and learning.

Construction and reconstruction in the process of enculturation indicate that enculturation is an active construction and reconstruction of new identity (Phan, 2009). Enculturation allows language learners to be autonomous by making the language their own and reclaiming their own identities (Phan, 2007, 2009; Widdowson, 1994).

During intercultural language teaching, non-native English language teacher identity is changing in dynamic ways (Liddicoat, Papademeter, Scarino, Kohler & Wood, 2003; Phan, 2009). In EFL teaching and learning, non-native English language teachers reconstruct their identity of "self" in relation to the foreign language and its culture (Liddicoat et al., 2003), or as Phan (2009) discussed, non-native English language teachers and learners reconstruct their identity "around their negotiations of available options and awareness of possibilities, and their proactive creation of new self-constructions that were relevant and meaningful to their sense of self" (p.212). The literature also suggests that during the process of construction and reconstruction of new identity, Chinese core culture will not be changed; instead, it provides Chinese English language teachers with a sense of belonging (Liddicoat et al., 2003; Xu, Wang and Case, 2010). Chinese English language teachers are involved in a process of transformation of the self by presenting their Chinese identity (Xu et al., 2010). This also indicates that

enculturation is not a process of colonization; instead, teachers can reclaim and strengthen their identities of Chinese in relation to English (Phan, 2009; Xu et al., 2010).

2.3 EFL teaching and learning is a relational practice

Sociocultural theorising offers us a perspective about the fundamental relationship between teacher and student. The fundamental point of view about the teacher-student relationship within sociocultural theorising is that the teacher is the mediator assisting the performance of learners during social interactions rather than being the source of knowledge, and students are culturally and socially situated learners rather than passive knowledge receivers (Kozulin et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2004). As discussed previously, Vygotsky (1978) viewed individual psychological function as appearing twice in the development of higher order thinking. It first appears in the form of actual interaction between people, then as an inner internalized form of function (Kozulin, 2003). In Vygotsky's notion of 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (as discussed previously), learning occurs when an individual engages in culturally-meaningful interactions with a more competent other (Monzo & Rueda, 2001). Therefore, teacher-student interactions take place within the context of the teacher-student relationship, and the relationship develops through their interactions. Hence, in the classroom, a mutually respectful and cooperative teacher-student relationship that promotes students' participation in social interactions in class, should be encouraged (Connolly & Smith, 2002; Lyn & Zembylas, 2006; Monzo & Rueda, 2001).

Whilst a traditional perspective views students as "blank slates" (Freire & Macedo, 1987), Lyn and Zembylas (2006), Monzo and Rueda (2001) argue that students are "whole persons" with emotions, and experiences situated in specific sociocultural settings.

The relationship between a teacher and student is also a caring one. Lyn and Zembylas (2006) argue that the caring teacher-student relations can help students engage in interactions, take risks as they learn, and be kind and respectful to others. A caring teacher-student relationship also helps teachers to establish close relationships with their students, which, further promotes their social interactions and collaborations. Harriet (1985) mentions that the student is the focus of the caring relationship, through which, the teacher approaches each student as another world and seeks to connect with it. However, he further points out that how the connection is made determines the growth of students and their involvement in learning. Monzo and Rueda (2001) advocate that a caring teacher-student relationship recognizes students as the one with emotional, social, and academic needs. In other words, the teacher should identify how students feel, what they expect, and what they require in learning. It also indicates that the teacher must play an active role in building the relationship with students by considering students' learning as the centre of his or her teaching, rather than asking students to passively adapt their learning to his or her teaching. However, it also needs to be pointed out that what is caring may change from culture to culture; for example, an overly strict teacher in China may communicate care, but not in New Zealand.

Reflecting on the power relationship between teacher and student is necessary if the teacher-student relationship is to be respectful and co-operative. Freire (1993) suggested that the teacher-student relationship can be described as 'dialogic'. According to him, a dialogic relationship encourages both teacher and student to learn and co-operate together through dialogue. The sharing of power in a teacher-student relationship is implied in sociocultural theorising of teaching and learning. This is different from the hierarchical relationship in traditional Chinese teaching practices. According to Liu (2006), a distinct characteristic of traditional Chinese teaching and learning, including EFL teaching and learning, is the emphasis on rote learning. He argues that although there are more and more criticisms of 'force-fed' teaching methods, the influence of such teaching and learning practices "extends all the way" from primary school until university education (p.7). Liu attributes this approach to teaching to the influence of Confucian philosophy on education and learning, central to which is a hierarchically oriented teacher-student relationship. This traditional and taken-for-granted Chinese teacher-student relationship, without doubt, prevents students from active participation in expressing their own voices in class since they are required to show respect for wisdom and knowledge, and teachers are traditionally viewed as the source of wisdom and knowledge. The deep-rooted assumptions about the teacher's authority and student's passivity lead to a dichotomy between teacher and student (Liu, 2006). This dichotomy between teacher and student may result in learning being viewed as a one-way information-delivery from teacher to student rather than a socially constructed process. Traditional EFL teaching in China is

53

characterized as teacher-centred. Hence, the adoption of a new teacher-student relationship which although needs to maintain Chinese values could be a powerful approach to achieving more effective EFL teaching and learning in China.

2.4 EFL teaching and learning is a reconstruction of identity

In a traditional foreign language teaching and learning approach, language is regarded as a "universal, abstract system", while, language users are typically treated as "stable, internally homogeneous, fixed entities in whose heads these systems reside" (Hall, 2002, p.31). That is, language has a separate existence in learners' minds, and learners have no part in shaping themselves. However, within the framework of sociocultural theorising, language or a sign system is viewed as being created by human beings purposefully (Kramsch, 2000). It functions as a stimulus to regulate human behaviors. In other words, language possesses the power of regulation. Through the mediation of material signs, external social interactions can be internally reconstructed as psychological processes. Therefore, learning a new language is not "an innocent relabeling of the familiar furniture of the universe" (Kramsch, 2000), rather, it is a process of reconfiguring one's whole classification system (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

Sociocultural learning theorising recognises EFL teaching and learning as a process of identity reconstruction. Lave and Wenger (1991), when discussing the concept of learning as legitimate peripheral participation, argue that "learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is itself an evolving form of

membership" (p.53). They emphasize that learning involves the construction of identity. Based on this view, foreign language learning is not merely a linguistic cross-over, but a renegotiation of one's identities. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) contend that the reconstruction of one's identities in foreign language learning involves communication with members of another discourse. And within the process, a struggle between the previously constructed identities and the newly forming identities is inevitable. Hawkins (2004) suggests that "previous identities should be respected and leveraged in the service of acquiring new ones" (p.4) since social languages are closely connected with socially-situated identities. Hence, foreign language learning is the struggle of "concrete socially constituted and always situated beings to participate in the symbolically mediated lifeworld of another culture" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p.155) rather than merely the acquisition of a new set of grammatical, lexical and phonological forms and the construction of other world-views.

Sociocultural theorising acknowledges identity as socioculturally constructed (Norton, 2006) and in the literature there are views of learning a foreign language as a process of appropriation, the appropriation of others' voices (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2001). According to De Guerrero and Villamil (2001), the appropriation of others' voices refers to cultural appropriation when someone of one culture learns about another. One of the tenets of sociocultural theory is that learners are primarily members of a specific culture with cultural identities (Alfred, 2002). Alfred considers the degree to which learners engage in learning as "a function of

this cultural identity" (p.5). He thinks this identity is culturally situated. According to his argument, in foreign language learning, learners are not limited by one culture but "float in and out of many cultures", and thus, become "the product of the multiple realities of these cultures", which co-construct learners' "beliefs, values and norms" (p.7).

Sociocultural theorising acknowledges identity as co-constructed in sociocultural interactions, and language is central to this co-construction (Baker & Galasinski, 2001; Hall, 2002; Norton, 2006; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). According to Baker and Galasinski (2001), human beings are formed from the social process using cultural materials; without language, "not only would we not be persons as we commonly understand that concept, but the very concept of personhood and identity would be unintelligible to us" (p.29). They argue that it is language and thinking that constitutes the "I", and identity is constituted through the regulatory power of discourse. Baker and Galasinski's view stresses the close relation between identity and language as well as the role of language in shaping an individual's identities.

Norton (2006) employs Bakhtin and Bourdieu's views to support her argument. According to Bakhtin (1994), language is situated and cannot be separated from speakers and meaning cannot be separated from the contexts where it is created. Bakhtin (1994) claims that language is a product of ideology as language carries or is invested with certain moral, social and political values. Language is not only

itself a part of a reality but it reflects and refracts something lying outside itself. Therefore, language is never neutral. Norton (2006) views language as a way for speakers to express their beliefs and value system and the listeners have to listen to their interlocutors' positions expressed in their utterances (Norton, 2006). According to Norton (2006), in contrast with Bakhtin, Bourdieu focuses on "the unequal relationships between interlocutors and the importance of power in structuring speech" (p.26). Bourdieu stresses the importance of an individual's values and social relationships in understanding his or her speech. According to him, the value expressed in an individual's speech is determined largely by his/her value system and his/her value system cannot be understood without considering his/her networks of social relationships.

In summarizing Bakhtin and Bourdieu's views, Norton (2006) points out that during language learning, learners have to appropriate the voices of others and even struggle to " 'bend' those voices to their own purposes" (p.26). In other words, as non-native speakers, language learners have to appropriate new surroundings and the practices in any particular community in order to construct their new identities. Or in Baker and Galasinski's (2001) words, identity is socially circumscribed.

Scholars also recognize that identity is dynamic and constantly changing (Alfred, 2002; Norton, 2006). According to sociocultural perspectives, learning is embedded within social interactions or discourse community (Alfred, 2002), thus,

learning a second or foreign language is regarded as a learning of social language within discourses (Gee, 2004; Hawkins, 2004). Firth and Wagner (1997) argue that learning a language should "account in a satisfactory way for interactional and socio-linguistic dimensions of language" (p.285). Alfred (2002) claims that each discourse possesses its own history, culture and identity. However, social identity is not fixed: "It is negotiated as one moves within and across communities" (Alfred, 2002, p.9). He comments that identity is contextually situated and within each discourse, members are constantly reflecting their identities, and acquiring new perspectives as well as reshaping their identities, which he calls "recursive identity" (p.9). This is similar to Alfred, Baker, and Galasinski (2001) who describe identity as a process of *becoming*, or "a continually shifting description of ourselves" (p.30). According to them, cultural identity is continually being produced during the process of meaning making, since meaning is never finished and identity "represents a snap shot of unfolding meaning, a strategic positioning which makes meaning possible" (p.30).

The construction and reconstruction of identity in foreign language teaching and learning may be an uncomfortable process (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Sercu, 2005). Within a sociocultural framework, language learners are viewed as people with history, intentions, agency, and affect (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). During the learning process, when learners move from one cultural practice to another, they experience the stages of loss and recovery of self. They firstly lose their linguistic identities. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) emphasize that "it is not merely a

58

phonological problem to be overcome with some practice" (p.164) but "the convention of subjects, which are embedded in their world, into objects no longer able to fully animate that world" (p.164). They comment that the reconstruction of identity is the loss of agency, or more specifically, the connection with the inner world, the world of mind. According to them, the loss of agency implies that native language inner speech stops its function and the function of the target language inner speech begins. Inner speech, as a tool of making sense of and organizing human social experience, makes language learners unable to make sense of their experience. Thus, the appropriation of others' voices is the first step toward recovery and reconstruction of a self. According to Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), the new identity, the same as the previous identity, is co-constructed with others. Based on these views, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) further argue that the ultimate attainment in second or foreign language learning depends on learners' agency because agency is a crucial factor in determining whether learners have to "initiate a long, painful, inexhaustive and, for some, never-ending process of self-translation" (p.170).

Sercu (2005) also describes foreign language learning, the intercultural experience, as uncomfortable and involving "the revision of beliefs, concepts, and attitudes that one has hitherto taken for granted" (p.2). While reconstructing their identities through participating in community practices, learners have to rethink their opinions towards themselves as legitimate but marginal members. The feelings involved range, according to Sercu (2005), from "anger and anxiety to excitement

and relief" (p.2).

The uncomfortable feeling can also be seen from the view that learning is what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as legitimate peripheral participation. According to these authors, legitimate peripherality is a complex notion involving relations of power: "It can itself be a source of power or powerlessness" (p.36). The concept of legitimate peripheral participation also indicates that as a peripheral participant, foreign language learners are not central but are on the margins of the activity in question" (Flowerdew, 2000, p.131) and they are facing being powerless all the time. As marginal members, learners, while experiencing powerlessness and conflicts between the new and old cultural identities, will inevitably be immersed in feelings of marginality, identity confusion, and depression as well.

2.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, sociocultural perspectives on foreign language teaching and learning are discussed in terms of four aspects of EFL teaching and learning: as a social practice, a cultural practice, a relational practice, and a reconstruction of identity. These four aspects of sociocultural theory are not completely discrete but overlap and interact with each other. Sociocultural learning theorising challenges and critiques traditional language acquisition perspectives and links personal linguistic internalization with its broader sociocultural contexts. It not only shifts our perspectives about EFL teaching and learning but provides an alternative

viewpoint to re-examine and rethink China's English language teaching and learning practices. As argued in Chapter One, China's English language teaching and learning is in a dilemma. On one hand, it is facing challenges from economic development as well as demands for expertise from the market, thus, a change is necessary; on the other hand, influenced by traditional teaching and learning pattern, it is still characterized by teacher-centred approaches geared towards the enhancement of students' familiarity with the rules and structures of English rather than their communicative competence. In this research project, sociocultural learning theorising is used as a theoretical platform to critique Chinese English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices as well as the theoretical platform to guide them to use New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices as a stimulus to develop teaching strategies which promote communicative competence in their classroom practices. The professional development for communicative competence teacher practices is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter focuses on the literature related to teacher professional development (3.1), the discourse of change (3.2) as well as the main factors which impact on teachers' professional development including teacher beliefs (3.3), teacher reflection (3.4), and teacher knowledge (3.5). It is argued that teacher professional development is not only a powerful tool in supporting and improving Chinese English language teachers' teaching expertise but also plays a vital role in meeting the needs of English language learners of communicative competence, which is a major part of the new goals and standards of English language teaching in China. According to Zhang and Guo (n.d.), most of the Chinese English language teachers have an English language major with a Bachelor of Arts degree. As most began their teaching career without further professional training and with none during their teaching career, few of them have had the opportunity to be retrained because of "the heavy work load and the financial problems that undertaking further education may involve" (p.4). Hence, it has become a commonly existing issue in English language education in China that teachers lack the opportunities and motivation to continue their learning and professional development. It also indicates that ways to promote Chinese English language professional development becomes an important issue in China's English language education reform (Song, 2009; Xia, 2002). The literature shows that effective teacher development involves changes in both teachers' teaching practices and their beliefs about teaching and the meaning of being a teacher. This literature is now

reviewed.

3.1 Teacher professional development

Development means general change and growth (Head & Taylor, 1997; Richards & Farrell, 2005) and teacher professional development "serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers" (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p.4). Teacher professional development is viewed as a major and powerful tool to "support improved practice and to assist teachers in meeting goals for student learning" (Mundry, 2005, p.9).

Teacher professional development is seen as a necessity in China's English language educational reform (Song, 2009; Xia, 2002; Zhang & Guo, n.d.). In Chapter One, it was shown that China's English language teaching industry is expanding and that increasing numbers of teachers and learners are involved. In addition, the outside demands from educational globalization and the inner requirements for better teaching and learning mean that China's English language education must make changes to promote communicative competence (Li, 1999). Under such circumstances, it is helpful for teachers to adopt a "developmental outlook" so that they can "cope better when they are facing change within and around their work environment" (Head & Taylor, 1997, P. 16). Head and Taylor further point out that teachers with the abilities to see and do things in new ways set a powerful example to their students and encourage them to embrace the

opportunities that change brings with it. In addition, addressing teacher professional development in China's new initiatives in English language educational reform will avoid teachers' "centrality in the process will 'act back' against the very essence of the reform" (Goodson, 2003, p.55). In this section, aspects concerning teacher professional development will now be addressed. Firstly, the importance and necessity of teacher professional development will be discussed. Then, teacher professional development will be discussed as bottom-up learning, as teacher learning, as teacher self-study of teaching, as an emotional process and needing time and teachers' commitments. Finally, the requirements for teacher professional development will be discussed.

3.1.1 The importance and necessity of teacher professional development

The first aspect is the importance and necessity for the professional development of Chinese English language teachers (Song, 2009; Xia, 2002). According to Head and Taylor (1997), many teachers resist changing their teaching practices or applying what educational reform requires because they are uncertain and afraid of what may happen and have feelings of anxiety and fear. However, teacher development, through broadening teachers' repertoires and taking on new responsibilities, helps teachers to "fight the feeling of jadedness and also to develop their careers as well as themselves" (Head & Taylor, 1997, p. 4). Besides the benefits to teachers themselves, teacher professional development can also benefit students and their English language learning in the context of this study. Mundry (2005) claims that "schooling can make a difference for all students if

they have access to quality teaching" (p. 9). There is a growing recognition of the value of teacher professional development with regards to promoting student learning (Mundry, 2005; Pugach, 2006). Pugach (2006) claims that teaching matters so much that once you decide to be a teacher, you make the commitment to "take responsibilities for the quality of the experiences each of your students will have in your classroom over the life of your career" (p.1). The purpose of teacher professional development is to "enhance learning of challenging content for all students" (Mundry, 2005, p. 13). Hence, in order to develop Chinese students' communicative competence, Chinese English language teachers need to accelerate their professional development.

3.1.2 Teacher professional development as bottom-up learning and top-down learning

A second key aspect of teacher development is that teacher professional development is both bottom-up learning and top-down learning. Teacher professional development which is driven by the teachers' agenda is known as bottom-up learning (Head & Taylor, 1997; Richards & Farrell, 2005). In other words, this type of teacher professional development mainly depends on teachers' own inner resource (Head & Taylor, 1997), within the contexts of schools, school leaders and teaching contexts. Head and Taylor (1997) argue that teacher professional development deals with individual teacher's needs and wants "in ways that suit that individual" (p.5). Since the needs may be various and diverse, the specific meanings and forms that it might take are mainly determined by

teachers' desired direction for development. They further argue that developing self-awareness helps to reduce the disparity between "what you do and what you think you do" (p.48). Hence, in their opinion, this form of teacher professional development is centred on teachers' personal awareness of the possibility for change as well as their awareness of what influences the change process. From this perspective, teacher development is mainly self-directed. That means it is teachers themselves who have to assume responsibilities for setting goals, managing, as well as controlling their development.

A second form is top-down teacher professional development, in which "teacher learning goes from explicit to implicit knowledge" (Sun & Zhang, 2004, p.63). Rodriguez (2010) argues that top-down teacher professional development programs tend to be "oppressive and regressive simultaneously" (p.938) as they ignore teachers' knowledge and their teaching. The history of English language education in China shows that in China, the State Education Development Commission (SEDC), the representative of the highly centralized Chinese system of education, sets the goals for English language teacher development (Liao, 2004) in each cycle of English language education reform rather than teachers themselves. Under these circumstances, China's English language teachers' individual needs in their professional development are ignored.

3.1.3 Teacher professional development is teacher learning

A third key aspect of teacher professional development is that teacher professional

development is characterized as teacher learning (Bell, 2005) and therefore the professional development process may be theorised as teacher learning. Firstly, teacher learning is knowledge-based. Smeby (2007) points out that one of the key characteristics of professions is that they are knowledge-based. Teacher knowledge develops over the career of a teacher and knowledge and skills may become outdated over time. There may be a gap or disparity between the skills and knowledge teachers possess and the skills and knowledge students need (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Therefore, teacher development can be seen as an ongoing learning process throughout a teacher's whole professional career. Furthermore, during the teacher development process, teacher learning does not only deal with teaching and teaching strategies. For English language teachers, it is also about English language development especially for those teachers whose native language is not English, cultural broadening, counseling and mediating skills, and almost anything related with teaching and learning (Head & Taylor, 1997).

Secondly, teacher learning is a personal construction and reconstruction process during which teachers reflect on and inquire into their past experiences and construct as well as reconstruct their understanding about what it means to be an English language teacher. During the learning process, teachers sense that "they have the potential within themselves to become better teachers through deepening their own understanding and awareness of themselves and of their learners" and this motivates teachers to go on learning (Head & Taylor, 1997, p.5).

3.1.4 Teacher self-study as teacher professional development

The fourth key aspect of teacher development is teacher self-study as teacher professional development. Self-study is defined as "teachers' systematic and critical examination of their actions and their context as a path to develop a more consciously driven mode of professional activity" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p.11). Teacher self-study requires teachers to "inquire thoughtfully and deliberately into their teaching practice and the assumptions embedded in that practice" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p.12). In this way, the "self" is closely linked with the process of research and teaching practice, thus, teachers can better learn about their teaching as well as themselves as a teacher. Although self-study employs various methods and "uses primarily qualitative research to analyze and represent findings" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p.13), it "involves a strong personal reference in that it involves study of the self and study by self" (p.14). Therefore, self-study involves teachers as researchers into their own teaching and may motivate them to explore and achieve a deeper understanding of teaching by feeling an ownership of the research. Kuzmic (2002) suggests that with respect to educational research, teachers remain on the margins of the research community. This can lead to the fact that teachers who are practising in the classroom tend to be guided by researchers who are outside of their classroom. In Kuzmic's opinion, this fact may also contribute to the discrepancy between teaching practice and educational theory. Self-study of teaching is seen to help teachers to link classroom teaching practice with educational research.

Self-study focuses on the improvement of the "self" on both the personal and professional levels (Samaras & Freese, 2006). Russell (2002) claims that the purpose of self-study is improvement. According to him, the complex nature of teaching makes change more challenging and it becomes more difficult to find evidence that the changes do represent improvement. However, when engaging in self-study of teaching, teachers use their own experiences as a resource for their research and continuously examine their own teaching practice and practice "what they preach" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p.33). In this way, self-study functions as a way of teacher knowing. During the process, teachers "question the underpinning of their beliefs and practice and the influence of their backgrounds, experiences, and culture on their teaching" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p.15). Thus, teachers may form and reform their identity as a teacher.

With respect to professional development and improvement, self-study allows for a manageable professional inquiry and this ultimately enhances professional development and classroom teaching practice. Firstly, self-study provides teachers with context-specific knowledge through reflection on their teaching in a particular teaching situation (Bass et al., 2002). In other words, through self-study of teaching, teachers' understanding of teaching and learning is derived from contextualized knowledge. Hence, Myers (2002) regards self-study as "both a means of investigation and analysis that starts with one's self, and as a tool for professional improvement" (p.130). Secondly, the context-specific nature of self-study is helpful for teachers to change their practice. According to Myers (2002),

69

self-study is a "conscious, conscientious, honest, organized probing into one's professional work" (p.130). The process involves "talking, writing, reflecting, and articulating" teaching (Bass et al., 2002, p.61). Through self-study, teachers can "select a focus for improving an aspect of their practice" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p.16). Thus teachers are positioned as askers of the research questions and as knowledge creators. This may not only make teachers more confident with themselves (Samaras & Freese, 2006; Bass et al., 2002) but it may also encourage them to conduct further self-study based on their earlier research (Samaras & Freese, 2006).

Another aspect of self-study is that although teacher self-study requires teachers to get close to their own teaching and thinking, it also encourages teachers to make their teaching and the changes in their teaching open so as to create a sense of community with other teachers studying their own teaching (Bass et al., 2002; Tidwell, 2002; Samaras & Freese, 2006). With colleagues, self-study teachers provide each other with multiple ways of looking at what teachers do in class and what they think about teaching (Bass et al., 2002) and they "collectively question and explore the complexities and possibilities in their teaching, and the interplay of their teaching actions within that exploration" (Saramas & Freese, 2006, p.13). Thus, Bass et al. (2002) claim that teacher self-study of teaching not only helps to detect the weakness in teaching but also it helps to make teachers' mind "flexible, open, and creative" (p.68).

Another aspect of self-study is that it is seen as a way to promote the research abilities of Chinese English language teachers (Yang et al., 2001; Deng, 2007). Yang et al. (2001) investigated the achievements in research of English language teachers in three universities from 1997 to 2000. There were 207 teacher participants involved in total. Yang et al. (2001) pointed out that there were some articles and research projects published in national-level core journals by the participants. They recommended that Chinese tertiary English language teachers could self-study and research their own teaching practices in the classroom and improve their research abilities by reflecting, re-examining and summarizing their teaching practices. Yang et al. (2001) regarded it as a way for Chinese tertiary English language teachers to change themselves from a teacher to a researching teacher.

Self-study is also seen as a way to create a collaborative research context and address the perceived lack of motivation to do research (Deng, 2007). It is commonly acknowledged in the literature that in many universities in China, teachers are not motivated enough to do research (Deng, 2007; Zhou, 2005; Yang et al., 2001). Two important reasons identified in the literature for this lack of motivation are the lack of research conditions (Yang, Zhang & Xie, 2001; Zhou, 2005), and the lack of incentive system for research (He, 2009). Thus, an important issue in English language teaching is exploring teacher self-study to develop Chinese English language teachers' research awareness and abilities and establish positive research contexts.

3.1.5 Teacher professional development needs time and teacher commitment

The fifth key aspect of teacher professional development that needs to be considered is the time needed as well as teacher commitment. Teacher development is a career-long process (Gebhard, 1996; Bell, 2005; Pugach, 2006), and therefore needs to be seen over a long time frame. However, as Gebhard (1996) points out in-service teachers usually have less time to spend on their development. Thus, if teachers think that development is important for them, they have to commit themselves to their development within the time constraints. In addition, Gebhard (1996) further argues that for new teachers with limited teaching experience, considerable time may be needed for them to work through "going from being dependent on outside sources and concerned with self-survival and with what kinds of techniques to use, to being concerned with student learning and able to make informed teaching decisions" (p.15). Therefore, teacher development requires an ongoing commitment and only when teachers make a commitment to ongoing development, can their development be enhanced. In China, because learning English is very popular and English language teachers are urgently needed, English language teachers have to undertake a heavy teaching load (Zhang & Guo, n.d.), with little time for professional development.

3.1.6 Teacher professional development is an emotional process

A sixth aspect of teacher professional development to take into account is that teacher professional development is an emotional process. Teacher development involves dealing with emotional issues, conflicts, uncertainties, stresses, anxieties,

and worries and maybe an uncomfortable process (Bell & Gilbert, 1993). To develop effectively, teachers need to manage their positive and negative feelings as well as work through problems rather than avoid them (Bell & Gilbert, 1993). Hence, their having positive and negative feelings is an integral part of teacher development (Katz, 1997). Teacher development requires teachers to learn how to respond to negative feeling and view development as a journey rather than a blueprint (Katz, 1997).

The requirement for teachers to deal with their emotions and feelings to achieve successful teacher development suggests that self-confidence is a necessary prerequisite (Head & Taylor, 1997). Self-confidence is seen as enabling teachers to believe that they have the potential to develop and this confidence can motivate them to be involved in teacher development. In China, the reforms of the educational and personnel systems put Chinese English language teachers under great pressures (Wang, 2007), leading to uncertainty and anxiety. Furthermore, the college expansion plan increases Chinese English language teachers' workload and over-work. Educational reform undoubtedly plays an active role in promoting Chinese English language teachers' professional development. However, the long-existing anxiety and the pressures exert a prejudicious influence on Chinese English language teacher professional development. Therefore, an important issue to consider when Chinese English language teachers are developing their teaching is the management of teachers' emotions, especially anxieties, conflicts and worries during professional development.

3.1.7 The requirements for teacher professional development

The seventh aspect of teacher professional development that needs to be addressed is the requirements for development. These requirements include making good preparations to take calculated risks, having courage; having ownership of development, pursuing a gradual pace of change, and being able to control the pace are helpful for teachers to overcome their negative feelings during the development process (Bell & Gilbert, 1993). Besides the above, support and feedback from outside sources, such as cooperation with colleagues, are also important for teachers to cope with their uncertainties (Pehkonen, 2004). Teacher development is not only a personal and individual process but also a shared and social process (Bell, 2005). According to Bell, although being isolated in classroom shelters teachers from pressure to change, the isolation prevents feedback and support from outside. Therefore, she encourages teachers to discuss their teaching and what it means to be a teacher with others and seek more support and feedback from others. Hence, whether or not a positive change can be achieved depends greatly on teachers' own abilities and competence to undertake changes in their profession and how far they can go during the change process.

Summing up, previous research suggests that Chinese English language teacher development may be promoted when teachers have the awareness of the need to change their teaching and improve their understanding about being an English language teacher, when they are willing and have the courage to challenge their existing beliefs and embrace new beliefs, when they are able to manage their

74

emotions during the change process, and when they commit themselves into ongoing reflection about their own teaching. Hence, it is argued that teacher development is best when it is managed by teachers themselves and not others (Bell & Gilbert, 1993), that is, the teacher is the centre of teacher development. The following section will further discuss the discourse of change related to teacher development.

3.2 The discourse of change

Teacher professional development involves change, and can be viewed as a change process. Change refers to a new state of things which is different from the old state of things (French & Bell, 1995). According to McMillan (2004), things are not fixed and nothing can remain static forever, therefore, change is an ever-present reality. For example, the dynamics of social change and globalization trends in education make change omnipresent in every aspect in China. The demands for change in China's English language education come from both inside China and outside.

In the post-modern era, change has been viewed as multifaceted (French & Bell, 1995; Poole, 2004). It can be planned and unplanned. Planned change is consciously conceived and attempts to improve the situation with a desired end state; unplanned change "may or may not be driven by human choice", or it is accidental and may not necessarily be controlled and managed (Poole, 2004, p.4). Relevant to the objectives of this research is planned change.

Planned change involves two levels of change: first-order change and second-order change. According to McMillan (2004), first-order change refers to the superficial change or the change in a limited way. It is evolutionary change and "the new state of things has the same nature, with new characteristics or features" (French & Bell, 1995, p.3). First-order change is seen as incremental change that occurs in the existing systems and aims at improving the status quo, or in other words, it attempts to achieve a fit between what is introduced and what exists (Waddell et al., 2004). Therefore, first-order change is only superficial change and it does not change the system within which it occurs (Meyer et al., 1993). Or in Newman and Nollen's (1998) opinion, first-order change does not challenge core values; instead, it builds on them. It serves to "make the existing patterns of behaviors more stable, predictable and efficient" (Newman & Nollen, 1998, p.47).

In contrast, second-order change is revolutionary change and the nature of the old state of things can be entirely changed (French & Bell, 1995). Second-order change is more than a moderate adjustment; it is a transformation of fundamental properties (Meyer et al., 1993). McMillan (2004) argues that second-order change is deep-level change and it requires people to see the world differently and to do things differently. When comparing these two levels of change, he describes first-order change as single loop learning and second-order change as double loop learning. According to him, when double loop learning takes place, people undergo significant personal change and "they change their mental models and shift their internal personal perspectives in such a way that important new insights

emerge and significant new behaviors develop" (p.62). Newman and Nollen (1998) call second-order change radical change. According to them, radical change implies "quantum and fundamental change in the core values" (p.47). During radical change, underlying assumptions about behaviors and core values accompanying those assumptions are both modified. In Newman and Nollen's (1998) words, second-order change aims to pursue "new and different strategies, structures, capacities, and resources, supported with new and different core values" (p.48).

From the discussion above, it can be recognized that it is first-order change rather than second-order change that has taken place in China's past English language educational reforms. Li (1999) claims in the history of Chinese educational reforms, pedagogical conflicts seem to have existed for centuries and the introduction of foreign pedagogical modes and the participation of foreign teachers have not changed the core or basic teaching and learning situations in China. The key issue is that during the process of past reforms, Chinese traditional and predominant educational culture and values have never been challenged and changed. Most of the strategies introduced to improve China's English language education have aimed to provide alternative and additional options to the existing teaching and learning situations within China's current educational structure and cultures. It implies that core cultures and values form the greatest challenge to effective planned change as core cultures provide stability (Glaser et al., 1983; Hatch, 2004; Newman & Nollen, 1998). Core

cultural beliefs provide people with stable interpretive framework to make sense of the world. Teachers' cultural beliefs and aspirations work together to influence their perceptions about teaching and learning as well as their own roles as a teacher (Coleman & Earley, 2005). In this sense, effective planned change of teachers' beliefs and teaching practices will involve changes to their cultural identity and values. According to Hatch (2004), cultures change, but they also remain stable simultaneously during the process of change. Change occurs from both outside and within. Changes from outside always involve acculturation and selective borrowing. In borrowing, people tend to accept what seems to be rewarding and reject what seems unworkable since it is human being's nature to resist the unknown and unfamiliar (Kane, 2005). In Hatch's words, "some elements may be taken over wholesale from another culture, others are resisted, often completely" (Hatch, 2004, p.199). He further argues that the accepted elements are those that "fall within a focal area of the culture" (p.199), that is, first order change.

Hence to achieve a positive change in Chinese English language education, its traditional cultural heritage has to be considered. However, if Chinese English language teachers are introduced, as intended in this research, to New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices, the Chinese teachers will be challenged to achieve some congruence between the cultural values of the New Zealand English language teachers and Chinese traditional values, otherwise culture will be a barrier for change (Kaplan & Norton, 2005). On the other hand,

changes from within, according to Herskovits (1964), involve both cultural stability and cultural change. In maturity, people are more likely to open "the gate to change via examination of alternative possibilities that permit reconditioning to new modes of thought and conduct" (Herskovits, 1964, p.152). Therefore, to achieve effective planned change for Chinese English language teachers to use New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices, the cultural dynamics of stability and change during the process need to be considered as an important factor. The changes involved in this research include both first and second-order change. From the aspect of first-order change, this research aims to provide alternative teaching beliefs and practices for Chinese English language teachers so as to enhance their teaching and profession development and raise the students' English language competence. From the aspect of second-order change, this research aims to develop Chinese English language teachers' beliefs about teaching as well as the educational culture, which will be challenged and examined by using the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices as a stimulus. Thus, the change may involve confrontations between two different cultures, and the values of Chinese traditional culture may be challenged.

3.3 Teacher beliefs

It has been argued that the professional development of Chinese English language teacher beliefs will be required if China's students are to be linguistically and communicatively competent in English. Beliefs here are taken to "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be

true" (Richardson, 2003, p.2). Dunkin (2002), while defining teachers' beliefs, points out that teachers' beliefs concerning teaching include "their judgments about the effectiveness of teaching as intervention, their estimates of personal influence upon student learning, their beliefs about the extent to which they posses teaching competencies, as well as the criteria by which they evaluate their own teaching and themselves as teachers" (p.42). Teachers' beliefs are neither scientific knowledge nor professional knowledge, but are seen as "a part of the underlying mechanisms of metacognition" and "a component of metacognitive knowledge" (Flavell, 1987, p.2). That is, teachers' beliefs are a mental construction of experience and they serve as the basis for teachers' actions and behaviors (Archer, 2000; Muchmore, 2001; Taylor, 2002). Three major sources for teachers' beliefs include personal experience, experience with schooling and pedagogy, and experience with formal knowledge – both school subjects and pedagogical knowledge (Borg, 1996, Farrell, 2007; Richardson, 2003). Among them, experience with schooling and pedagogy is recognized as the most important one (Richardson, 2003). Teachers begin their teaching career with deeply-seated and pre-existing beliefs based on their experience as students in school, and these beliefs are robust and resistant to change as they always function as the filter to allow or prevent the construction of new knowledge that is compatible or incompatible with current beliefs (Goddard, 2003; Kane et al., 2002; Muchmore, 2001; Richardson, 2003). Furthermore, teachers' classroom experiences as a teacher exert a powerful influence on the development of their beliefs and practices (Farrell, 2007).

Teacher beliefs are important as they play a central role in guiding teaching practices (Mihai & Platt, 2005; Roehrig & Kruse, 2005). It is widely accepted that what teachers do in the classroom has its origins in life history, thoughts, or mental acts, and it has been shaped by attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs gathered through years of being a student and being a teacher (Mullock, 2006). In addition, teaching beliefs, through influencing teaching practices, exert an influence on the implementation of curriculum.

Although beliefs play a central role in guiding teachers' practices, it has been noted by researchers that teachers' beliefs are not always reflected in their teaching practices, sometimes with a discrepancy between what teachers wish to do and what they actually do in classroom (Farrell, 2007). Hence, teachers' beliefs cannot be seen as a reliable guide to their practices. The discrepancy is attributed to the effect of contextual factors (Borg, 1996; Kane et al., 2002). Contextual factors not only constrain the change of teachers' beliefs but also give rise to different sets of beliefs (Beswick, 2004).

Teachers' beliefs are also important as they play an important role in promoting teacher professional development (Bell & Gilbert, 1993; Flores, 2003). When teachers make efforts to develop pedagogies which are consistent with their deeply-rooted beliefs, their teaching practices are gradually changed (Muchmore, 2001). Hence, Muchmore (2001) proposes that being a teacher involves more than simply mastering a set of skills, it also involves the development of "an inner

81

awareness – a sense of how one's life experiences have helped to shape the beliefs and underlying assumptions that ultimately guide one's practices" (p.107). In this way, teaching can be viewed as an artistic form of self-expression rather than a science or technique, and teachers should seek coherence between their teaching pedagogies and their inner selves: what they know, what they feel, and what they think about their teaching (Mullock, 2006), and what it means to be a teacher (Bell, 2005; Flores, 2003). The assumption is that with the access to teachers' inner life, valuable insights about teaching and teacher development can be gained by teachers themselves (Muchmore, 2001). Kane et al. (2002) argue that an understanding about teaching is "incomplete without a consideration of teachers' beliefs about teaching and a systematic examination of the relationship between those beliefs and teachers' practices" (p.182). At times, however, beliefs can become disabling and may get in the way of teacher development. Only when teachers are willing to recognize that their beliefs are no longer serving them and are brave enough to reconstruct them into the beliefs that they would like to have, can they take the first step to teacher development (Kane et al., 2002).

In view of the important role that teachers' beliefs play in teaching practices and teacher development, it is clear that any attempt to change the practices of teachers must involve change in their beliefs. However, it is also recognized that the changing of teachers' beliefs may be very difficult (Dunkin, 2002; Richardson, 2003). The reason is that teachers' beliefs are formed over a long period, starting with when the teachers themselves were once students, or as beginning teachers,

assimilating the attitudes and behaviors of their more experienced colleagues (Archer, 2000). Once the beliefs are established, teachers may selectively choose information that confirms their beliefs; even distort evidence to make it fit. Furthermore, as new knowledge is generally constructed on the basis of existing beliefs and experience, it may be very difficult to challenge teachers' beliefs and encourage different attitudes and behaviors (Archer, 2000).

However, it is possible to change teaching beliefs (Murrell and Foster, 2003; Richardson, 2003). Changing teachers' beliefs involves more than providing a 'right' educational experience. Instead, it is a developmental process, over the time of a teacher's career, and requires teachers' "committed engagement to interrogate their beliefs" (Murrell & Foster, 2003, p.49). Teachers' challenging and thinking about their beliefs in self-study may be promoted through actually using new teaching practices, and reflecting on their effectiveness in promoting learning (Raths, 2001).

3.4 Teacher reflection

The previous discussion of teachers' beliefs indicates that teacher professional development involves changes in teacher beliefs as well as teaching practices. Teacher reflection is seen as a useful and powerful means to change teachers' beliefs and promote teacher professional development (Barth, 2001; Hoffman-Kipp et al., 2003). Teacher reflection emancipates teachers by linking teachers' experiences with meaningful practices and distancing them from mere

implementation of highly routinized and meaningless activities (Farrell, 2007).

A valuable definition of teacher reflection is when teachers "re-examine and ponder over their prior experience to make sense of it, to learn from it, and presumably to become a better teacher in the future" (Boody, 2008). However, learning from experience is not inevitable but rather intentional (Barth, 2001). Hoffman-Kipp et al. (2003) define teacher reflection as "comprised of self-awareness" and "often achieved through introspection both in and after the moment" through various repositories of personal experience (p.249). The main feature of this definition is its focus on individual experience as the reflection resource and the basis for clarifying and articulating profession knowledge (Barth, 2001; Hoffman-Kipp et al., 2003).

There are three major types of reflective practice. The first happens during teachers' classroom teaching practice, which Schön (1987) calls reflection-in-action. The second is called by Schön (1987) as reflection-on-action which takes place after the practice or action has happened. While the third, according to Farrell (2007), is that teachers think about their future teaching actions and it is called reflection-for-action. The first type of reflection-in-action happens "in the midst of action without interrupting it" and during the action-present, "we can still make a difference to the situation at hand" because "our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (Schön, 1987, p.26). According to Schön, when teachers practise their routine teaching practices, they employ a

84

kind of knowing-in-action, which according to him, refers to the sorts of know-how that people reveal in their intelligent action. Teachers use their knowing-in-action unconsciously because it usually remains at the tacit, subconscious level of their thoughts (Schön, 1983). However, there are some occasions that teachers' knowing-in-action does not work and teachers have to resort to reflection-in-action (Schön, 1987). Farrell (2007) summarizes the sequence of moments in a process of reflection-in-action as the following:

(1) A situation develops which triggers spontaneous, routine responses;

(2) Routine responses by the teacher do not produce a routine response and instead produce a surprise for the teacher;

(3) This surprise response gets the teacher's attention and leads to reflection within an action;

(4) Reflection now gives rise to on-the-spot experimentation by the teacher.

(p.5)

The second type of teacher reflection, reflection-on-action, according to Farrell (2007), refers to the reflection that takes place after teachers have finished their teaching. It is similar to the retrospection of prior experience and focuses on the cognitive process of teaching, taking into account sociocultural contexts. Compared with reflection-in-action, which stresses teachers' abilities "to frame problems based on prior experience", reflection-on-action, according to Farrell (2007) comes to mean "some kind of metacognition" (p.5). Metacognitive and cognitive mediation, according to Karpov and Haywood (1998) are the main mechanism people use to mediate their action. Metacognitive mechanisms include

self-regulation tools, such as self-monitoring, self-planning and self-evaluating, and cognitive mechanisms include the use of tools needed for problem solving (Hoffman-Kipp et al, 2003). In other words, teachers use reflection as a metacognitive mechanism to regulate their practice after the practice has finished so as to achieve a better teaching (that is better student learning).

The third type of teacher reflection is reflection-for-action. According to Farrell (2007), it is different from the previous types in that "it is proactive in nature" (p.6). Teachers use their knowledge gained from their experiences or reflection during and after classroom practices to prepare for their teaching in future. Hence, teacher reflection involves not only reflecting on how to solve a problem which has occurred in their practice, but also questioning and reflecting the beliefs and values that guide their work (Johnson & Jay, 2002). Hoffman-Kipp et al. (2003) argue that teachers can construct their envisioned worlds as social space where "reflection and action are created, negotiated and transformed" to promote their teaching (p. 252). Teacher reflection can be viewed as a social practice and culturally mediated (Hoffman-Kipp et al., 2003) by three levels of cultural artifacts. Primary artifacts refer to those can be used directly such as words and curriculum materials; secondary artifacts refer to those that represent primary artifacts such as beliefs and norms, and the tertiary artifacts refer to those that help teachers to be free from external control such as various forms of reflection and action (Cole, 1996). Hoffman-Kipp et al. (2003) stress that the key to teacher reflection and action is the development of a collective identity in which teachers

acquire the language shared and accepted by the group in which they participate. Furthermore, teachers reveal their beliefs and values in the shared language during their teaching practices.

Teacher reflection is not just a cognitive progress but also an emotional process during which teachers experience various emotions (Stanley, 1998). Reflection is not easy work as it needs a large amount of energy and commitment (Stanley, 1998). Besides that, some "personal, professional and contextual factors may limit and even inhibit a teacher's ability to engage with reflection" (p.586). According to him, "personal issues of self-esteem may trigger responses of guilt, pain, and self-doubt when teachers examine their teaching" (Stanley, 1998, p.586). If the experience of reflection is too painful, teachers may resist reflecting on their teaching consciously or unconsciously. And when the basic personal, professional and contextual factors are stable and teachers are interested in reflecting their teaching, a continuous commitment is required for teachers to engage in ongoing reflection. Hence, Stanley (1998) suggests that "a healthy degree of ego development" (p.) is necessary for reflective teachers. His suggestion echoes the three attributes that Dewey (1933) identified many years ago for reflective teachers, which Farrell (2007) thinks are still important for teachers today: open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. Open-mindedness indicates that the teacher desires to listen to and give attention to alternative views. Responsibility refers to "careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads" (Farrell, 2007, p.2). Wholeheartedness implies that "teachers can

87

overcome fears and uncertainties to critically evaluate their practice in order to make meaningful change" (Farrell, 2007, p.2).

Reflection is advocated for language teacher development because "it is a bottom-up approach to teacher professional development that is based on the belief that experienced and novice language teachers can initiate and improve their understanding of their own teaching by consciously and systematically reflecting on their teaching experiences" (Farrell, 2007, p.9) as advocated in self-study. Reflective language teaching practice is also seen to lead to higher teacher efficacy, which in turn leads to increased student learning (Distad & Brownstein, 2004). Efficacy, according to Distad and Brownstein (2004), refers to the teacher's capacity to make positive change in students' learning. As part of their research on teacher efficacy, Distad and Brownstein (2004) set up a Reflective Practice Group (RPG) process as "a particular way for teachers to regularly and systematically reflect on their practice in a supportive, collegial environment free from evaluation" (p.2). According to Distad and Brownstein (2004), RPG provided teachers with opportunity to get together and examine their practices and reflection provided teachers with the alternative views to re-examine their teaching practices as well as to try different solutions to their teaching problems. The research indicated that efficacy increases when teachers see the positive effects on their own solutions. A teacher with high efficacy feels more confident, affirmed, and validated by his or her classroom teaching experience. Furthermore, high efficacy helps to develop a larger repertoire of teaching skills, which Distad

and Brownstein (2004) suggest is very important, because "one teaching situation may require multiple approaches" (p.8). A teacher with a large repertoire may not feel defeated as he or she can prepare another approach if the first one does not work. He or she even may take it as a joy and the challenge of being in a profession. However, a teacher with low efficacy may be discouraged. In addition to the above, higher teacher efficacy further enhances teacher reflection in their teaching practice. Teachers in Distad and Brownstein's (2004) research with high efficacy regularly reflected on their teaching and their systematic reflection helped them to increase their abilities to create more positive learning environments in classroom, which further indicated the increasing efficacy of teachers.

To sum up, it has been pointed out in this section that teacher reflection is an effective means for teachers to identify their teaching problems as well as to examine the teaching beliefs that guide their teaching practices so as to achieve changes and development in their profession. Teacher reflection is seen as both a metacognition mechanism and a social practice, and also as an emotional process which involves teachers' continuous commitment and particular a healthy ego development. Based on the above discussion, it is argued that teacher reflection, as a bottom-up teacher professional development strategy has meaningful implications for English language education especially its function in increasing teachers' efficacy.

3.5 Teacher knowledge

The terms 'knowledge' and 'beliefs' are often used to describe teacher cognition (Richardson, 2003; Guerrero, 2005). In contrast to beliefs, which are about the world, teacher knowledge can be taken to refer to the 'practical concepts that can be used to define and describe the expertise and inform the practice of teachers engaged in the act of the teaching process' (Guerrero, 2005, p. 251). Teachers' understanding about teaching, learning, students and the subject they teach will inevitably influence their teaching practices. Therefore, it is necessary to explore teacher knowledge about their profession in order to understand the complex nature of teaching as well as improve teachers' practices. Furthermore, some researchers regard teacher professional development as teacher learning (e.g. Bell, 2005). From this perspective, teacher development can be viewed as the development of teacher knowledge. It has been suggested by sociocultural learning theory that prior knowledge plays an important role in teacher learning and it functions as the filter for teachers to interpret their experiences in learning to teach as well as inform their teaching practices (Bell, 2005; Kramsch, 2000). Hence, it is meaningful to explore teacher knowledge and view its development as both of the precondition and outcome of teacher professional development.

Teacher knowledge reflects the way that teachers "know themselves and their professional work situations" and it comes from teachers' formal and informal educational experiences (Xu & Connelly, 2009, p.221). Teacher knowledge is characterized in some literature as inside-out, that is, what knowledge teachers

actually know and what knowledge teachers actually use in their teaching practices (Xu & Connelly, 2009; Guerrero, 2005). Based on this perspective, teacher knowledge is subjective, constructive, and practical. Teacher knowledge includes what teachers are taught in formal education settings, as well as what they construct during their personal and professional career experiences (Xu & Connelly, 2009; Guerrero, 2005; Zembylas, 2007).

Moreover, teachers are not just passive knowledge receivers, consumers, or users, but they are also knowledge constructors and producers (Bell, 2005; Lantolf, 2000; Ohta, 2000). In their teaching practices and problem-solving processes, teachers do not merely rely on the theoretical knowledge they acquire from outside, but actively construct their own knowing-in-action (Schön, 1983). Teacher knowledge is seen as tacit, and "not organized and coded according to any of the traditional disciplinary and cognitive ways of organizing knowledge and skills" (Xu & Connelly, 2009, p.223). According to Xu and Connelly (2009), teacher knowledge is dependent on the context it is constructed in, rather than on formal theoretical knowledge. As such, teacher knowledge is a comprehensive representation of teacher experience both in personal and professional lives. And teacher knowledge represents who teachers are since it touches their identity as both teachers and persons; on the other hand, teacher identity indicates their practical knowledge gained from experience, and contexts (Xu & Connelly, 2009). Within this study, teacher knowledge is categorized as English language proficiency, subject matter knowledge, as well as pedagogical content knowledge. In the following sections,

each of these three areas of teacher knowledge will be discussed in detail.

3.5.1 English language proficiency

English language proficiency is an aspect to teacher knowledge. In this research, English language proficiency refers to the competence of English language teachers in using English language as the communicating tool in their teaching. With the introduction of Western teaching pedagogies from the 1980s, the communicative language teaching approach as distinct from grammar-translation methods, has gained support in China's English language teaching settings (Yang, 2000). However, in real practice, there is limited application of this approach. One of the most important reasons is that it requires a relatively high level of language proficiency on the part of the English language teachers, especially in oral courses (Yang, 2000; Farrell & Richards, 2007), when there is a lack of qualified teachers with native-like proficiency in oral English. The low language proficiency often "leads to the excessive use of the mother tongue rather than English with practice of the language limited to exercises from the textbook" (Farrell & Richards, 2007, p.63), which, according to Liao (n.d.), prevents teachers from developing their students' communicative competence and requires them to employ knowledge-oriented pedagogies to fit their language proficiency.

One of the roles that English language teachers are expected to take on in class is the language authority, which means to speak English with students and model for students how to use the language to express meanings (Gebhard, 1996). Hence,

for the non-native English language teacher, English language proficiency is a fundamental component of his or her professional competence (Farrell & Richards, 2007). According to Farrell and Richards (2007), professional competence includes the knowledge of relevant subject matter, a broad range of teaching pedagogies, skills to develop tests, curriculum and materials, abilities to use resource to assist teaching and learning as well as proficiency in English especially for those who are not native speakers of English. They argue that the language proficiency level of a language teacher will not only determine whether the teacher can employ appropriate teaching methods, but also determine whether the teacher can provide target language input for students.

The literature recognizes that lack of proficiency in English "exerts" an "adverse" effect on teaching (Braine, 2005, p.22). McNeill (2005) points out that inadequate command of English language proficiency often makes it difficult for non-native speaker teachers to achieve their desired job performance. And it becomes a challenge for them to practice some teaching pedagogies which emphasize oral communication. The likely language teaching problems that non-native English language teachers might experience with a language deficit include the difficulty in "conveying messages to their students in target language", "addressing their questions on language use" and "providing a good language model" (Llurda, 2005, p. 146). Furthermore, the difficulty may even lead to a low level of self-confidence and eventually force the teachers to turn to a teacher-and-textbook-centred class (Cook, 2005; Llurda, 2005).

In sum, a high level of English language proficiency is an essential condition for effective English language teaching and learning, especially in countries where English is a foreign language. Such a situation exists in China, where English is a foreign language and English language teachers work in non-English speaking environments. The only occasions that they have to use English is in their classrooms with their students. However, there are many factors which limit the improvement of their language proficiency. For example, as Farrell and Richards (2007) comment, the limited English language proficiency of students' forces teachers to employ simplified classroom discourse intentionally so as to facilitate comprehension. They even identify the characteristics of this type of classroom discourse: "It focuses on the formation of correct examples of language. It is a careful (monitored) speech style. It involves use of small samples of language. It involves restricted types of communication" (p.62). Gradually the limited type of English language that they use in classroom and the restricted access to English language provided by the external environment results in a lack of development of their own English. In China, the teacher is regarded as the authority of knowledge and if they make some mistakes in front of their students, they feel that they have lost face and their authority role is damaged. In this way, some English language teachers with poor language proficiency might be extremely nervous in using English in class (Liu, 2005). Hence, China's English language teachers are in a dilemma that on one hand, it is very hard for them to change the environments where they work and live; on the other hand, they have to explore more opportunities to improve their English language proficiency to a certain level in

order to be able to teach more effectively.

3.5.2 Subject matter knowledge

A second aspect of teacher knowledge is subject matter knowledge. Subject matter knowledge means "how teachers need to know a subject to teach it to others" (Phelps & Schilling, 2004, p.31). According to Kolis and Dunlap (2004), subject matter knowledge includes the knowledge such as structure of the content area, scope and sequence, ability to prioritize content topics, applications of the content in life experiences, and so on. Since the amount of knowledge in any one discipline is growing fast, it is well recognized that teachers' subject matter knowledge cannot be measured by the amount of the knowledge or information that they command (Kolis & Dunlap, 2004; Phelps & Schilling, 2004). Instead, in-depth subject matter knowledge involves "an understanding of the significant patterns and themes that exists within the specific content area" (Kolis & Dunlap, 2004, p.100). In other words, a teacher with sound subject matter knowledge knows what is more important for students' learning and what is less important, and is able to adapt the teaching materials for more effective learning. Hence, with respect to English language teachers, their subject matter knowledge includes their knowledge of the subject English and also their knowledge of how the subject 'English' is constructed in the curriculum, and in their pedagogy. One use of subject matter knowledge by teachers is in addressing and taking into account students' prior knowledge so as to help students construct new knowledge (Bell, 2005).

A second use of a teacher's subject matter knowledge is in the selection and use of an appropriate pedagogy (Ball, 2000). Similarly, Roehrig and Kruse (2005) point out that a lack of subject matter knowledge reduces teachers' abilities in arranging and planning curriculum as well as their confidence with teaching. Hence, using effective pedagogies and the curriculum, relies on a good understanding and adequate knowledge about subject matter (Traianou, 2006). However, adequate subject matter itself cannot guarantee quality teaching (Ball, 2000). Teacher's subject matter knowledge is developed over their professional career (Ball, 2000; Traianou, 2006). At the start of their careers, when teachers transfer their role from student to teacher, they enter into a new "community of practice" at the same time (Smeby, 2007). In their teaching practice, the subject matter knowledge that they need to command is not only related to the topics that they teach but it also influenced by a knowledge of how to teach the content (Phelps & Schilling, 2004).

3.5.3 Pedagogical content knowledge

As discussed in the previous section, adequate subject matter knowledge is not enough for effective teaching, as teacher knowledge not only includes subject matter knowledge but also includes pedagogical knowledge (a knowledge of teaching) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). PCK is a term originated from Shulman (1986) who referred to the "blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (p.8). PCK plays an important role in considering the

ways that teachers make their instructional decisions within specific content areas (Guerrero, 2005). It blends the knowledge domains of subject matter and pedagogy to focus on the specific instructional strategies that are unique to the specific content of teaching. An analysis of PCK is helpful for us to explore "the relationship between what teachers know, how they come to know it, and, as a result, how they go about teaching it" (Segall, 2004, p.491).

There are five key aspects of PCK, which are relevant to this study. Firstly, pedagogical content knowledge is constructed knowledge, and has both personal and individual aspect. As a form of cognitive knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge is a powerful vehicle to explore teachers' thinking and their instructional decisions about teaching (Goodnough, 2006; McCaughtry, 2005). Pedagogical content knowledge is seen as the topic-specific knowledge that teachers have developed and constructed from their repeated teaching of specific topics (Hashweh, 2005). Hence, pedagogical content knowledge is a personal construction and only teachers who engage in subject matter teaching can possess this form of knowledge (McCaughtry, 2005). Hashweh (2005) describes pedagogical content knowledge as "the set or repertoire of private and personal content specific general event-based as well as story-based pedagogical constructions that the teacher has developed as a result of repeated planning and teaching of, and reflection on the teaching of, the most regularly taught topics" (p.276). Therefore, pedagogical content knowledge can be seen as a result of teachers' intellectual and professional experience and construction, and it is

personal and private. Based on personal experiences and interpretations of teaching, teachers come up with different solutions to their problems and develop different pedagogical content knowledge (Hashweh, 2005). In addition, pedagogical content knowledge is also socially constructed with students and other teachers. Teaching cannot be separated from students' learning and teaching occurs during the interactions between the teacher and students. The interaction with students (or other teachers) helps the teacher to socially construct his/her pedagogical content knowledge.

Secondly, pedagogical content knowledge is also practical knowledge. Being the intersection of subject matter knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy, pedagogical content knowledge is used by teachers to design their teaching activities as well as to solve problems which occur during their teaching; thus, pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge that informs teachers' classroom practices (Goodnough, 2006). Major and Palmer (2006), after reviewing research about the development of pedagogical content knowledge, claim that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is developed through practical activities such as "through studying, by doing and reflecting, by collaborating with other teachers, by looking closely at students and their work, and by sharing what they see" (p.621). In addition, pedagogical content knowledge functions as the transformer which transforms teachers' subject matter knowledge into different forms so as to connect teacher knowledge with student knowledge (Shulman, 1991). Hence, the application of pedagogical content knowledge itself is a kind of teaching practice.

Thirdly, pedagogical content knowledge is closely related to other categories of knowledge, and the application of pedagogical content knowledge involves interaction with and integration of other specific knowledge. Zembylas (2007) argues that teacher knowledge is a form of knowledge ecology, which, according to him, refers to "a system consisting of many sources and forms of knowledge in a systematic relationship" (p.356). It is within this system that all the forms of knowledge interact with each other and as a result of the interaction, teaching and learning occur. As a separate category of teacher knowledge (Hashweh, 2005), pedagogical content knowledge never functions solely. According to Kolis and Dunlap (2004), the application of pedagogical content knowledge occurs when "the integration and application of two or more specific knowledge bases occur" (p.101). In their opinion, pedagogical content knowledge is the integration and application of subject matter knowledge and the knowledge of learning. They view pedagogy as the "art" and "science" of teaching, then, the application of pedagogical content knowledge becomes the process of "organizing content in 'learning appropriate' ways" (p.101). Basing on this argument, they further point out that the application process requires that "content scope and sequence be aligned with learning processes" (p.102).

Similarly, Segall (2004), Guerrero (2005), Watzke (2007), and Zembylas (2007) all recognize that pedagogical content knowledge mainly involves subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. However, their arguments stress that a knowledge of the teaching context also plays an important in teachers'

instructional decision. The teaching context is seen as encompassing a comprehensive knowledge of students, curriculum in relevant subject area, curricular material, emotional understanding, educational purposes, and the contexts of classroom and school where teachers work. All the knowledge that a teacher possesses interacts with each other and influences teachers' understanding about teaching, their thinking and their instructional decisions in the classroom as well.

Furthermore, different teacher knowledge categories influence the development and construction of pedagogical content knowledge (Hashweh, 2005). According to Hashweh, pedagogical content knowledge is the result of the interaction between different teacher knowledge and belief categories rather than the result of "deep knowledge in a single knowledge category" (p.279). She argues that any single knowledge category is not enough for the development of PCK as PCK contains "a value or beliefs components but it also has a subject matter component, a purpose component, a pedagogy component and other components" (p279). Hence, pedagogical content knowledge develops only when the other knowledge categories advance together and a balance among them is achieved. From this point of view, it can be seen that the development of pedagogical content knowledge implies the advancement of teachers' comprehensive knowledge about teaching. Thus, the development of pedagogical content knowledge becomes an important indicator of teacher professional development.

Fourthly, pedagogical content knowledge is not only cognitive knowledge but also possesses an emotional dimension. It not only represents teachers' thinking and cognition in their instructional profession but also represents "how teachers understand the emotional aspects of teaching and learning" (Zembylas, 2007, p.355). The emotional dimension of pedagogical content knowledge firstly represents teachers' emotional experiences with respect to students' learning. Teachers need to possess student knowledge which not only focuses on students' "cognitive psychology [and an] understanding of student thinking and classroom learning" but also which focuses on students' "community backgrounds, the emotional tenor of a classroom and the interpersonal dynamics with and between students" (McCaughtry, 2005, p.380). The purpose of teaching may be seen to connect students and curriculum, and McCaughtry (2005) stresses that "teachers, therefore, are to fully connect the child with the curriculum, they must know the whole student, not just how they cognitively grasp fractions for instance" (p.381). To "know the whole student", according to McCaughtry (2005), means "something much deeper and more interpersonal" (p.383). It includes teachers' understanding of how students' lives, inside and outside of school, influence their learning in classroom. The emotional understanding of students and their learning, according to Shulman (1991) also involves "a moral way of looking at the relationship between teacher and students" (p.18). In other words, teachers must invest their energy as well as faith in students and their learning. It is a moral commitment of teachers to education based on the belief that there is no student who cannot be taught well, there is only the teacher who does not know how to

teach.

The emotional dimension of pedagogical content knowledge can also be represented with respect to teachers' emotional experiences with the subject matter, and learning and teaching. To construct effective pedagogical content knowledge and achieve effective teaching, teachers need to be open-minded and develop their understanding of the subject matter and the possible representations of subject matter, as well as teaching and learning. There is no absolutely right instructional strategy that works forever and teachers should never be limited by just one way of looking at the subject. Instead, they should continually develop a repertoire of representations to connect teacher knowledge and student knowledge (Shulman, 1991). The passion that teachers show in developing their teaching instructional strategies and the efforts that they are willing to make is described by Shulman (1991) as "the intellectual and moral essence of teaching in the interests of students and the interests of humanity" (p.17).

The emotional dimension of pedagogical content knowledge can also be seen from teachers' social emotional experiences. Teachers' social emotional experiences refer to their emotional knowledge of the social, institutional, and cultural contexts where they teach (Zembylas, 2007). Teachers' emotional knowledge is seen to an important role in the development of pedagogical content knowledge and Zembylas (2007) proposes that "to teach well, teachers must be able to connect their emotional understanding with what they know about subject

102

matter, pedagogy, school discourses, personal histories, and curriculum" (p.364). In summary, the three emotional dimensions of pedagogical content knowledge are neither sufficient aspects of pedagogical content knowledge nor function independently. Instead, they are seen to occur simultaneously and "interact or overlap to shape instruction" (Zembylas, 2007, p.358).

Lastly, the development of pedagogical content knowledge is "non-linear" and "cyclical and interactive in nature" (Hashweh, 2005, p.280). In a study of teacher professional development, it was found that pedagogical content knowledge develops with the teachers' increasing understanding about subject matter knowledge and pedagogical practices over time (Watzke, 2007). There are several factors which influence the development of pedagogical content knowledge. Watzke (2007) proposes that teachers' prior knowledge, beliefs and instructional decisions, professional collaboration and reflective practices are all factors that influence PCK. Another way to develop teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is the practice of reflective teaching. According to research in foreign language (FL) education, reflective teaching is "a means of developing complex thinking and of understanding classroom events and teaching practices" (Watzke, 2007, p.65).

In sum, the five aspects of pedagogical content knowledge recognize PCK as both social and personal knowledge, practical knowledge, knowledge that is closely related to other categories of knowledge, knowledge that possesses an emotional

103

dimension, and knowledge with an interactive nature and non-linear development trend. These five aspects of PCK are not completely discrete but overlap and interact with each other, which indicates that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is not only a powerful tool and vehicle to analyze teachers' thinking and their instructional decisions in classroom practices, but it is also an effective means to explore how teachers' knowledge influences their professional development since it is an important category of teachers' knowledge.

In China, it is commonly recognized in the literature that English language teachers' limited subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge have become one of the major factors which hinders their professional development (Zhang et al., 2008; Jian, 2008, He, 2009). He (2009) explored 54 Chinese English language teachers' professional knowledge in one university and pointed out that most of the teacher participants' language acquisition knowledge was limited, which, he further claims, also contributed to the participants' traditional teaching beliefs. Zhang et al. (2008) emphasized that the lack of subject matter knowledge contributed to Chinese English language teachers being unable to understand the difficulties and problems which exist in students' learning and that the lack of pedagogical content knowledge contributed to Chinese English language teachers relying on knowledge-centred teaching pedagogy, rather than implementing student-centred teaching practices. Jian (2008) further pointed out that the lack of pedagogical content knowledge results in Chinese English language teachers just focusing on "what to teach" and ignoring

104

the "how to teach". She attributed the rigid teaching model and the gap existing between teacher beliefs and practices in China's English language teaching to teachers' limited pedagogical content knowledge. Therefore, if Chinese English language teachers are to teach for communication competence, there is a need to improve subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, as much as there is a need to enhance English language proficiency.

3.6 Chapter summary and research questions

This chapter has explored the existing research on teacher professional development, the discourse of change, and the factors that promote teacher development. The chapter has also reviewed the literature on teacher beliefs, and teacher knowledge, including English language proficiency, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. The literature explored in this chapter, together with sociocultural learning theory reviewed in Chapter Two, will form the theoretical framework of this study. The present study is concerned with the use of New Zealand English language teacher beliefs by Chinese English language teachers in the Chinese educational context. It is hoped that New Zealand teacher beliefs will contribute to developing Chinese English language teaching from one focusing on grammar and translation, to one focusing on language competency, and hence promoting Chinese English language teacher professional development. Based on the above purposes, the following research questions are proposed for this study:

1. What are Chinese English language teachers' beliefs about English language teaching and what are New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs about English language teaching?

2. How do New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice influence Chinese English language teachers' understanding of teaching and their practice?

3. What factors influence the use of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs by Chinese English language teachers to promote Chinese students' language proficiency?

4. How can Chinese English language teachers implement teaching for language proficiency more effectively?

To explore these issues, an appropriate research methodology is needed. The following chapter provides a description of the research methods used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research methodology used to address the research questions identified in the previous chapter will be discussed. The first part of this chapter deals with the research design (4.1). The second part addresses the interpretive research paradigm (4.2). The third part talks about the validity and reliability in qualitative research (4.3). The fourth part focuses on the action research methodology (4.4) and the remaining sections discuss the data generation (4.5), analysis strategies (4.6), the participants (4.7), as well as ethical issues related to the research (4.8).

4.1 Research design

In the previous chapters, the literature was reviewed and the major research questions for this study were clarified. Accordingly, this research was divided into three phases. The first phase was located in China from May to July in 2007. In this phase, the researcher explored the perceptions and teaching practices of 20 tertiary Chinese English language teachers and 99 students. They came from 5 different universities or colleges. In this phase, the teacher participants' teaching beliefs and the effects that these beliefs had on their teaching practices were gathered and teacher development, especially areas which had been identified as weak were explored by the researcher. The second phase occurred from August to November in 2007. It was located in New Zealand and focused on one New Zealand English language teacher's teaching beliefs, teacher practices, and teacher

development and the experiences of 20 students to identify what could be helpful for China's English language teaching and learning. In the last phase, action research with two teachers was employed to examine how New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices can be used to benefit English language teaching and learning in China. This phase lasted 4 months from March to July in 2008.

The research questions determined the design of the study. To investigate the differing perceptions of teaching of English language teachers in China and New Zealand, the influences of teaching beliefs on their teaching practice as well as the change process for Chinese English teachers, a research paradigm that highlighted understanding the teacher participants' diverse teaching practices in educational settings was required. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), "since there are many types of research questions and many types of designs, it is important to match the design with the question" (p.31). Therefore, this research employed qualitative methods since a qualitative research paradigm provides researchers with descriptive and in-depth data of the meanings constructed by the participants of "aspects of the social worlds of education", "producing and constructing the reality presented" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.73). Hence, interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations were the main data generation instruments used in the three phases of the study.

In addition, in the third phase, action research was employed in order to examine the process of developing Chinese English teachers' teaching beliefs by adapting

and applying a selection of New Zealand English teacher beliefs and practices. In action research, field notes are used as another data generation technique in addition to interviews, and classroom observations.

4.2 Interpretive qualitative research paradigm

This study was undertaken within an interpretivist paradigm (Lather, 1992). Within the interpretivist paradigm, researchers seek to understand behaviors from the teachers' own frame of reference and explore the meanings constructed by the teachers in the sociocultural contexts of their teaching (Lather, 1992). There were three main reasons for the researcher selecting the interpretivist paradigm and generating qualitative data, including the focus on in-depth and holistic interpretation of social phenomena, dynamic and flexible exploration of social phenomena, and the development of educational theorising. Each of these is discussed in turn.

4.2.1 In-depth and holistic interpretation of social phenomena

Qualitative research within an interpretivist paradigm focuses on in-depth and holistic meaning, interpretation and description of social phenomena (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Bryman, 1988). It is based on the assumption that "humans are conscious of their own behavior", therefore, "the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of their informants are vital" (Burns, 2000, p.388). As such, the main purpose of research in the interpretivist paradigm is to provide an in-depth descriptive study of human experiences and phenomena as understood by the

participants themselves (Lichtman, 2006). To achieve that goal, the data generated in research in this paradigm are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hittleman & Simon, 2006), which enables researchers to describe, illustrate and present the social phenomena. Furthermore, interpretivist research requires that the description or interpretation should be consistent with the constructed reality of the participants in the social contexts to "understand what is going on in a particular context and provide clues and pointers to other layers of reality" (Bryman, 1988, p.63). Accordingly, researchers working within interpretivist paradigm, use interviews, observations, and documents, enabling researchers to generate a broad range and a variety of types of data as well as to study the interrelationships among data (Stainback & Stainback, 1988), so as to present the complexity and holistic meanings constructed by the participants.

4.2.2 Dynamic and flexible exploration of social phenomena

A second reason for undertaking research in the interpretivist paradigm for this study is that it is dynamic and flexible since it allows for the examination of the process of social phenomena rather than simply focusing on the outcomes. Bryman (1988) argues that the emphasis on process is a response to the qualitative researchers' concern to reflect the reality of everyday life in educational contexts, and as such, qualitative research does not follow one particular way of doing things and the specific procedures may emerge *during* the research (Lichtman, 2006, McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Each step in qualitative research depends

on the data or information generated from previous steps during the study, and this allows researchers to "investigate and gain an understanding not only of the product but also of how a program or situation operates, how it developed, and why a program did or did not work" (Stainback & Stainback, 1988, p.12).

As mentioned previously, this study was divided into three phases. In the first and second phases, data generated was through interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations, and in the third, the action research employed interviews and classroom observations as the data collection strategies. Therefore, this study was dynamic in that each step depended on the data generated previously. In the action research, interviews (both individual and group interviews) were conducted in which participants told their own stories and experience. The researcher did not need to follow a predetermined set of questions in order to generate data on 'multiple realities' (Burns, 2000) of the research questions from the perspectives of participants. In each cycle of the action research, the changes that the teacher participants effected in their teaching were determined by themselves, based on their previous teaching. The flexible and ever-changing generation of qualitative research data enabled the researcher to make this study "more responsive to the needs of respondents and to the nature of the subject matter" (Walker, 1993, p.3). In addition, classroom observation was used as another data generation technique to capture the complexity of teaching activities. In this way, the researcher was able to maintain close association with both participants and their activities, within the participants' teaching settings, and gain an insider's view of their

teaching.

4.2.3 Developing educational theory and benefiting teaching and learning practices

The third reason for the researcher's decision to research within the interpretivist paradigm was that of developing educational theorising as qualitative research is seen as helpful to bridge the gap between theory and practice in educational settings. According to Stainback and Stainback (1988), qualitative researchers gather diverse and natural data occurring in educational settings and through analyzing the interrelationships among the data about educational concerns, qualitative research enables researchers to access to the "consistencies or inconsistencies in the data in order to determine theories, ideas, or hypotheses" (p.14). In other words, theories are formulated during the process of analyzing particular data generated. From this point of view, qualitative research is potentially useful in the development of theory in specific educational contexts.

In addition, as qualitative data is not presented as a statistical summation, but rather is reported in a descriptive and narrative style, this form of presentation "might be of particular benefit to the practitioner" (Burns, 1990, p.12). According to him, qualitative reports close the gap between ordinary teachers and research, as teachers without knowledge of sophisticated measurement techniques could go into qualitative reports and acquire new insights about educational concerns to improve their teaching; on the other hand, they might become interested and

112

involved in educational research themselves, which tallies closely with the purpose of this research, that is, to help English language teachers in China to improve their teaching practices and their students' learning outcomes. It was also the intention of this study to make the educational research beneficial to the participant teachers and their teaching practices.

4.3 Quality in qualitative research

Trustworthiness and robustness are two important indexes in evaluating the quality and rigor of qualitative educational research. Trustworthiness is akin to validity which means that the research actually measures "what it sets out to measure" (Mutch, 2005, p.114). That is, in qualitative research, "findings can be considered valid if there is a fit between what is intended to be studied and what actually is studied" (Stainback & Stainback, 1988, p.97). A key aspect of trustworthiness is that the user/reader of the research can trust the researcher's data generation, analysis and interpretation, especially with respect to whether "the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides, can actually be sustained by the data" (Cohen et al., 2003, p.107). According to Hittleman and Simon (2006), in qualitative research, research efforts to achieve trustworthiness include the use of triangulation, with multiple data sources, multiple data collection points, or multiple researchers. According to Hittleman and Simon (2006), triangulation refers to "the collection of information from different participant perspectives about the settings, activities and behaviors being observed" (p.138). Cohen et al. (2003) define it as the use of two or more

research methods in data collection. Multiple data sources refer to the different information collection sources (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). Multiple data collection points means that data are collected at different times or "when the researchers engage in repeated site visits to establish rapport with the participants" (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). The multiple perspectives of the phenomena being researched adds to the accuracy of the data and their meanings.

Another aspect of trustworthiness is akin to external validity, in the positivist research paradigm, according to Cohen et al. (2003), refers to "the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations" (p.109). In an interpretivist paradigm, the qualitative data enables researchers to generalize their findings within the settings, contexts and people (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), but it does not guarantee that the findings can be generalized to a wider population or different contexts (Cohen et al., 2003). Again, triangulation is an important technique used to address this aspect of trustworthiness.

In this study, the researcher maximized the trustworthiness of the data generated by firstly, employing the data generation technique of classroom observations in each of the three phases so that the researcher could immerse herself with the participants in their natural settings. This helped the researcher to obtain first hand data and knowledge of the research participants and contexts. Secondly, this study used multiple techniques for data generation and multiple data generation points. Twenty Chinese English language teachers from five different Chinese

114

universities and colleges, and 99 students were involved in the first phase. In the second phase, one experienced New Zealand English language teacher and 20 learners of English from China were interviewed individually. In the third phase, two Chinese English language teachers and their students took part in each of the three cycles of the action research. Data were collected at three different times: pre-, during- and post-action research. Before the action research, the teacher participants were interviewed to identify the changes that they wanted to make in their teaching; during the action research, the researcher observed their teaching and after the action research, both teacher and students were interviewed to express their opinions about the new teaching. Thirdly, this study employed multiple collection techniques to enhance the trustworthiness of data collected including questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and field notes. All the above measures maximized the quality of the research findings.

4.4 Action research methodology

Burns (2000) defined action research as "the application of fact-finding to practical problem-solving in a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (p.443). Action research is then a process in which "a 'problem situation' is diagnosed, remedial action planned and implemented, and its effects monitored" (Burns, 2000, p.443). Thus, action research is not only an effective way to connect theory to teaching practice (Mertler, 2006) but it also provides opportunities for teachers to reflect and develop their teaching in a systematic way (Koshy, 2005). It is generally agreed that action research in

education implies an orientation to engaging teachers in research, and professional development as well as a reflective way of teaching (Arhar et al. 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Stringer, 2007). Arhar et al. (2001) define action research as a form of professional development and point out that during action research, research, practice, and development are not separated. In the present research project, action research was employed when aspects of New Zealand English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices were applied in China's English language teaching contexts. The purpose was to help Chinese English language teachers to reflect upon their teaching and to improve their teaching practices by engaging in problem-solving research as practitioners.

According to the literature, three key elements characterize action research: ethical commitment, collaboration, and cycles of reflective and democratic principles (Arhar et al., 2001). Ethical commitment and the democratic principles require relationships in action research to be equal. That means, all people involved have the opportunity and power to make (share) decisions on the research questions, data generation, analysis, theorising and reporting. Having ethical relationships also involved the researcher addressing ethical issues of confidentiality, right of withdrawal and being aware of potential harm as discussed later in this chapter.

In this study, the researcher tended to make the major decisions about the actual research design as it was her doctoral research. However, the researcher followed

the above principles in the process of action research. In terms of relationship, the researcher encouraged cooperative and harmonious relationships among participants. When conflicts occurred, they were solved openly and all participants were treated equally and accepted as they were. In terms of communication, the researcher listened to every participant attentively, and accepted what they said. In terms of participation, the researcher encouraged participants to be active participants and provided support as much as possible to ensure that all relevant participants were involved.

The second key element of action research is collaboration, with teams of researchers and practitioners working together (Burns, 2000). Cardno (2003) suggests that a collaborative endeavor at all stages is one of the guiding values of action research. She also suggests that all participants involved must be active, no matter whether the project is conducted by a group or individual. One of the important issues in collaboration is the role of researcher. It is not necessary for an action researcher to follow the rules that researchers must be neutral and objective (Arhar et al., 2001; Cardno, 2003; Stringer, 2007). The role of the researcher is to provide direction and leadership during the long-term and systematic research and development process. Stringer (2007) even calls the action researcher the *research facilitator*. Arhar et al. (2003) define an action researcher's role in detail as "to bring to light assumptions, beliefs, and actions; to examine them; and to bring their actions into closer alignment with their values" (p.31).

In this study, the researcher fulfilled her role as mentioned above. Firstly, the researcher organized seminars about sociocultural learning theory before the practice of each cycle in the action research. The purpose of these seminars was to help teacher participants clarify their understanding about teaching as well as go beyond their own perceptions and interpretations about teaching. In this way, they could reflect on their own teaching practices with the help of a powerful education theory. Secondly, during teacher professional development meetings, the researcher tried to help teacher participants to clarify the changes that they wanted to make in the next cycle of the action research. Thirdly, the researcher maximized the benefits to the teacher participants and their students from action research. Whenever the researcher finished an interview with students, she fed back a summary of their responses to teacher participants in a timely way so as to build bridges between teacher and students as well as to enable more effective teaching and learning.

The third key element of action research is that it proceeds in a cyclic mode and each cycle repeats a series of steps comprising action and research (Cardno, 2003), with an emphasis on reflection. According to the literature (Cohen et al.,2003), each cycle involves four steps including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the first step of planning, researchers and practitioners identify problems, dilemmas or ambiguities that arise from the real world and formulate the research question (Burns, 1999; Burns, 2000; Kember &Kelly, 1993). Arhar et al. (2001) asserted that action researchers begin with knowing exactly what they

118

want to study and how to study, however, they enter with vague or general questions because "questions evolve over *time*" (p.89). Therefore, the researchers are able to think about and refine research questions as the research proceeds. In other words, action researchers and practitioners have to identify and establish some research questions to address their problems as well as guide their research, on one hand, and use their experience or some relevant educational knowledge from literature to recognize different dimensions and aspects of their research problems so as to refine their research questions further.

The second step in the action research cycle is the action. In this step, teacher participants take steps to implement their new teaching activities based on their own design, that is, to implement changes. The third step in the cycle, researchers collect and analyze the data about the effects of changes that teachers make.

In this study, the changes that teacher participants made in their teaching were determined by teacher participants and the new teaching activities were designed by the joint efforts of teacher participants and the researcher. Each change was based on the problems identified and data generated in the previous cycle. Whenever, the teacher participants implemented their new teaching, the researcher observed them. All the new teachings were video-taped and the researcher took field notes to supplement the recordings, which enabled the researcher to study the effects of the changes more effectively and comprehensively. In addition, individual teacher interviews and group student interview were conducted in each

cycle after the classroom observations. The multiple data sources enhanced the quality and trustworthiness of the observing stage.

The last step in the action research cycle involves critical reflections on what has happened and how effective the changes have been. According to Kember and Kelly (1993), critical reflection can take place both in isolation and within small groups. In this research, reflection happened among teachers and researcher during discussion and sharing different ideas as well as the responses from students in the meetings. The purpose of these discussions was to generate more innovative ideas and suggestions. Finally, as a result of the former stage, for the problems and dilemmas identified, new research question were formulated, and another action research cycle was started.

4.5 Data generation

Within the interpretivist paradigm, interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations were used to elicit the meanings constructed by the participants. The details of each of these data sources will now be outlined.

4.5.1 Interviews

The semi-structured interview was one of the data generation techniques used in this research project. Two interview formats were involved including individual and group interviews, with the purpose to suit different groups of people and contexts and to meet different research purposes (see Appendix V, VII, IX, X, XI)

According to Cohen et al. (2003), an interview is "an interchange of views" between researchers and participants on a topic of "mutual interests" (p.267). Lichtman (2006) points out that the purpose of the interview is to elicit from participants their views of the topic being researched. Generally, interviews are divided into three categories: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews. The selection of the interview category is determined by the purpose of the research (Bell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2003). The advantages of semi-structured interviews can be seen from two perspectives. Firstly, it allows researchers to obtain a set of responses that can be easily "recorded, summarized and analyzed" (Bell, 2005, p.159). Secondly, it provides researchers the opportunities to "discover the unexpected and uncover the unknown" (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p.204). Burns (2000) suggests that for a semi-structured interview, an interviewing guide without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions should be developed. The interview guide was not a structured interview question list, but a guide to remind the researcher of the range of the themes covered. In this way, "a direction is given to the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues of the study" (Burns, 2000, p.424). That is, the semi-structured interview, by its open-ended nature, allows researchers to ask interviewees ideas, opinions, or suggestions and get deeper insights into the research questions. The objective of the present study was to learn about teacher participants' beliefs, attitudes, and understandings about English language teaching and their own teaching practices as well as to explore the process of teacher professional development. Compared with the other categories of

interviews, the semi-structured interview, with minimal fixed wording, order, and format, provided the researcher with access to hear what the participants had to say in their own words, so as to achieve a greater depth of understanding of the situation of English language teaching (Lichtman, 2006).

In this study, the researcher employed Chinese to do interviews through the whole process. At the start of each interview, the researcher made a brief statement about the nature of the interview and made participants feel at ease (Stringer, 2007). Considerable attention was given to establish rapport, respect and understanding between the researcher and interviewees, and to maintain a focus on what the interviewee was saying. As the nature of the research objectives determines the interviewing modes employed, this study used two modes to address different situations: the individual interview and the group interview.

The individual interview involves just the researcher(s) and one interviewee. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004), individual interview helps researchers "to convey genuine interest in what an interviewee has to say and in what can be learned from the interviewee about the problem, topic or issue being investigated" (p.201). Such an in-depth interview helps researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how the participants interpret the situations. In this study, in order to study and explore both Chinese and New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs, values, and their understanding about teaching as well as how their beliefs influence their teaching practices, individual interviews were

employed in Phase One and Two. In Phase Two, since only one experienced English language teacher accepted the invitation to participate, an individual interview was conducted. Twenty Chinese students who were studying English in New Zealand accepted individual interviews. An individual interview was also used in the action research in Phase Three. Two teacher participants were interviewed individually both before and after each cycle of the action research. The purpose was to explore in-depth their feelings and constructed meanings during the process of the action research.

Group interviews have many advantages. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) contend that group interviews help researchers maximize data generation within decreasing time. The purpose of the group interview is to generate discussion and during the group discussion, freedom is given to participants to exchange their own ideas and opinions. By this socially-oriented data generation technique, participants can build on or respond to the ideas of other interviewees. Hence, during group discussion, the researcher is provided with access to alternative points of view as well as refining "the researcher's in-process interpretations garnered or developed from already-collected data" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.208).

However, in group interviews, the facilitation skills of the interviewer are very important. Bell (2005) argues that researchers should devise their own techniques to involve every participant, especially the silent ones, into discussion and

expression. In this research, group interviews were employed in the action research. In each group interview, there are 16 to 26 students involved in. The main reason for the researcher to have such a big group is that students in the two teacher participants' class were shy and it was believed that interviews in a big group might make them feel safe and more comfortable to give their opinions and make them active in responding to each other's opinions. The researcher noticed that most students involved in the action research were shy and they tend to be quiet when the researcher introduced this research to them. To deal with this, the researcher decided to employ a large group interview. During the discussion, the researcher tried to invite those silent students' ideas by asking "what do you think about it" or "do you agree his/her ideas".

In this research, as an organizer and listener, the researcher tried to maintain a neutral role and encourage interviewees to participate actively to elicit their meanings of the phenomena being studied. Meanwhile, during the discussion, the researcher avoided controlling participants' views of points and imposing her own ideas on participants.

4.5.2 Questionnaires

In this study, questionnaires were used to generate data about English language teaching in China. The questionnaire is an effective method for researchers to collect opinions, meanings and understanding from a large group of people (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). In this study, 99 Chinese students (all of them were

English language majors) consented to complete the questionnaires in Phase One. The purpose of the questionnaires was to elicit from students their views on China's English language teaching. Therefore, it was necessary to generate data from a wide range of subjects. From this perspective, the questionnaire was suitable for the purpose of the study.

The questions in the questionnaire were designed carefully (Bell, 2005) (see Appendix VI). The researcher went over the research objectives and identified the important themes for investigation in the questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify Chinese English language learners' beliefs and practices as well as the problems which were seen to need improvement. The questions were divided into three parts. The first part concerned information about participants, that is, their English language learning backgrounds. The second part addressed their teachers' teaching practices. Participants were asked to describe the teaching pedagogies that their teachers employed, how their teachers' teaching helped their learning, the strengths as well as the weaknesses in their teachers' teaching and so on. Questions in the second part helped the researcher to identify the concrete problems in China's English language teaching. In the last part students were asked to describe their ideal English language teacher. Questions in this part provided the researcher with some possible directions for changes in the Chinese teacher participants' teaching in the action research phase. In order to enable students to express their ideas correctly and deeply, the questionnaire was in Chinese.

According to the literature, there are generally two types of question: closed and open questions. Each type possesses advantages and disadvantages. According to Cohen et al. (2003), closed questions "prescribe the range of responses from which respondents may choose", and it is easy for researchers to code (p.248). However, closed questions do not enable respondents to add their feelings and responses accurately, and reduce the trustworthiness of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Open questions enable respondents to express their true feelings in their own terms (Cohen et al., 2003). In addition, open questions exert "the least amount of control over the respondents [which] helps researchers to capture idiosyncratic differences" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p.244). Since the purpose of the questionnaire in this study was to generate specific individual responses, it used open questions.

In terms of question writing, the researcher tried to word the questions precisely. Bell (2005) reminds researchers that words which have a common meaning to researchers might mean different things to participants; therefore, it is important that researchers ensure that the questions mean the same to all participants. In this study, the researcher piloted the questionnaire to check for understanding and misunderstanding with 10 of Chinese students who were also student participants in this research. Furthermore, to avoid ambiguity and imprecision in questionnaires, complex, negative and double negative questions were avoided. The principle for question design in this study was that all questions must be clear and easily understood by the research participants. In order to make student

participants respond easily and accurately, the questions were written in Chinese. Another issue which was considered was the layout and appearance of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was typed, with clear instructions. More space was provided for participants to write their answers. The order of the questions followed the principle that Bell (2005) mentions, that is, easy-to-complete questions came first and more complex questions came later.

For the distribution and return of questionnaires, the classroom teachers were asked to encourage their students to participate in the questionnaire by distributing the research information (see Appendix II) and invitation letter (see Appendix III). Once informed consent (see Appendix IV) was obtained, the questionnaire completion began. Participants were advised that their confidentiality and anonymity would be maximized.

4.5.3 Classroom observation

Classroom observation was used in this study in Phases One and Two to observe the teachers, who had been interviewed, teaching in their classrooms. According to the research objectives, in Phase One, once the questionnaires and interviews were completed, classroom observations were conducted to provide additional data to that in the questionnaires and interviews. In Phase Two, following the same procedures, one experienced New Zealand English language teacher's class was observed. In Phase Three, classroom observation was a particularly important research technique in the action research in this study. In the action research,

classroom observations were used to generate data about teacher participants' new teaching. The data generated from observation reflected what teacher participants did in class; the data collected from interviews reflected what teacher and student participants perceived to be happening. Therefore, once combined, findings from both sources become more trustworthiness.

Burns (1999) views classroom observation as a mainstay of action research. According to her, it enables researchers to "document and reflect systematically upon classroom interactions and events, as they actually occur rather than as we think they occur" (p.80). Stainback and Stainback (1988) claim that the best of classroom observation is where researchers can study what happens in class in a natural setting, and the evidence on what influence classroom interactions can also be obtained. Bell (2005) asserts that classroom observation helps researchers to triangulate interview data, since observation mainly relies on researchers' seeing, hearing and interpretation rather than participants' responses to questions. In this study, by observing, the researcher better understood the teaching practices of the New Zealand English language teachers. The researcher was then able to understand better how they theorize their teaching practices and how their teaching beliefs shape their practices. The significance of teaching beliefs and practices were the focus of the observation.

There are mainly two types of observation: structured and unstructured observations. Unstructured observation "involves observing a context, event or set

of activities with few or no specific or tightly defined data collection goals in mind" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.222). According to Bell (2005), unstructured observation is generally used to generate hypotheses; it is not only time-consuming but not easy to manage. Compared with unstructured observation, structured observation is planned closely beforehand with a detailed observation checklist, which is a list of actions that researchers expect to observe in the setting (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Structured observation was used in this research since the observing focus had been identified before the observation, as teacher participants' teaching practices in classroom, their classroom management skills and the relationships between teacher and students.

Classroom observation can also be divided into participant and non-participant observations. In participant observations, researchers directly and fully engage in the context being observed (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). In other words, researchers try to make themselves a natural and integral part of the context being observed. Non-participant observers "remove themselves as much as possible from the context they are observing" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.224). Compared with non-participant observation, participant observation enables researchers to gain "an insider perspective on what takes place" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.225). This study adopted a position midway between the two. Whilst the researcher was in the classroom sitting with the students, she wrote down fieldnotes, and did not take part in the learning activities with the students.

Bell (2005) reminds researchers that no matter whether the observation is structured or unstructured, participant or non-participant, the researcher's role is to observe and record as objectively as possible and then to interpret the data collected. In this study, the researcher identified the specific aspects she expected to observe before conducting the classroom observation, based on results from previous interviews and questionnaires.

Observation involves systematic noting and recording of the behaviors and activities in class (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). To be an observer, the researcher tries to record what she has observed, maximizing objectivity. However, it is impossible for researchers to record everything happened (Bell, 2005). Therefore, the researcher develops observing checklists for the classroom observation in different phases according to different research objectives (see Appendix VIII). The checklist is used as a guide for the researcher in classroom observation. Fieldnotes were used as well. One part of the fieldnotes was to record what happened in class; the other was for the researcher's feeling and impression about the teaching and learning activities occurred in class.

During the classroom observations in this study, the researcher also used video recording to capture naturalistic interactions and verbatim utterances. According to Burns (1999), audio and video recording can facilitate researchers to "reflect on the implicit beliefs, classroom scripts or mental schemata which are brought to classroom processes" (94). Field notes were written as well to record what

happened in class. The combination of printed recording and audio and video recording helped the researcher to generate more trustworthy data. The details of how field notes were kept are described in the following section.

4.5.4 Fieldnotes

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004), fieldnotes "comprise finely detailed written accounts of what was observed" (p.229). In other words, fieldnotes directly record what the observers see and hear as well as their impressions (Arhar et al., 2001). Arhar et al. (2001) claim that taking fieldnotes and reflecting on them helps researchers to become aware of the point of view from which they observe. In this study, the researcher employed fieldnotes during the classroom observation to describe what happened in detail, and when and where it happened as well. Arhar et al. (2001) note that, "recording that complexity through rich detail will help us as we try to analyze and synthesize what we have observed" (p.140). Another issue that the researcher paid attention to was that the fieldnotes used descriptive language rather than judgmental language. In addition, the researcher used alphabet letters for students' names to ensure the students' anonymity. Some reflective data was also included in the researcher's fieldnotes since it is essential in data analysis (Stainback and Stainback, 1988). For example, the researcher's feelings, reactions and interpretations about what was happening in class. This part of the data was separated from the descriptive data for analysis.

4.6 Data analysis for this research

Data analysis is a process of "bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.111). As mentioned earlier, this research employed qualitative research modes based on the research questions and objectives. The data analysis was based on interpretations of the interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations (including the fieldnotes, video-tape recording) in the action research. Qualitative data analysis seeks a general statement or builds grounded theory about the relationships between categories of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In this study, the analyzing strategies employed involved data organizing, data linkage establishing, data interpreting, and speculating. These strategies will now be described in detail.

4.6.1 Data organizing

Organizing data refers to "the process of preparing data in ways that enable the researcher to readily retrieve specific 'pieces' from the overall data set"(Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.266-267). In this step, the researcher employed different data organizing methods depending on the data generation strategies used. In the first phase of the study, questionnaires were used. For data generated from questionnaires, the researcher firstly worked out the types of questions, for example, questions about the teaching pedagogies that China's English language teachers employ, questions about their teaching problems, questions about students' ideal images of English language teachers, and so on. In this way, the responses could be categorized and analyzed more easily. With data from

interviews and classroom observations, the researcher transcribed all the tape recordings and video recordings either in Mandarin or in English. While the researcher read and re-read the data transcriptions, she took the research questions into account and theorised using sociocultural learning theory as well as teacher development theory. In this way, the researcher not only familiarized herself with the data generated, but made it easier to categorize data and identify patterns. Once the key patterns were identified, large amounts of complex and descriptive data could be coded and reduced, thus, becoming more manageable.

4.6.2 Data linkage establishing

Once the data had been categorized, the researcher examined the hierarchies or sequences between data sources so as to identify the relationships and connections between them, and maintain complexity. Since this study consisted of three phases, and the third phase was based on the findings of the first two phases, data linkage occurred firstly at the connection of data between the first and second phases. In the third phase, when the action research was conducted, linkage occurred between cycles.

At this stage, the researcher continually refined the categories that were identified in the previous stage. Meanwhile, to prepare for the next stage of data interpretation, the researcher kept track of her thinking by writing notes and comments about the ideas that occurred to her. When analyzing the data in the action research, memos were written as well. The purpose was to remind the

researcher of the problems identified in this cycle and what needed to be done in the next cycle. The purpose of this stage was to further "describe and display the data rather than to interpret them" (Burns, 1999, p.158).

4.6.3 Data interpreting

After organizing, comparing, grouping data and linking different data sources, the researcher moved to the stage of data interpretation. According to Arhar et al. (2001) data interpretation refers to making sense of and explaining or theorising the data. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) regard qualitative research data analysis as "an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories" (p.479). According to them, inductive analysis means that "categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed on data prior to data collection" (p.480). Using the data organizing and linking from the two previous stages, the researcher in this study used theoretical frameworks as the platform to form tentative explanations. For the action research, data interpretation was an ongoing process that began at the outset. During this process, critical thinking and rethinking were necessary. The purpose was not only to interpret the behaviors by using existing theories but also to develop theories.

4.6.4 Speculating

At this stage, more thinking about the tentative interpretations was needed. Atthis stage, the big picture underpinning the research was further explored and

grounded theory (Bell, 2005; Donato, 2000; Lantolf, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, 1987) about English language teaching and teacher development was developed.

4.7 The participants in this research

In line with the research questions, four groups of participants were involved in this research in the three phases: Chinese English language teachers, a New Zealand English language teacher, Chinese English language learners in China, and Chinese English language learners in New Zealand. In the following sections, the participants involved in each of the three phases are described.

4.7.1 Participants in Phase One

In Phase One, 20 tertiary Chinese English language teachers and 99 Chinese English language students were involved in. The 20 teacher participants were interviewed individually in Chinese and 99 tertiary students were given a questionnaire to complete. The 20 teacher participants come from five different schools. Among these five schools, one is a national key university, two were ordinary universities, and two were vocational colleges. In China, there are some differences between university and vocational college. University refers to the school that offers degrees in various areas of study and offers degrees beyond bachelor, while vocational college usually focuses on particular skills or trades. Table 4.1 provides detailed background information about the 20 English language teachers in this study:

	MA	9
Educational Qualification	BA	11
	Associate Professor	4
Professional Titles	Lecturer	13
	Associate Lecturer	3
	Over 15 years	5
Teaching Experience	10-15 years	4
	5-10 years	8
	0-5 years	3

Table 4.1 Chinese English language teachers' background information

The 99 student participants came from three universities and colleges and were all studying as English language majors with more than six years' English language learning experience[1].

4.7.2 Participants in Phase Two

In the second phase, one New Zealand English language teacher and 20 Chinese English language students were involved in. The New Zealand English language teacher was an experienced teacher with more than ten years ESOL teaching experience and a Bachelor's degree. At the time of interviewing, she was studying for a master's degree majoring in ESOL teaching. Twenty students agreed to be individually interviewed as well. The interviews in New Zealand were conducted

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[1] Most of them had more than 9 years' experience as they started English language learning from primary school; those who come from rural areas had more than 6 years' experience.

within university setting. The 20 Chinese English language learners all learned English language in university setting. They all have learning experiences both in China and in New Zealand. Among them, 12 were studying English language and 8 have enrolled in university. Some of some have learned English language in two different cities and 2 of them were the students of the interviewed English language teacher. But the other 18 students did not know her. During the interviews, some of the students mentioned more than 1 New Zealand teacher as they mentioned "one of the New Zealand teachers" "the teacher who impressed me deeply is…" The details about their academic learning are listed in Table 4.2:

Academic Status	Length of Learning English as a Student in New Zealand	Numbers of Students
Language Institute Student 12	0-2 months learning experience	1
	2-4 months learning experience	3
	4-6 months learning experience	5
	Over 6 months learning experience	2
Tertiary Student 8	0-2 months learning experience	0
	2-4 months learning experience	0
	4-6 months learning experience	7
	Over 6 months learning experience	1

Table 4.2 Background information of Chinese students learning in New Zealand

All the 20 students have English language learning experience in China. Thirteen of them (65%) spent 6 years in English language learning in China, which include

3 years in middle school and 3 years in high school. Two of them have 7 and 8 years' learning experiences in China respectively as they had studied in university for 1 and 2 years before coming to study in New Zealand. The other 5 students have less than 4-year learning experience in China and four of them studied English language in New Zealand after they finished middle school study. Sixteen of them (80%) stated that they had to learn English as English is a compulsory course and they had to learn to pass examination. Among the 16 students, 8 students further reported that they didn't like English when they studied in China and their learning results were not good; 6 reported that they like English but they found it very difficult to learn it well in China, especially oral communication in English; 2 of them reported that they belong to the lower achievement students in English language learning in China, and it seemed that there was no any hope for them to pass university entrance examination, so, they chose to study abroad. For the other 4 students, their responses for the learning purposes in English language learning in China include "to learn another culture", "to widen vision" and "to master another language".

4.7.3 Participants in Phase Three

In the third phase of the study, two teacher participants and the students in their classes were involved in the action research. The two teacher participants were both young teachers with two and three years' teaching experience. Both of them were majors of Business English language with a bachelor degree. The action research lasted three cycles, and the teacher participants took part in seminars

about sociocultural teaching and learning theory and professional development meetings before each cycle. In addition, they both took part in interviews before and after each cycle. The students in their class were interviewed in groups according to whom their teacher was. Access to participants will be discussed in the following part of ethical concerns in detail.

4.8 Ethical concerns

Research involving humans has ethical concerns that need to be addressed (Cohen et al., 2003; May, 2001; Zeni, 2001). In this research, the following ethical issues were addressed: informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, the right of withdrawal, and ethics in action research. Each of these will now be discussed.

4.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent refers to "the procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decision" (Diener & Crandall, 1978, p.34). Informed consent is an ethical way for researchers to respect their participants. In the first two phases of the present study, the researcher fully respected participants' "rights to freedom and self-determination" (Cohen et al., 2003, p.51). Firstly, they were fully informed. The researcher contacted school leaders by mail at the outset to introduce the research project attached (see Appendix I, II). Letters to potential teacher and student participants about the detailed information were also provided (see Appendix II, III). The letter included information about the research purpose,

research methods employed, the activities participants will be involved in, and the possible risks and expected benefits. Once school leaders notified the researcher of potential teacher participants, the researcher contacted them in person and asked them to send the information to their students. Consent forms for both teacher and student participants were provided as well (see Appendix IV). Secondly, in order to ensure that each participant fully understood the information, the letters to Chinese teacher and student participants were written in Mandarin. Contact information of the researcher's chief supervisor was provided in the invitation letters, in this way, once participants had any concerns about the research, they could contact with the supervisor. Thirdly, participants were informed that they had the right and freedom to decide whether they participated in the research as well as the right to withdraw at any time.

4.8.2 Privacy and confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality were two major issues in this study. According to Sieber (1982), privacy refers to "person's interest in controlling the flow of information between themselves and others", and confidentiality refers to "an extension of the concept of privacy which refers to agreements between persons that limit others' access to private information"(p.145). According to Sieber (1982), privacy concerns persons and confidentiality concerns data.

This study took measures to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality of the data generated by them. Firstly, anonymity was maximized to protect participants'

identity. The principle of anonymity is "not using the names of the participants or any other personal means of identification" (Cohen et al., 2003, p.62). In this study, the names of participants were replaced by alphabet letters or numerical digits. Secondly, the researcher informed participants in the invitation letters and consent forms that the connection between them and the information that they provided will be in no way known publicly as the data generated and the key to the data codes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for 10 years before being destroyed.

4.8.3 Ethics in action research

Ethical problems are always interwoven with research methodology. According to Kelly (1989a), action research is the area in qualitative research to which the special ethnical attention needs to be paid. Action research is an important research methodology in this research. Before conducting the action research, as in the previous two phases, the researcher contacted the school principal and headteachers to introduce the project (see Appendix I, II). Invitation letters to potential teacher and student participants were provided (see Appendix III) including the research purpose, methodologies, activities participants would be involved in, and potential risks and benefits for them. Consent forms were also provided to inform them of their rights during the process of research (see Appendix IV). The measures used in Phase One and Two to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality were taken as well in action research. According to Van Den Berg (2001), an important point in action research is that action research

should be compatible with educational aims. Therefore, the researcher paid much attention not to conflict with participants' teaching aims and students' learning during the process of action research.

4.9 Chapter summary

In sum, this study was undertaken within the interpretivist paradigm to explore and understand teachers' beliefs and practices regarding Chinese and New Zealand English language teachers. A summary of the data generation techniques used and the participants involved in each phase is listed in Table 4.3:

Phase of the research	Dates	Data generation techniques	Participants
Phase One	05/2007-07/2007	Questionnaire, Interview, Classroom observation	20 Chinese teachers, 99 Chinese learners
Phase Two	08/2007-11/2007	Interview, Classroom observation	1 New Zealand teacher, 20 Chinese English language learners
Phase Three	03/2008-08/2008	Interview, teacher professional development meeting, Classroom observation	2 Chinese English language teachers and the students in their classes

Table 4.3 A summary of the research methodology and participants in this study

In Phase One and Phase Two, questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations were used to generate qualitative data about English language

teaching in New Zealand and in China. Chapter Five will report the findings of Phase One and Two. The data generated from these two phases laid a foundation for the action research in Phase Three. During the three cycles of the action research, student and teacher interviews, classroom observations were used to investigate the changes in teacher participants' teaching and how the changes promoted their professional development. The findings of Phase Three will be discussed in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FIVE PRE-ACTION-RESEARCH DATA

The pre-action-research data were generated for three purposes. The first was to explore Chinese English language teacher beliefs, teaching practices, and the perceived problems existing in current English language teaching in China; the second purpose was to explore New Zealand English language teacher beliefs, teaching practices, and the significant issues in New Zealand English language teaching; the third purpose was to refine research questions reported in Chapter Three (page 104) and pave the way for the action research. This chapter will first report the findings about English language teaching in China obtained by administering a questionnaire to 99 Chinese English language learners and also by interviewing 20 English language teachers from five universities and colleges (5.1). Then the findings about English language teaching in New Zealand obtained by interviewing one experienced New Zealand English language teacher and 20 Chinese learners who had learned English language in New Zealand will be reported (5.2).

This chapter presents the research findings from a qualitative interpretation of the data and is the result of identifying, grouping and analyzing the converging themes collected from coding and decoding the questionnaires, and transcribing, reading and re-reading the interviews. The coding system include participants numerical name and question number which responses come from. For example, Chinese student participants' responses will be coded as CS1, PI Q1 (PI refers to

Part I since there are two parts in the questionnaire). Chinese English language teachers' replies in the interviews will be coded as CT1Q1. While for New Zealand participants, NZS and NZT will be used to refer to student and teacher participants.

5.1 English language teaching in China

In this section, some Chinese English language teachers' and Chinese students' beliefs about English language teaching and learning, teachers' teaching practices, as well as the problems identified in questionnaires and interviews will be reported. The coding system include participants numerical name and question number which responses come from. For example, Chinese student participants' responses will be coded as CS1, PI Q1 (PI refers to Part I since there are two parts in the questionnaire), Chinese English language teachers' replies in the interviews will be coded as CT1Q1. While for New Zealand participants, NZS and NZT will be used to refer to student and teacher participants.

5.1.1 Teachers' and students' beliefs about English language teaching in China

This section explores the 20 Chinese English language teachers' and the 99 students' beliefs about English language teaching and learning. Several themes were identified: It was found that the students' purposes for learning English language were varied. In addition, the English language teachers felt teaching had gone beyond teaching the language and had a richer meaning. Meanwhile, traditional teaching and learning culture was seen by the teachers as being less

145

influential in English language teaching. Both Chinese English language teachers and students have their own understanding of teaching and learning. Each of these themes is now discussed.

English language learning purposes were varied

The Chinese student participants' purposes for learning the English language were varied, according to their responses in the questionnaires. From the 99 questionnaires, thirty-nine student participants (39.4%) related their learning to their personal development and career options. For example, some of them mentioned that their purpose for learning the English language was to find a good job in the future because English was one of the most widely used languages (CS6, 25, 33, 39, 61, 70, 95) and some of them mentioned that English could provide them with more options and opportunities in their future development (CS13, 19, 27, 53, 78, 82). Thirty-one student participants (31.3%) mentioned that they had more access to information by learning the English language and they regarded English language as a wealth or a key to wealth. Here is an example comment made in one of the questionnaires:

> *At the beginning, I had to learn English because it is one of the school required courses. However, gradually, I realized that English is very important because it is the tool for global communication and it provides us the access to more information. As we all know, in modern times, information means wealth* (CS49 PI Q1).

Of the 99 student participants, 14 (14.1%) mentioned that they liked languages and they enjoyed the process of learning a language. Eleven (11.1%) of them mentioned that they wanted to learn about a new culture related to the English language. They thought that learning English could not only enrich their cultural knowledge, but also widen their communication and vision, for example:

I think English (language learning) enriched my knowledge. When I learn the language, I am very interested in the cultural knowledge that my teacher introduced in class. This knowledge enabled me to learn more about English language speaking people including their life and the way that they look at the world (CS85 PI Q1).

Responses from the teacher participants confirmed that Chinese students have varied purposes in English language learning. In the interviews, the teachers concluded that the purpose of their teaching was to meet various requirements. "To satisfy students' requirements" was mentioned by all the twenty teachers. The following was a typical view of the teachers:

All the students I teach are English language majors. English will be their meal bowl. So their practicing abilities are very important...en.... All my teaching has to focus on improving their speaking, listening, reading and writing abilities, especially their listening and speaking abilities... This is also the requirements of students (CT11Q1).

To meet the requirements of society was another consideration reported by the English language teachers in their teaching. Seventeen teacher participants (85%) mentioned this point. One of them told the researcher that nowadays English language graduates were very popular especially those with high level abilities in oral communication. Therefore, his teaching was to help his students find a good job once they graduated and in this way students might have great motivation to learn (CT20 Q1).

Compared with the two points mentioned above, only 5 teachers (25%) identified that the targeted purpose of their teaching was to meet the requirement of curriculum guidelines. T2 was an English writing teacher, she mentioned:

My teaching basically conforms to the specific curricular guidelines. For example, the purpose of English language writing is to improve students' comprehensive writing abilities from the aspects of vocabulary, grammar, sentence, paragraph and structure. I plan my lesson according to these requirements... (CT2 Q1)

In the interviews, it was particularly noticeable that students' learning and students' requirements in their learning had become the most important consideration in the teacher participants' teaching practices. All the teacher participants expressed their views on the traditional teaching. They mentioned while the traditional English language teaching in China is still knowledge-

transmission (CT3, CT7, CT18), it plays a negative role in fostering practical English competencies (CT7, CT9, CT11,CT19). CT7 mentioned that the traditional teaching modes were outdated and could not satisfy the requirements of modern society. She said that the traditional teaching could only kill students' initiative and creativity in learning.

English language teaching has got a richer meaning

All the 20 teacher participants agreed that English language teaching went beyond teaching the language itself. During the interview, the teachers mentioned that English language teaching was to teach knowledge, culture related with the language, to develop students' language competencies, to promote their learning interests, and to help students form their own effective learning methods. For example, CT5 said:

> *Interest is the best teacher. It is essential for a successful teacher to be able to promote students' interests in English language learning. It is also a challenge to teacher. In my eyes, an English language teacher should have good English and Chinese knowledge especially should be good at culture difference between these two languages. The comparison of these two different cultures is an effective way to promote students' interests* (CT5 Q1)

It was commonly agreed by the teacher participants that English language teachers should improve student personal development including teaching them how to

learn (CT1, CT2, CT5,CT6, CT9, CT10, CT12, CT14, CT15, CT16, CT17, CT19) how to solve problems by themselves (CT1, CT2, CT3, C T7, CT11, CT18, CT20) and how to cooperate with others (CT5, CT8, CT11, CT19) . For example, CT10 said:

> *I think learning ability is very important for students. Learning will not stop even after they leave school. So, the ability to learn is very important for their future development in the competing society. As we Chinese always say that to provide people skills to fish is better than to provide them with fish* (CT10 Q2).

Of the 20 Chinese English language teacher respondents in the interview, 55% of the teachers acknowledged that teaching was to help students' learning. For example, CT8 defined his role in class as "to guide students", "learn student learning", "give them help", and "encourage them to learn" (Q2). CT19 mentioned that it was very important for English language teacher to learn about "students' language abilities" and "the difficulties of teaching materials". He thought that "good teaching should not be limited by teaching materials"(Q2) .

Four teachers (20%), in the interview, mentioned that teaching meant learning about students. CT9 thought that it was useful to learn about students because a good understanding about students helped to communicate with students and close the gap between teacher and students:

... A good understanding about students' mental world can help me to communicate with them better.. Normally, students like young teachers. I think that's because they have more shared opinions or beliefs. ... This phenomenon indicates that we elder teachers should learn about students. ... Learning about students is also a kind of knowledge. And we have to learn (CT9 Q2).

CT15 (Q3) pointed out that learning about students and what they thought was helpful to maintain classroom disciplines and with the changing times, teachers had to change themselves and get rid of their out-of-date perspectives so as to close the gap between them and their students as well as keep up with the development of the society.

Students feel that traditional teaching and learning culture has become less influential in China today

Data from the 99 questionnaires indicated that the culture of traditional teaching and learning has become less influential on students and that they had their own understanding about teaching and learning. Seventy-three students (73.7%) thought that language was for communication and they needed more opportunities for practice in listening, and speaking so as to overcome their "dumb English". Among the 73 students, 66 students (90%) expressed that they suffered from difficulties in speaking and listening. CS55 mentioned:

Language is for speaking. Teacher should organize more activities for students to communicate in English. Grammar knowledge is also one important aspect. However, grammar should function as the facilitator to help us speak fluently. I hope that my English teacher can find more interesting topics for us to discuss (PII Q3).

A majority of students (62 out of 99) acknowledged that in their English language class, grammar teaching and learning still took a big proportion of the time and that talking by English language teachers still dominated a big proportion of the time (63.6%). It was a common student opinion that they wished to be given more time in practising the language and taking the initiative in their own learning.

Fifty-seven students (57.5%) thought that learning was about being active and positive engagement. CS35 mentioned that it was important for students to be involved in teaching and encouraged to speak, and to raise and answer questions (PII Q2). CS87 pointed out that the classroom should not be a "one-person show" by the teacher. Instead, students should have "more engagements" especially "exciting and challenging" engagements (PII Q2). CS74 suggested that teachers should not rigidly follow text-books but involve students in effective learning (PII Q2).

Eighteen students (18.2%) regarded learning as frequent communication between teacher and students. CS45 mentioned:

I hope that there is more communication between teacher and students. Teacher can identify the various abilities of students, thus, provide help to each student according to their different learning conditions (CS45 PII Q2).

It was commonly agreed that the purpose of communication between teacher and students was for teachers to identify problems which existed in students' learning so as to help them learn better. CS96 mentioned that during the communication, teachers could learn about students' "learning styles" and help them to find "a better teaching method" (PII Q2),　CS23 pointed out that through communicating, teacher could "find apt and specific ways to solve problems" according to students' learning (PII Q2).

Besides their opinions about learning, the students also had their own understanding about teaching and what a good English language teacher should be. Ninety-two students (92.9%) agreed that a good English language teacher should have excellent professional abilities. It was commonly agreed that a good English language teacher was not only good at professional knowledge such as fluent oral English language, and plenty of knowledge about English language and culture, but also was good at teaching pedagogy, for example, he/she knew how to encourage and facilitate students' learning. An example of comments which expressed this follows:

The ideal English language teacher can plan lesson in a unique way, speak

good English and make the classroom atmosphere active by telling humorous

stories and providing practicing opportunities (CS27 PII Q3).

A good English language teacher can complete his/her instruction in English.

His /her English should be correct and standard and be able to create an

English environment, invite students to open their mouth and give them

courage and confidence (CS82 PII Q3).

Sixty-two (62.6%) students thought that a good English language teacher should

be interactive with students. They thought that interaction between teacher and

students was necessary for an active class and favorable for the opportunity of

students to learn more effectively. The following extracts exemplify this:

There should be more interactions between teacher and students. During the

interactions, students can be more active and learn better... (CS37 PII Q3)

Each member of the class feels that he/she is an indispensable part of the

class and thinks her/himself is important (CS29 CSQ PII Q3).

Forty-seven (47.5%) students thought a good English language teacher should be

able to create good learning circumstances for students. CS2 thought that an ideal

teacher should implement instruction in English to create an encouraging learning

circumstance for students to speak the target language (PII Q3). CS75 regarded

the ideal teacher as the one who was able to "create a positive language learning

environment" and "motivate students' enthusiasm". In this way, students could

"have the feeling that learning English is a happy thing"(PII Q3).

Twenty-six students (26.3%) thought that a good English language teacher should

possess the following personality traits: being kind, humorous, helpful,

responsible, encouraging, and knowledgeable. Personality traits were regarded as

an important index to measure a good English language teacher. CS34 mentioned

that a good English language teacher should be kind to students, both during and

after class (PII Q3). This view was agreed to by CS46 who said that the ideal

English language teacher should be "patient enough" and "keep smiling during the

class so as to create a relaxed atmosphere" (PII Q3). CS10 pointed out that a good

English language teacher should be responsible for his/her teaching rather than

regarding it as a job he/she had to do (PII Q3). CS55 mentioned:

In my opinion, the ideal English language teacher is able to present his/her

profound knowledge or the diligent learning attitudes in his/her teaching (PII

Q3).

Thirteen students (13.1%) mentioned that a good English language teacher knew

how to guide students to achieve effective learning. CS27 described an English

language teacher as the person who "leads" students "into the door" and with the

155

teacher's "guidance" and students' "endeavor", a better learning could be achieved (PII Q3). However, CS27 also said that compared with teacher, students played a more important role in learning. CS8 echoed the above opinion, in the following extract:

The key to improving English lies in students' hard work themselves. Teacher just functions as guidance, however, she is still very important. For example, in class, teacher should provide students more questions without answers (PII Q3).

Seven students (7.1%) thought that a good English language teacher should love students and be willing to establish a good relationship with students. These students mentioned that a good relationship between teacher and students was helpful for their learning. It was emphasized that a good English language teacher should treat all students equally no matter whether their English level was good or not. CS39 mentioned that the ideal teacher should "love each student no matter how excellent or ordinary the student is" (PII Q3). CS47 thought that English language teacher should "never abandon any one student, love them, encourage them and give them confidence like friends" (PII Q3).

Six students (6.1%) thought that a good English language teacher knew how to motivate students to think and explore in their learning. They suggested that the teacher should provide students with more questions for them to explore rather

than providing answers and letting students remember like a machine. CS91 mentioned this:

> *I hope my teacher can always give us some questions without answers and let us think about and find answers. This is an effective way to learn knowledge and to have a deep impression* (PII Q3).

Responses from the questionnaires indicated that the students possessed specific learning targets and a clear concept of a good English language teacher in their minds.

Traditional teaching and learning culture has become less influential on today's English language teachers in China

During the pre-intervention interviews, it was found that the English language teachers interviewed were less influenced by the traditional teaching and learning culture in China than before. They possessed their own teaching beliefs which came from their own learning and teaching experiences, and reflections of their own understanding about English language teaching and learning. All twenty teachers involved in the interviews defined the student as the centre of teaching. They emphasized that "the student is the key of teaching" (CT15 Q1) and "the student is the starting point of teaching" (CT13 Q1). The teachers mentioned that they should "experience the process of knowledge understanding from students' standpoint" (CT7 Q1) and "adjust teaching according to students' learning" (CT9

Q2). Twelve of the teachers (60%) pointed out that they focused on improving students' interest in learning; eight (40%) of the teachers expressed that their teaching was to guide students in learning methods; and ten (50%) of them regarded their teaching as a process to learn about students' learning.

Besides the above, eighteen teachers (90%) mentioned that they regarded themselves as a facilitator of students' learning. They thought a teacher should learn about each student's language learning so as to make decisions and design teaching and learning activities with a well-defined objective in mind. CT7 said:

I think [during teaching and learning process] a teacher's role is to pull thread through a needle. A teacher should not be the centre. For me, a teacher should learn about students' learning, and their thinking, then, decide how to help them learn better. This is the role that I mentioned as "pulling thread through a needle". A teacher plays the role to guide students and help them to achieve their learning goal… Student is the center. There should be more dialogues between teacher and students. This communication between teacher and students is an equal one. I think it is an ideal state (CTI Q2).

CT19 pointed out that teaching varied according to different students, and teachers could get inspiration from students during teaching process. CT20 echoed the above opinions and added that teachers could be a little serious in class but never exerted any pressure on students.

Eighteen (90%) of the teacher participants regarded the English language, not only as a symbol system, but also as the carrier of culture. Most of them conducted their language teaching in the context of culture. CT13 mentioned "I try to improve students' language and cultural awareness" (Q4) and CT18 "combine(s) teaching contents with cultural knowledge and professional knowledge" (Q4).

Another point raised by all the teacher participants was that student learning-ability came first in teaching. They mentioned this point either explicitly or implicitly. According to the responses, learning ability was defined as "abilities to learn"(Q1), "abilities to acquire information" (CT5 Q1), "abilities to carry out relevant research" (CT11 Q1) and "abilities to communicate orally and literally"(CT14 Q1). CT1 mentioned that his teaching purpose was to foster a useful person for the society and teaching students how to learn by themselves was the key of his teaching. CT3 expressed the same view as CT1 by expressing that "My teaching is to stimulate students' interest in English and help them master learning methods so as to master knowledge by themselves" (Q1). After learning-ability, communication ability was the second most frequently mentioned. The teachers called learning-ability an invisible ability, while, communication ability in English was visible, which reflected students' learning directly. Therefore, it became another important consideration of the teachers. More than 90% of the teacher participants mentioned that students' communication abilities both orally and literally had became an important factor in appraising their

teaching.

All the teacher participants agreed that teaching meant an equal and friendly relationship with students. They thought that the relationship between them and their students was an important factor not only for their teaching but also for themselves as a teacher. "Equal" and "friendly" were the most frequently mentioned words to describe their ideal relationship with students. The extracts below are examples of this:

... [The relationship between students and me is] the relationship like friend. However, this friendship is different from the one between contemporaries. It is an equal relationship and equal in mental (CT17 Q3).

I think the relationship between teacher and students is the one between friends, an equal relationship through which teacher and students can learn from each other (CT2 Q3).

The teacher participants thought that a good relationship with their students was not only necessary for their teaching but also for themselves. For them, a good relationship with students meant that they were accepted and recognized by students (CT13 Q3). And the acceptance and recognition by students, for most of the teacher participants, symbolized students' approval of them as a teacher. More than 80% of the teacher participants mentioned that they cared about students'

approval of their teaching and for themselves as a teacher. Below is an example from CT13:

... For me, a good relationship with students indicates their approval for my teaching and my personality. Being a teacher, I cherish it very much and I think to be accepted by students is the essential for a teacher, because it not only brings me confidence but also encourage me to do better. Otherwise it becomes very hard to regard teaching as a lifelong profession (Q3).

The above three points that students' learning is the centre of teaching (students' learning ability comes first and the relationship between teacher and students is equal) indicates that the current English language teaching practice of the twenty teachers in this study has gone beyond the influence and limitation of Chinese traditional teaching and learning culture, and that these teachers do not have traditional teacher-centred, text-centred and grammar-centred teaching beliefs.

5.1.2 The views of students on English language teaching practices of their Chinese teachers

The second data set in the data generated in China is that of the views of the teaching practices of the English language teachers. Data were generated on the teachers' teaching practices in the questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. The data are now reported.

Students' responses to teaching

Seventy-six student participants (76.7%) mentioned that their current English language teachers should provide them with more practice opportunities and they denied that their teachers' teaching was helpful to develop their English language communicating competence. Thirty-five (35.4%) students described their own spoken English as "dumb English" and they attributed this to insufficient practice in class. For example:

> *I hope that our teacher should give us more practising opportunities in listening, speaking, grammar and writing. In speaking, our teacher should organize us to practise English; in writing, she should ask us to write more, for example, dialogue, report. I think enough practice can help us improve. In grammar, she should illustrate the knowledge together with enough practice. For example, she can give us some exercises to check whether we have understood it* (CS77 PII Q3).

The students also mentioned that too much listening, following, and memorizing without oral practice limited the development of their language communicating abilities. According to their responses, communicating in the target language in class was what they were most concerned about. More than 70% students proposed in the questionnaire that their teachers should communicate more with them in English in class or should create opportunities to communicate with each other in English. It was strongly acknowledged that insufficient spoken English

162

was no longer acceptable to the students.

When asked what they normally did in English classes, eighty-seven students of the total of ninety-nine described that they mainly listened and took notes or tried to remember what their teachers said. Most of them described their role in class as listening and answering the questions from their teachers. The response of CS38 was a typical one:

[I] Listen to our teacher carefully and pay much attention to each of the language point and take notes. After class, I will try to remember them (PII Q1).

Among the 99 students, forty of them (40.4%) mentioned that except for going over what their teacher instructed in class, they did not know what they should learn by themselves after class. Thirty-five students (35.4%) said that they not only "actively cooperate with"(CS19 PII Q1) their teachers, and "closely follow" (CS56 PII Q1) their teachers' thinking, but also "looked up relevant materials" if there was any "difficulties in understanding words or sentences"(CS37 PII Q1). Only nine of the students (9%) said they took the initiative to practise the target language after class to make up for the deficiency in practising in class. CS9 mentioned this:

In class, I listen to our teacher carefully and take notes. After class, I

memorize vocabulary and read text early in the morning, and sometimes I find some exercises to practice my listening and spoken language, for example, I sometimes communicate with my classmates in English (PII Q1).

Forty-three students (43.4%) mentioned that they were not satisfied with their teachers' spoken language ability and commented that their teacher's spoken language was poor. Ninety students (90.9%) mentioned that their English language teacher's spoken language ability influenced them greatly with respect to their interest in learning, motivation for learning, learning environments, and even their learning outcomes. These students generally thought that an English language teacher with fluent spoken language could bring them the target language information and nurture their English language skills, especially their listening ability. One student (CS64) mentioned that if what students heard in class was all English, it was helpful for students to form the habit of speaking English.

However, about 30% of the students (28) mentioned that they preferred their teachers to teach English grammar using the Chinese language because it was much easier for them to understand. For the other teaching content, they hoped that their teachers could employ English as the communication tool. More than 85% of the students (85) expressed the opinion that too much Chinese language in class was not helpful for their learning, especially for the development of their oral English language.

Another problem identified by the student participants was group learning activities. The students mentioned that there were group activities in class and they liked this form of learning. However, twenty-one students (21.2%) mentioned that there was not enough engagement in group activity. The students, on one hand, suggested that their teachers should organize more group activities in class, so that "each student can have the equal practicing opportunity" (CS72 PII Q2); but on the other hand, pointed out that they needed their teacher's help to achieve better learning results. One student (CS59) expressed his hope that his current English language teacher could provide more group activities catering to students' tastes:

I like discussion and I hope that (our current English language teacher can provide us) more group activities like discussion especially the one with an interesting topic or a topic relevant to our life or learning (PII Q2).

The students generally agreed that the learning achieved in a group activity was not as good as expected by students. The students expressed that they needed their teacher's help to make the activity as positive and active as possible. Otherwise they thought group activity became a "waste of time"(CS59 PII Q2).

Twelve of the student participants (12.1%) mentioned that their current English language teacher did not encourage or motivate them. Most of them mentioned in the questionnaire that their English was not very good and some of them even

mentioned that they were shy in class. But they generally had a strong desire to improve their learning and placed great hope and expectation on their teachers. One of them mentioned this explicitly:

My English is not good. And my oral English is even poorer. So, I am always shy in class and don't have the courage to open my mouth although I desire to be able to speak fluent English. I hope that our teacher can provide some practicing chances for the students like me and encourage us to be active and brave (CS55 PII Q3).

However, most of these 12 students mentioned that their teachers tended to pay more attention to the students who learnt well, more than those who struggled. Three of the twelve students even mentioned that they had little confidence in themselves or had even given up learning.

Fieldnotes of the classroom observations indicated a trend that students did not have the opportunity to use their oral English and that their thinking was ignored. This was noted in the classroom observations. As mentioned in Chapter Four, five of the 20 teacher participants' classes were visited in 2007. The following was an abstract from the researcher's field notes.

The whole class lasted for 50 minutes and was divided into two parts. During the first part, Teacher 4 [T4] went over the new words that students learned

last time [about 10 minutes]. Students read them together one by one and then T4 pointed out the mistakes in their pronunciation. Students are asked to re-read the words until there was not any mistake. In the following part, T4 began to illustrate the text. The whole illustration was dominated by T4. He analyzed sentence structure, explained his understanding about the potential meaning of some sentences. He could relate the text with his knowledge from his reading, TV and his personal experience, which enriched his teaching and engaged students. However, during the 40-minute illustration, students only were questioned 4 times. And each of the questions he raised had nothing to do with students' understanding about the text, just the questions about the translation, grammar structure of the sentences [Among them, three are long and complex sentences].

During the five classroom observations of the five teachers, the teachers tended to use the time in class to illustrate their teaching content and the students just followed and listened. Their thinking, understanding and opinions were ignored.

The teachers' accounts of their own teaching practices

Twenty Chinese English language teacher participants took part in the interviews and expressed their beliefs and current practice about English language teaching and learning. It was a common response (18 of the 20 teachers) from teacher participants in the interviews that there was a paradox between their teaching beliefs or their ideal teaching and their current teaching practices. Although all of

167

them regarded students as the centre of their teaching and proposed that teaching should address students' learning needs, by for example, adjusting the teaching materials and contents, thirteen teachers (65%) mentioned that in their teaching practices, they depended on the textbook too much. CT14 mentioned that his teaching was mainly based on the content of the textbook. He compared it to a "scaffold", and from which he could "find relevant content to support his teaching" (Q4). However, when asked whether and how they adjusted the textbook when it did not address the students' learning needs, more than 80% teacher participants (16) expressed that they would still use the textbook. CT9 said:

Textbook is very important and necessary. I cannot imagine the teaching without a textbook. I regard it as the window and platform to display language knowledge and skills to students. ... Once there is a clash, I don't think that I will reduce the difficult of the textbook but try to employ other teaching methods to make my teaching easier understood (Q4).

Eighteen of the teachers (90%) realized that it was a paradox, but they expressed their difficulties in closing the gap. One teacher (CT17) told the researcher that it was too hard to adjust the teaching content so as to satisfy each student's learning needs since there were so many students in class. And the textbook provided a general standard for them to make reference to. Four of them even mentioned that the quality of the textbook influenced the quality of their teaching to a great

degree. CT2 thought that the quality of textbook played an important role for inexperienced teachers. If there were any flaws in textbooks such as being unpractical, or unsuitable for the students' level, the teacher's teaching would suffer. CT7 described her beliefs as follows:

Textbook is very important for my teaching. My teaching focuses on the textbook. And the quality of the textbook influences my teaching directly. For example, this semester, the textbook that I used is less practical, which influences my teaching negatively. Sometimes, I try to find some additional materials to enrich my teaching and make it practical. However, it burdens me a lot and I don't think I can achieve the desired teaching results. So, it is a paradox that I want to go beyond textbook on one aspect, however, my teaching depends on it and is limited by it on the other aspect (Q4).

The lack of knowledge of effective teaching pedagogies was another problem that the teacher participants mentioned. Eight teachers (40%), including five inexperienced teachers and three experienced teachers with more than 10 years' teaching experience, mentioned that they had this problem. They expressed that they had a picture of their desired teaching in class; however, they always failed to find the appropriate teaching pedagogies to bridge or to help them "arrive at the destination"(CT11). CT11 told the researcher that although she knew teaching pedagogy was important for good teaching, especially in motivating and attracting students, her teaching pedagogy was poor and dull. CT20 mentioned that because

of his limited teaching pedagogies, his teaching was just lecturing in class and he could not use modern teaching facilities to support his teaching. He found this a great trouble for him.

Another paradox that teacher participants faced was that they could not implement instruction using the target language during the whole process in class. Three teachers (15%) mentioned this point. They reported that although they knew students liked teachers with fluent English and that it was also helpful for their teaching, they could not do it. One oral English language teacher (CT12) told the researcher that her limited oral language ability prevented her from "creating a good language learning environment" and designing more activities for "interactions between teacher and students" and this resulted in her having no confidence in herself as a teacher (Q5).

5.1.3 Teachers' awareness of teaching problems and expectations to improve

Many of the teacher participants were aware of the problems in their teaching and they expressed their strong desire to improve their teaching as well. According to their responses, the reasons for their not improving their practices could be categorized into school culture, limited subject matter knowledge, limited abilities to do research, and the lack of passion and patience in teaching.

Firstly, 65% teacher participants (13) mentioned that their school culture played an important role in influencing their teaching. CT17 mentioned:

Too much teaching task is a disadvantage for my improvement. Sometimes I do want to read some books about teaching and improve my teaching. However, most of the time has to be spent in planning lessons. And the leaders in our department don't have the awareness to organize some programs to help teachers. It seems that teacher development is a personal thing (Q8).

CT17's view was representative of many other teacher participants. Typically, they taught for about 20 hours per week, with preparation time being additional to the 20 hours. Some teachers mentioned that they had to undertake teaching tasks as much as possible because their income was closely related to the amount of their teaching (CT5, CT13, and CT16). Besides the heavy teaching load, the teachers also mentioned that the lack of access provided by their school to new teaching and education information was another factor influencing their teaching. CT1 told the researcher that the lack of educational information about the development of teaching was unhelpful for teachers to do research and improve their teaching.

Another factor that the teachers, especially the young teachers, thought reduced their teaching effectiveness was limited subject knowledge. An inexperienced teacher with less than two years teaching experience claimed:

... It has troubled me for a long time that I have some difficulties in subject content understanding. I think the text-book is difficult. Almost in every chapter, there are some long and complex sentences that I cannot understand.

171

It influences my teaching (T8 Q8).

Compared with the inexperienced teachers, experienced teachers with more than 10 years teaching experience emphasized the necessity of knowledge-updating for them. Most of them thought that the fast development of the society was the main reason for them having to update their knowledge all the time. They said that they felt the pressure from society exerted on them. As one of them mentioned, if he failed to update his knowledge, society would abandon him (CT11 Q8).

The third factor was limited ability to do research. Only three teachers (15%) mentioned this point. They all claimed that they needed to do research to improve their teaching and learn more education theory; however, excessive teaching loads prevented them from doing that. They further expressed that since they had not opportunity to do research about teaching, their research abilities were limited, which further prevented their teaching development.

The last factor, which was proposed by only one teacher (5%), was the lack of passion and patience in teaching. He mentioned that patience and passion was what he needed in teaching. The lack was also the factor that prevented his professional development.

5.2 English language teaching in New Zealand

Data about English language teaching in New Zealand were also generated. One

experienced English language teacher with more than 10 years teaching experience and twenty Chinese students who were learning or had learned English in New Zealand were involved in the interviews. The teacher's class was visited by the researcher as well and observation fieldnotes were taken. It is a limitation of this research that there is only one New Zealand teacher was interviewed in the Second part of the research. In order to make up the limitation, 20 Chinese students were individually interviewed with the aims to learn more about New Zealand teachers. The New Zealand English language teacher's teaching was perceived to be significant with respect to their pedagogy and teacher-student relationships. These aspects will now be outlined.

5.2.1 Pedagogies

The data indicated that the pedagogies New Zealand English language teacher were characterized by the students as being student-centred, being helpful to create a relaxed learning atmosphere, an interactive teaching pedagogy, pedagogies to encourage and motivate, and assessment as a part of pedagogy. Each is now discussed.

Student-centred pedagogy

Firstly, the pedagogy of the New Zealand teachers were seen by the students as student-centered. Twenty of the 20 students mentioned that their New Zealand English language teachers mainly played the role of guiding and directing learning, and the students themselves undertook learning activities. Most of them

told the researcher that in class the biggest difference between their Chinese and New Zealand language teachers was their pedagogy. The former generally employed the form of the lecture, most of the time was dominated by teachers talking, while the latter provided students with time to "explore and discover problems in their learning"(NZS5 PII Q2) and the teacher "supervised", "guided" and "helped" students to correct misunderstandings (NZS7 PII Q2). One student (NZS7) described the New Zealand teachers' teaching pedagogy as follows:

In the beginning of class, teachers tell us the learning content for that day, then assign the tasks to us, remind us the points that we should pay attention and lastly we prepare and finish the tasks. Yes, students dominate most of the time and teachers functions as a director. If students follow the directions from teachers and explore by themselves, they can learn something and some of the misunderstanding also can be avoided (NZSI PII Q2).

All the students preferred the student-centred teaching pedagogy because it gave them full scope to use their initiative and creativity. NZS15 mentioned that she knew where she had gone in the New Zealand teacher's class and she had to be responsible for her learning. The students further mentioned that in a student-centred class, language learning became very practical and teachers paid much attention to the students' overall language skills and abilities. NZS3 told the researcher that the New Zealand teachers focused on students' practical abilities rather than their test-taking abilities. New Zealand English language teachers were

seen to teach students the knowledge about grammar and vocabulary as systematically and thoroughly as Chinese teachers did, but based on the students' needs in language learning. NZS3 thought this just reflected the notion that grammar has a practical use in language.

The one New Zealand teacher interviewed mentioned that during her teaching and preparation for teaching, students' learning needs were always what concerned her. For example, when talking about her teaching purposes, she said,

Obviously, (my teaching purposes are) to increase students' knowledge, to increase their English language, as quickly as possible and as thoroughly as possible. So, yes, that definitely is what the students want is what I want. The same thing.... (NZTI PII Q1)

In practicing student-centred teaching, she mentioned that she never thought her students as passive learners. Instead, she employed a "three As" rule to help her students to be active, adventurous and analytical in their learning. As she said,

They (students) are not passive learners. I expect them to be active. I told them at the beginning of paper logs that I've got three As. The first one is they must be active. I believe in active learning. Then they must be adventurous. And the third one, if they are going on to university, I expect them to be analytical. They must be able to ask questions. They must be able to delve deeper. They must be able to go right using your own opinion and other

people's opinion and put them together. That I have those three As for

language learning but I put them together one. ... (NZTI PII Q1 L: 5-11)

A relaxed pedagogy

In contrast to learning in a Chinese English class, all twenty students mentioned that they felt relaxed in the New Zealand English language classes. NZS6 mentioned that compared with Chinese English language teachers, teachers in New Zealand never taught too much nor assigned too much homework for students. Instead, they paced their teaching according to the students' learning and allowed them enough time to learn. He thought that in the short run, Chinese teachers' teaching achieved better immediate outcomes, while, in the long run, the way that language was taught in New Zealand benefited students more (NZSI PII Q3). Responses of the interviewed New Zealand teacher echoed what NZS6 mentioned. She told the researcher that in being a teacher, what she needed to do is to "provide a situation or environment where English can be learnt quickly and effectively" rather than "pushing things" (NZTI PII Q2).

Besides the above, the students also stated that they enjoyed the comfortable and relaxed classroom environment in New Zealand classrooms. One student (NZS20) claimed that in New Zealand, students could relax both physically and mentally, since teachers were never stern but humorous and friendly. There was not a great distance between teachers and students, because the teacher's actions and ways of talking made them feel included the class. Students were encouraged to speak and

even when students made mistakes, nobody laughed at them. NZS18 described his learning experience with his New Zealand teacher as follows:

... According to my own learning experiences, the one which most impressed me is the comfortable classroom atmosphere created by New Zealand teachers which enable me to learn without any pressure. This is totally different from that in China. I can express my idea no matter it is correct or not even has nothing to do with the question. Teachers never criticized you; instead, they respect your ideas. In this way, I become braver and I am willing to express my ideas (NZSI PII Q3).

Nine of 20 students (45%) mentioned that their New Zealand teachers helped them learn complicated knowledge, through easy and interesting learning activities. They claimed that in China, teachers set many learning expectations for students. For example, the students claimed that in each lesson teachers always explained many points of the English language such as the usages of key vocabulary, and translation of texts. In order to reconstruct and remember all that teachers had mentioned, students had to preview the lesson by themselves before class and do lots of exercises after class. While, in New Zealand, the students said that teachers introduced information little by little and allowed students time to reflect on and consolidate their learning. NZS6 had been learning English in New Zealand for three months when she participated in the interview. She felt that learning was like playing in class and she had no pressure and became

unconsciously more active in class than when she was in China. The knowledge that had previously seemed difficult now became much easier for her to understand.

Interactive pedagogy

During the interview, the New Zealand English language teacher mentioned that she regarded teaching as the interaction between her and her students. According to her, teaching was "a kind of enthusiastic interaction with students" (NZTI PII Q4). She thought that the interactions between her and her students were helpful to "provide a situation or environment where English can be learnt quickly and effectively" and her job was "to provide the environment rather than pushing things" (NZTI PII Q2).

Seventeen of 20 students (85%) mentioned that in their New Zealand classes, there were many interactions among students and between teacher and students, which, they commented, not only motivated their engagement in learning but also improved their interest in learning. NZS9 said that her first impression about English language teaching in New Zealand was its positive interactions among students and between teacher and students. According to her, teachers not only provided students with chances to discuss and negotiate with each other, but the teachers were also humorous to draw students into interactions. She also mentioned that the interactions always lasted from the beginning to the end of each lesson, which made learning interesting and easy (NZSI PII Q2).

The seventeen students also mentioned that learning English in their New Zealand classrooms was like a conversation between teacher and students. NZS5 claimed that his New Zealand teacher never taught too much in class, but organized some activities or games enabling students to learn by themselves. He thought that the way New Zealand teachers taught, made him feel that they were having a conversation with each other (NZSI PII Q2). The students said that they participated in the conversation and whenever they had any questions or different opinions, they could express and discuss these with the teacher or classmates.

Encouraging pedagogy

Fifteen of 20 students (75%) mentioned that their New Zealand teachers encouraged them to have their own opinions which, they thought was helpful to develop their thinking skills and abilities in their current and even future learning. NZS5 pointed out that his New Zealand English language teacher emphasized oral and written competence rather than grammar as his Chinese teachers did. According to him, this competence included the use of English, as well as language competence in thinking as well.

> ... *Teachers are never satisfied with just an answer. Students have to provide their reasons. ... For example, in writing classes, teachers in China emphasize correct grammar and sentence structure. While, in New Zealand, teachers emphasize the organization of your ideas, and your argument to support your ideas. Teachers always remind us that during learning, we must*

179

try to have our own ideas and they encourage diverse answers to one

question (NZSI PII Q3).

NZS5 told the researcher that what his teachers taught in New Zealand had gone

beyond the language itself (NZSI PII Q5). NZS8 echoed his ideas by saying that

his New Zealand teachers' pedagogy enabled him to cooperate with others and

deepen his thinking, which, he thought, was helpful for his future study (NZSI PII

Q5).

Fourteen of 20 students (70%) mentioned that New Zealand teachers encouraged

active learning. That is, the students felt their teachers designed their teaching to

enable students to learn by being active in using the language for themselves.

NZS8 told the researcher that she was not an active student in China, however, in

New Zealand, it was the teacher who had changed her to be active in activities and

games in class (NZSI PII Q6). NZS15 supported her ideas by saying:

Besides the advantages that I mentioned the above, I think the most

significant is that students dominate class and use most of the time in class.

They can learn on their own initiative. This is totally different from China.

Passive learning becomes active. [Studying in New Zealand] changed my

learning attitudes. Previously I thought learning is hard working at the desk

quietly and it is a personal thing or sitting in class and listening with full

concentration. When I came to New Zealand class, I get to know that learning

also can be in a form of group discussions and making progress

collaboratively or in the form of student-speaking-with –teacher-listening

(NZSI PII Q5).

Twelve of students (60%) mentioned that in their New Zealand classrooms, no

matter how competent or poor they were in English, the teachers designed

activities to engage them in learning, which enhanced their confidence in

themselves. The following was the story of NZS7:

I met a very excellent English language teacher in New Zealand. She can

remember each student's name after the first class, which makes me feel very

friendly. In class, I think her teacher methods are also very good. For

example, the students are not in the same level in language ability. She always

can design the activities to involve all of us and make us experience some

improvement. Although it is impossible that every one has got the same

improvement but we do have some according to our own previous levels. In

this way, you won't feel that you are not as good as others, and then you have

more confidence for yourself (NZSI PII Q2).

Five of 20 students (25%) mentioned that their New Zealand English language

teachers aimed to improve their students' interests in English, thus, improving

their language competence. NZS19 mentioned that in China, a large load and high

pressure limited students' interest in English language learning. However, in New Zealand, their teachers were good at creating a relaxed and active classroom learning atmosphere (NZSI PII Q3). NZS12, going over his own learning experience, concluded that his New Zealand English language teacher based the teaching on motivating and fostering students' interest (NZSI PII Q5).

Assessment as a part of pedagogy

Six of 20 students (30%) mentioned that their New Zealand English language teachers always provided timely feedback and assessment in class. NZS7 and NZS14 told the researcher that they avoided misunderstandings through feedback from other students in group discussion and the teacher's feedback and assessment. According to them, New Zealand teachers not only praised students' performance but provided timely and detailed feedbacks as well (NZSI PII Q5). As NZS7said:

... In New Zealand, (my) teacher always organized some group learning activities. I think this kind of learning is helpful for me. You know, in English language learning, sometimes there is some confusion in grammar ... such as usages of vocabulary. This problem always troubled me when I studied in China. However, I found group learning provided me with the opportunity to correct my misunderstanding in grammar through discussing with other students or the feedbacks from them... In addition, (my) teacher's feedback plays an important role (in my learning). I found that when I answer questions or make a speech in class, the teacher not only acknowledges my

performance but also tells me the mistakes I made (in my speech) or tells me

the proper words that I should use... (NZSI PII Q5).

The other five students' responses supported what NZS7 mentioned above. They expressed that they liked their New Zealand English language teachers' timely feedback on their learning and regarded the feedback as "helpful" (NZS11, 17), "necessary" (NZS4), "practical" (NZS15) and "pointed" (NZS19) in helping their learning English language.

Pedagogy for language competence

The New Zealand English language teacher interviewed in this research mentioned that it was very important to develop her students' English language competence for her. In her classroom teaching practices, she said, she paid much attention to getting her students to practise speaking and listening. She told the researcher that to encourage students to speak more English; she insisted that there was no foreign language used in class except for those learners with less English language. In practicing listening, she asked her students to listen when she was speaking. She explained to them that to develop good listening skills, they not only needed to "hear a native speaker", and to understand her pronunciation, but also to know "what is happening".

Four of 20 students (20%) mentioned that when their New Zealand teachers designed the learning activities to allow students to practice listening, speaking,

reading, and writing skills, they combined as many skills as possible in one activity. They all agreed that learning English language in New Zealand was very practical, that is, focused on using the English language. As NZS4 mentioned in the interview:

... Although I study for ELTS examination, I don't have the impression that teachers list all the key points and ask us to recite and do a lot of exercises just like China's language teachers do. Instead, they start from the practical application of language. For example, one of my English language teachers once asked us to interview one of our friends or homestay member, write down the interview, and bring it next day to class for discussion and marking with classmates. I think it is an effective method. It not only practices students' listening, speaking, writing, reading abilities but also makes the learning process interesting without too much pressure. In class, teachers always design the activities to practice more than two language abilities at one time (NZSI PII Q2).

The other three students mentioned similar learning experiences. And they reported that they liked this form of learning because it linked their listening, speaking, reading, and writing practices and seemed more practical for them.

Pedagogy for friendly teacher-student relationships

According to the twenty New Zealand students, the pedagogies that their New

Zealand language teachers employed were helpful for a democratic, friendly, helpful and easy-going teacher-student relationship. The students especially pointed out that in New Zealand class, there was no distance between teacher and students even though there was a big age difference. NZS5 told the researcher that in a New Zealand class, the teacher's speech was very casual and humorous, which not only created a good learning atmosphere but also closed the distance between teacher and students. NZS13 talked about her own experience:

My first impression is that New Zealand teachers are very friendly. They are smiling most of time. Whenever I ask questions, they are very glad to help me. When I make progress, they show their happiness, which, sometimes, moves me. The relationship between teacher and students in New Zealand seems like the one between friends. We are equal and we respect each other (NZSI PII Q5).

NZS18 expressed the similar views:

I think the relationship between teacher and students in New Zealand is very democratic. Each person, no matter you are a teacher or a student, has the right to express your own ideas. If the teacher makes a mistake, the teacher never escape from it but admit that (NZSI PII Q2).

Students also expressed that the close and democratic relationship with teachers

helped them to learn more actively and on their own initiative as NZS13 mentioned:

> *Democratic teacher-student relationship contributes to the active atmosphere in class in New Zealand. In China, there is some distance between teacher and students. At least, that's the case for me. When I met some problems in English language, I seldom thought that I should communicate with my teacher. Because teachers criticize students if they make same mistakes especially when teachers have mentioned those points several times. Sometimes, I worry that teacher and students will laugh at me if I make mistakes. So I give up and problems become more and more. In New Zealand, I meet an old teacher and we all respect him. One of the students from Korea calls him 'teacher' with respect. He replies that "who is teacher? Call my name. That's ok." In class, teachers have jokes with students. You can say everything you want say. There is no pressure. Furthermore, teachers give equal opportunities to each student. In China, teachers always pay more attention to those good students and ignore the poor students* (NZSI PII Q3).

The interviewed New Zealand English language teacher's responses echoed what the students mentioned above. She told the researcher that in order to achieve better student learning, she employed five rules in her teaching practice including "no speaking when I am speaking", "no later comers", "no cell phone", "no yawning", and "no foreign language". However, she treated students with humor

to maintain a friendly and close relationship with her students. As she said:

... The relationship needs to be friendly, but there is no doubt that I am the boss. Yes, I have the expectation that they will listen to me and they do it as I asked. But I don't boss them. But I am the boss. But I want them to feel that I am keen to approach anytime... (NZTI PII Q3).

Besides the above, the students all mentioned that New Zealand teachers respected students no matter how poor their language was. The students claimed that in China, there was some discrimination against poor students. However, in New Zealand, teachers never discriminated in this way. Students mentioned that New Zealand teachers provided equal opportunities for each students and recognized their progress and advantages no matter how minor they were. One of the students mentioned that "In New Zealand teachers' eyes, it seemed that their responsibility was to help students do better no matter where they were and where they had gone"(NZS1 PII Q3). Most of the students mentioned that the trust from teachers not only made them willing to be involved in learning activities but it also enhanced their self confidence.

Another student, NZS10, mentioned that his New Zealand teachers communicated with students after class by using modern technology. He told the researcher that the teacher he met was very kind and he contacted students by email after class. In his emails, he reminded students of the homework assigned by him, the learning

tasks for the next couple of weeks, the points that students should pay attention to, and so on. NZS10 also mentioned that the emails made him feel that the teacher was very friendly and that he did care about his students (NZSI PII Q2).

5.2.2 New Zealand teachers' beliefs

During the interview, the New Zealand English language teacher talked about her beliefs about English language teaching and the meaning of being an English language teacher. Firstly, she said that for her English language teaching is enjoyable. She mentioned as follows:

... It is relating to other people. It is communicating with other people. It is learning about other culture. Just the whole very satisfied communicative side of English language teaching and so it is a hard job, but actually so enjoyable. So, it is really a job but I don't think it a work. Even you do have to work hard. The results and interactions are very enjoyable. To me, very enjoyable, yes.... (NZTI PII Q2).

Secondly, according to the New Zealand teacher, teaching is creative. She said that she loved creativity and she loved writing her own things. She told the researcher that in her teaching, she did lots of writing of her own resources, based on her students' learning needs. As she mentioned:

When you teach your own things you have written yourself, you teach them

with so much enthusiasm. And that is what I particular love about. Using

other people's resources is fine. But when you specifically wrote it for your

students, for your purposes and you teach with amazing enthusiasm. And the

students see it and they learn, I mean, you know they like the teacher who is

enthusiastic and students can do as well, yes, yes (NZTI PII Q4).

Thirdly, the New Zealand teacher said that teaching is more than teacher telling students. She mentioned that she tended to get her students to analyze some problems when learning an article or some English language grammar knowledge by posing them some examples or questions. She thought that through analyzing the problems, students had a better understanding of grammar or the proper usage of grammar. As she said:

... I quite like them to be able to analyze and come up with the ideas from

themselves because I think they remember more than if I tell them this is

how. ... Of course, you know you have to work out what grammar will be used

in such and such way and you can just see their great understanding work

through with the teacher. ... (NZTI PII Q4).

5.2.3 Disadvantages of English language learning in New Zealand

Besides the significant positive aspects of their English language learning experiences, the students also mentioned some disadvantages that existed in English language teaching in New Zealand. Firstly, all the students mentioned that

grammar teaching was less systematic and not as comprehensive and deeply taught as in China. NZS3 said:

I think in New Zealand, grammar instruction is a little weak. I always have some problems in tenses and voices in my writing. For the New Zealand born students, English is their native language and they have got very good linguistic sense. But we are different and in most of time, we need grammar to organize sentences (NZSI PII Q5).

NZS3's view represented those of most of the students. It was commonly agreed that grammar was very important for Chinese students in their English language learning. However, as NZS15 expressed, since there were so many student activities in class, their teachers' instruction about grammar became less systematic. During the interview, the New Zealand English language teacher mentioned as well that she addressed more than one language skill at a time in her pedagogy. For example, she told the researcher that she might involve grammar in a listening activity that is, listening for correcting the grammar. She also mentioned that she did not always ask students to analyze grammar because "that can be quite time-consuming and time can be limiting" (NZTI PII Q5).

Besides the matter of grammar, 90% of the students (18) mentioned that their New Zealand English language teachers conveyed less language knowledge than their Chinese teachers did in one lesson. Most of them reported that the student activity

was helpful, but too much would be a waste of time. They suggested that their New Zealand teachers should allow some time to introduce more language points and grammar knowledge. NZS16 said "if teachers just focus on listing knowledge, learning is boring; but, a certain amount of time should be allocated to it. In this way, teachers can provide students information as much and effective as possible" (NZSI PII Q3). He suggested that a balance between the Chinese language teaching style and New Zealand style should be achieved. Some students mentioned that the learning activity that New Zealand teachers designed was comparatively easier for them and they hoped that New Zealand teachers could shorten the time for each activity and arrange more to enlarge on the information covered in each lesson.

5.3 Chapter summary

It was reported in this chapter that English language teaching in China appeared to be undergoing changes, as their questionnaire responses and interviews, both teachers and students perceived that Chinese English language teaching went beyond the influence of the traditional teacher-centred, textbook-centred, and grammar-centred teaching and learning culture.

In this chapter, it was also noted that Chinese English language students had developed their own understanding about and expectations for English language teaching and learning. They were expecting pedagogical innovations, the creation of authentic learning environments, being motivated to learn, and increased

cultural awareness of English speakers. Students wanted their learning needs to be addressed in teaching and learning activities.

The interviewed teachers of English in China, as the executor and administrator of teaching, were aware of the disadvantages of traditional teacher-centred teaching patterns in meeting today's students' needs and fostering practical English competencies. The notion of people-orientation had became generally acknowledged and accepted by teachers. In other words, student-centred teaching and learning had become the new direction of English language teaching for the teachers interviewed.

However, that data also suggested that there existed a gulf between the teachers' and the student's expectation for English language teaching and the current teaching practices. It was noted that the Chinese English language teachers had realized the gulf between their teaching beliefs and practices. They were troubled by the gulf and they expressed a strong desire to develop their teaching to close the gap. The problems that were identified as preventing teachers' effective teaching mainly existed in the areas of pedagogy and teacher-student relationships. These areas were identified by the teachers as areas for improvement in Chinese English language teachers.

It was also reported in this chapter that the students' New Zealand English language teachers' teaching practices were characterized by student-centred

teaching pedagogy to achieve effective learning, skills in establishing democratic teacher-student relationship, and maintaining a positive classroom learning atmosphere so as to help students' learning and thinking. However, some disadvantages were also identified. Compared with English language teaching in China, the students mentioned that grammar teaching was less systematic and comprehensive in New Zealand English language teaching. The Chinese students also suggested that New Zealand English language teachers should provide more language knowledge.

The data generated by the interviews, questionnaires and observations in China and New Zealand have indicated that the teaching practice of some New Zealand English language teachers has implications for Chinese English language teachers in the areas of student-centred pedagogy and teacher-student relationships. It is hoped that the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices identified in this research will contribute to developing Chinese English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices and helping them to change their teaching from being teacher-centred to student-centred.

Chapter Six examines in detail the application of New Zealand English language teachers' practices in Chinese English language teaching and examines how these applications helped two Chinese English language teachers to develop their teaching beliefs and practices.

CHAPTER SIX RESULTS CASE STUDIES

As mentioned in Chapter Five, New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice were employed as the way to help Chinese English language teachers develop their teaching beliefs and practice so as to help Chinese students' communicative abilities. In this chapter, the learning process of the teachers will be presented in the form of two case studies

At the beginning of the action research, the researcher introduced the research to the two teacher participants including the aims of the research, their rights in the research, how many cycles they would be involved in, how long each cycle might last, and the activities they would take part in each cycle, and so on. In each cycle, teacher participants firstly would be involved in seminars about English language teaching and learning. The seminars were presented in PowerPoint by the researcher. She employed Chinese as the communicating language. Sometimes, English was employed, for example, words like "scaffolding", "enculturation" and "mediation". Some English definitions for these words were given to help teacher participants understand them. In the three seminars, sociocultural learning theory and formative assessment were introduced to teacher participants separately and the contents were based on the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and Three in this thesis. Because there were many pages and in view of the word limitation in this thesis, titles and subtitles are presented in Appendix XII. In view of the limited time in this action research and in order to help teacher participants to

understand sociocultural teaching and learning theory, some materials were provided for their reference, which include the books of Learning in Science: the Waikato Research (Bell, 2005) and Sociocultural theory and second language learning (Lantolf, 2000). These two books were the major references of this research.

Teacher participants were also involved in a professional development meeting in each cycle. At the meeting, some of the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices were introduced. Teacher participants discussed their opinions about the introduced beliefs, practices and their own understanding of teaching.

Besides the seminar and professional development meeting, teacher participants were interviewed respectively before and after their new teaching in each cycle. Sometimes, after practicing new teaching, teacher participants had a short and informal dialogue with the researcher to talk about their new teaching, which the researcher recorded in fieldnotes as a part of the data for the action research. Email was another way for the researcher to keep in touch with the teacher participants especially after the action research and during the period when the researcher analyzed data generated and wrote the thesis.

In each study, the teacher participant involved in and the changes in their learning will now be discussed with respect to the three cycles of action-research.

6.1 Case study I

In this section, the case study of Mr. Z will be presented. There were three cycles of action-research. In each cycle, the data will be summarized in terms of before, during, and after the action research.

Mr. Z was one of the two teacher participants in this action research. He was a young teacher with about two years' teaching experience. He had graduated two years ago with a bachelor's degree of arts, with a major in Business English. As a young teacher, he said that he loved his job and worked very hard. Because of the shortage of teaching staff, Mr. Z undertook a heavy teaching load. He taught about 20 hours a week including Saturdays and sometimes even on Sundays. The subjects that he taught included *College English Intensive Reading*, *Business Writing*, and *Oral English*. Although he was a young teacher with only two year's teaching experience, he was respected by students because of his professional dedication and great patience in helping his students. He was recommended by the Dean to the researcher as a popular young teacher among students and full of potential.

When the researcher first contacted Mr. Z, she was impressed by his openness and warmness. He told the researcher that he was very happy to take part in this research as he regarded it as an opportunity to learn and improve his teaching. Actually he said he had always thought about changing and improving his teaching. As the contact increased, he impressed the researcher that he was not

only diligent but willing to learn.

Among the three subjects that he taught, he told the researcher that he chose *College English Intensive Reading* to focus on during the research because it faced challenges from the English language teaching reforms. The instructional material, *College English Intensive Reading,* was published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. This teaching material was originally compiled in 1986, and revised in 1998 and 2004 (Dong, 2006). According to Dong (2006), the chief editor of the teaching material, the purpose for the revision in 2004 was to enhance students' listening and speaking abilities, especially their speaking abilities. Mr. Z explained that among all the subjects required for this major, *College English Intensive Reading* functioned as one of the foundation subjects to foster students' basic language skills and abilities including listening, speaking, and reading.

Before the action research began, Mr. Z introduced some basic information about his class. There were in total 24 students in his class, all of whom were first year tertiary students majoring in Business English. According to Mr. Z, the English language level of the students varied; however, the general level was not high, especially the level of their spoken language. Mr. Z emphasized that the key challenge he was facing was to improve the students' speaking abilities.

The action research lasted three cycles and each of the cycles lasted about one

month. During the three months, Mr. Z actively and regularly took part in seminars about education theory, professional development meetings to discuss New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices, and reflected on his own teaching, pre and after-action research interviews. The changes in his teaching were also observed in each cycle by the researcher. After a classroom observation, some students were interviewed in a group by the researcher. The following chart outlines the time frame of all the activities during the action-research and the stories of Mr. Z in this research are presented in the following section.

Date / Activities	Cycle One	Cycle Two	Cycle Three
Professional Development Seminar	11/03/2008	29/04/2008	03/06/2008
Professional Development Meeting	20/03/2008	09/05/2008	06/06/2008
Pre-action Research Interview	28/03/2008	14/05/2008	18/06/2008
In-action Research Classroom Observation	02/02/2008	16/05/2008	23/06/2008
Post-action Research Interview	09/04/2008	20/05/2008	24/06/2008
Student Interview	17/04/2008	23/05/2008	30/06/2008

Table 6.1 Time frame for Mr. Z in the action research

6.1.1 Cycle One

In this section, the data of the action research for Mr. Z in Cycle One will be

presented.

Pre-action research

Before the first cycle began, a seminar about sociocultural theory was held. In this seminar, the researcher introduced some basic ideas, such as EFL teaching as a social and cultural practice (Bell, 2005; Donato, 2000; Kramsch, 2000; Lantolf, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the theory of zone of proximal development (Chaiklin, 2003; Edwards, 1997; Lantolf, 2000; Ohta, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978) (see Appendix XII [2]). Two days later, a professional development meeting was organized where the teaching beliefs and practices of New Zealand English language teachers were introduced (see Appendix XXII). After that, the two teacher participants were asked to reflect on their own teaching beliefs and practices. Mr. Z took part in both the above activities and, one week later, took part in the interview. The data from this interview will now be outlined.

Mr. Z firstly showed his interest in both of the sociocultural theory and the teaching beliefs and practices of New Zealand teachers. He mentioned that the theory and New Zealand teachers' beliefs about teaching enabled him to re-examine his own beliefs and practices. He recalled that, as a young teacher, his teaching beliefs mainly came from his learning experience in senior middle school and university. He thought that the college entrance examination and College English Test, Band Four (CET-4) made him embrace examination–driven learning.

[2] All the seminars involved in this action research were presented in powerpoint in Chinese. These are presented in the section of appendix in the thesis in English with main points and sub-points.

Therefore, he had thought that good English language teaching was to help students understand what teachers taught correctly, easily and quickly. He continued that it was always his aim to be a good teacher since he began his teaching. He spent most of his spare time in planning teaching materials and imitating the teaching of the teachers who taught him previously, especially those he thought had been effective for learning.

However, the challenges from Chinese society for English language skills and teaching reforms had gradually influenced his understanding about teaching. Mr. Z mentioned that before being involved in this research, he had already begun to rethink his teaching beliefs. According to him, the educational theory and New Zealand teachers' beliefs covered in the pre-action research seminars played a role in stimulating, and raising his awareness that students' learning, the fundamental element, had been neglected in his teaching. With this new awareness, he classified his teaching as teacher-centred and textbook-centred. Mr. Z also mentioned that although he knew teaching was not easy work, he never thought that it is so complicated, with so many issues to be considered in teaching:

I think that I made some mistakes in understanding teaching, although… it is my job. Reflecting my teaching, I think what I am trying to do in my teaching is to pass on the knowledge about English language clearly and logically or sometimes in an interesting way. Thus, it is easier for my students to acquire [the knowledge]. What I am concerned is how to make it easier for my

200

students to understand my teaching. I think that I just see the surface of teaching. Teaching is a kind of knowledge that every teacher has to learn. I think I neglect students' learning compared with New Zealand English language teachers. I only see teaching but neglect the close relationship between teaching and learning. And learning is even more important than teaching since teaching serves for learning. (Professional Development Meeting 1-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z thought that the education theory and New Zealand English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practice covered in the pre-action research seminars played a significant role in re-constructing his teaching beliefs and practice as they provided him with a concrete and specific contrasting reference point. He claimed that his previous lack of such a reference point made it difficult for him to see the other side of teaching or difficult to put into practice any ideas he may have had about changing:

I think New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs refresh my understanding about teaching. They are very useful for me. ... at present, English language teaching is facing with great challenges as the society demands more and more practical English talents. The traditional teaching seems less and less workable. One of the most convincing facts is that many good students in our college experience serious problem in workplace speaking context. ... Whenever my students talk about such embarrassing

201

experiences in workplace, I will question my teaching. But ... only questioning, there isn't any criteria or... norm for me to contrast with ... to help me find the difference or gap. It does trouble me for a long time. ... So, it is very nice to learn about the beliefs of New Zealand teachers and the education theory. I think they not only influence my own beliefs but also can function as something for me to ... learn from and ... en...compare with. (Field Notes Z-1, TRANS)

Therefore, Mr. Z did not have to be convinced of the need for change. He was aware of the need for change but had been looking for guidance about what to do differently. In the interview, Mr. Z mentioned that through learning and reflecting, he thought it was necessary to change his teaching. He said that New Zealand English language teaching had given him a way of developing his teaching and improving his students' communicative language abilities:

... I like the beliefs and teaching practices that you introduced. They do give me some hints for my own changes in teaching. In my previous teaching, I had thought to organize some student activities to stimulate them to learn more actively. However, I lacked the concrete instructions or guides. ... From your introduction, I think, I do learn something useful and practical. I like the idea that teachers design the student activity involving more language skills. ... And it provides me the hints to carry out the teaching reform required by the new curriculum. I can involve listening and speaking into one

activity. In this way, students can use limited time to practice more language

skills at the same time. ... (Teacher Interview Z-1-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z thought that the New Zealand English language teaching (both teacher beliefs and practices) gave him some hints and guidelines to try new teaching ideas in the classroom. However, he was concerned that the teaching contexts were different and he didn't think it possible for him to copy exactly the New Zealand teachers' practices. Therefore, he intended to design some teaching and learning activities based on New Zealand teachers' beliefs.

Although Mr. Z did not feel satisfied with his teaching pedagogy, he thought that he had done well in maintaining a good relationship with his students. He attributed it to his easy-going personality, his love of teaching and students, and frequent communication with students as well. However, he pointed out that compared with New Zealand English language teaching, his poor English language speaking ability was a big disadvantage for him in communicating with his students effectively in teaching and learning activities.

With respect to classroom management skills, Mr. Z expressed that he didn't want to adopt or establish rules to maintain classroom discipline as in New Zealand English language teaching such as the five "As" employed by one of the English language teachers in New Zealand to maintain classroom discipline (see Chapter Five):

It [to set up rules] might be helpful. ...But, I don't think I will do that. On one side, most of my students are adults. To set rules looks like the way to deal with kids or young students. I think after more than ten years' learning experience in school, they know what good behaviors in class are. On the other hand, rules will not be effective if the teaching is boring.

(Teacher Interview Z-1-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z summarized the changes he wanted to make to his own teaching practice: designing interesting and challenging learning activities involving more use of oral English language, maintaining the relationship with students as he usually did, and maintaining classroom discipline by improving his teaching.

During- action research

During the in-action research, Mr. Z practiced the activities that he had designed with the aim to involve more oral English language in his lessons. The researcher observed his new teaching during one classroom observation.

The whole class lasted 100 minutes, with three teaching and learning activities involved. Mr. Z firstly asked students to do a vocabulary exercise to check whether they had command of the key words that they learnt in the previous week. During this activity, the whole class was divided into 4 groups and each group consisted of 6 students. The teacher put just one piece of chalk on the teaching desk. The teacher showed one word to one of the students in each group, then, the

students described the meaning of the word in their own words to the next student. The next student, thinking about the word, in turn, described the word to the next student in the group. The quickest group had the chance to grab the chalk and write the words on the blackboard. The group that wrote the most words was the winner. This activity was repeated 10 times, lasting 23 minutes in total. The researcher noticed that students were very interested in this activity and all of them were very active and cooperative with their partners. When the activity finished, Mr. Z, in Chinese, gave detailed comments to each group, praised their excellent performance, and encouraged the students to do better in vocabulary learning.

In the second part of the class, the teacher focused on the text titled *Lesson from Jefferson*. The text was about some of the things that Thomas Jefferson (3rd US president) said or wrote. Mr. Z firstly wrote 12 questions on the blackboard. All the questions were related to what Jefferson said and wrote in the text. The sequence of the questions was based on the contents of the text. The teacher introduced the activity to the students and asked them to go over the whole text themselves, trying to find the answers to each question and answer in their own words in English. When students were reading the text, Mr. Z walked around them. Whenever students had problems, he discussed and gave explanations to them patiently. He reminded students to read carefully and asked them to mark where they couldn't understand. This activity lasted 30 minutes.

The last 47 minutes were spent in checking students' answers to these questions. Mr. Z analyzed the text by checking students' answers and their own understandings as well. The teacher began with the first question. Once students provided their answers, he gave some feedbacks and then discussed the text relevant to the question. During the whole process, the students were involved in answering questions, reading the text, and translating the text into Chinese. In this activity, students were asked to reply in English except when translating. However, the teacher did not analyze the text nor provide feedback to students in English. In this section of the lesson, Mr. Z paid much attention to encouraging students to speak English and acknowledging their performance.

During the observation, it was noticed that Mr. Z was very encouraging and used praise well. He was very patient in answering students' questions, which played a positive role in maintaining teacher-student relationships and classroom management. His use of an interesting and challenging learning activity also helped to maintain good discipline. According to the time analysis by the researcher, more than 80% of the time in class was dominated by students. After the lesson, Mr. Z and the students in his class were interviewed on Mr Z's new teaching.

Post-action research

After the classroom observation, teacher and student interviews were conducted respectively. Themes from these interviews will now be reported.

Students' responses

Twenty-one of the 24 students were interviewed in group. At the beginning, most of the students were too shy to articulate their ideas. However, they became more and more confident as the interview proceeded. Most of the students noticed the changes in Mr. Z's teaching, even at the beginning of the class because of the word activity. They reported that they liked the new teaching activities. Some mentioned that the new teaching involved more student interactions:

I think compared with Mr. Z's previous teaching; there are more interactions in class. In previous teaching, he reads us the new words, analyzes the text and checks the answers to the exercises for each lesson. Sometimes he questioned us. However, only a small proportion of us have the chance to answer those questions. Most of the students keep silent all the time. In the new teaching, all the students are involved in interactions with each other. Every student has the chance to interact with others… (Student Interview Z-1, S6, TRANS)

Some students mentioned that the new teaching promoted students' interest in learning, which they thought very important for their learning. The students felt that any teaching which failed to interest students, even teaching full of information and knowledge, was not good teaching. Some of the students thought that interesting teaching activities made their learning relaxed. As one of them said:

… During the process [of Activity 1], we are very excited and there is always laughter. This activity makes our learning relaxed and there is not any pressure. I like this kind of activity. (Student Interview Z-1, S5, TRANS)

In addition, the new teaching enhanced students' awareness of the importance of participation. The students told the researcher that they knew the more active they were in class, the more they could practice their language skills. But, if the activity was boring, they were reluctant to use their language skills. According to them, the new teaching activities were both interesting to them and attractive for them, and they also forced them to be engaged.

The students also mentioned that the new teaching approach helped to promote their learning abilities. They liked the way that Mr. Z provided lots of time and questions for them to learn by themselves, which, according to them, not only deepened their understanding but also gave them the opportunity to practise their learning-to-learn skills.

Some disadvantages of the new teaching were also identified by students. For example, some students suggested that Mr. Z should improve the organization and management of learning activities in order to achieve better results; some students suggested that Mr. Z should lower the difficulty of learning activity; while, most suggested that Mr. Z should speak more English in class to enhance his teaching.

Mr. Z's responses

In the interview, Mr. Z said he experienced both anxiety and excitement doing the new teaching. At the beginning, he was worried that he might lose control over his students and their learning and that he might not be as well organized because there were so many unexpected things that might happen. So, he was very careful and even a little bit nervous:

> *... Since this is the first time for me to try these new teaching methods, I worry... that I might lose the control over my students and their learning. I don't know what I shall do if they show no interest or if my design itself doesn't go well. I have got lots of worries... for example, whether they [students] can recite the text in their own words, and some of them perhaps will not engage themselves into this activity. Besides that, if students cannot answer questions in their own words, they might feel disappointed with themselves or might lose confidence with themselves. You know, in class, if students can finish the learning tasks successfully, they will be encouraged and might do better next; however, if they fail, they might be very upset. This is one of my worries, or difficulties for me to try the new teaching. Another one is that if I give too much time to students, I just worry whether I can finish teaching tasks in time because student activities take more time.*
> (Teacher Interview Z-1-2, TRANS)

However, as the lesson had progressed, he became more and more confident with

his teaching. And after the exploratory experience, Mr. Z couldn't contain his excitement. He was satisfied with his new teaching as he thought that it gave him a new start. As well as experiencing the delight of changing, Mr. Z reported that he had enhanced his understanding about teaching.

I think my previous understanding about teaching was too narrow. I only focus on myself and the textbook. I focus too much on teaching itself, while neglecting learning. Change is necessary because we have got different teaching purposes. I think I should shift my focus from the teaching of teacher to the learning of students. Students are not only the object of teaching, but also the … Sorry I don't know how to describe, but I think… I mean good teaching should stimulate their initiative and shift passive reception to active acquisition. (Teacher Interview Z-1-2, TRANS)

Mr. Z was very happy that he went beyond his previous understanding about teaching by being open to and connecting with his students' learning. He thought that it was very important for him to have a thorough and profound understanding of the practice of teaching. According to him, the new demands for English language skills and the call for English language teaching reforms compelled him to rethink his beliefs about teaching. The educational theory and the introduction to New Zealand English language teaching delivered in the pre-action research phase helped him to reconstruct his view of teaching. The practices based on his new and developing teaching beliefs not only helped to enhance the new beliefs

but also helped to identify the difficulties and problems existing in his new teaching practices, namely, decisions about the teaching and learning activities, a busy teaching schedule, and lack of English language knowledge:

For example, if students cannot answer questions in their own words, shall I allow them to read the text, organize them to discuss together, or shall I give them some indications to help them? I don't think I can make a reasonable decision very quickly… (Teacher Interview Z-1-2, TRANS)

… the new teaching activity challenges me a lot. If I want to make the activity more meaningful and active, I not only need more experience to organize the activity well but also more related knowledge about the topic in the text. That means I should provide students with a well-structured activity and introduce more related information as well. … But… in fact, heavy-burden of teaching task and busy time schedule is another big problem. (Teacher Interview Z-1-2, TRANS)

He also mentioned that the application of New Zealand English language teaching did benefit his teaching and provided directions for changing his teaching to enhance his students' oral communication abilities in target language. As he said:

I think they are very helpful and benefit me a lot. …. I like the idea that one class activity engages students to practice more than one language ability

211

(one of New Zealand English language teaching practices). Yes, I like it very, very much. It has widened my mind and I can design more activities like this to develop my teaching and improve my students' learning. Actually, in this cycle of new teaching, I treat it as a basic principle to design my teaching. I found it helpful for me to change my teaching. I also found it practical. Yes, I agree that in language learning, students need to develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities together. That's very helpful. (Teacher Interview Z-1-2, TRANS)

6.1.2 Cycle Two

Mr. Z and the researcher began a second cycle of action research. In this section, the data for Cycle Two will be presented and summarized.

Pre-action research

In the second action research cycle, the researcher introduced the sociocultural theory of teaching and learning by theorising that EFL teaching and learning as a teacher individual identity construction process, as well as a teacher-student relationship construction process (Connolly & Smith, 2002; Hawkins, 2004; Kramsch, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lyn & Zembylas, 2006; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000) (see Appendix XII). After this session, Mr. Z commented that it never occurred to him that teaching was so complicated. He told the researcher that he only saw the surface of teaching, such as teacher, student, textbook and teaching methods. But he never realized the things beneath

it. The educational theory provided in the pre-action research session gave him a broader view to rethink his teaching and he mentioned that he needed more time to refine his understanding (Field Notes Z-2).

One week later, in an interview, Mr. Z told the researcher that he was thinking about the meaning of teaching and the meaning of being an English language teacher. Sometimes, he thought about the traditional conceptions of a teacher and teaching; sometimes he thought about the theories and New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices. These two different conceptions conflicted with each other in his minds. But his final solutions came from his teaching practices:

> *… I've got the feeling that a teacher is like a designer, a director and a guider of student learning activity. Before the teacher practices teaching, he/she has to design the activities. During the practice, he/she has to direct and guide students to finish the tasks by fulfilling the activity. It's very interesting. I like this feeling because once my students and I cooperate with each other very well or once they finish the task successfully, I have the feeling of achievement and I feel that my work has been recognized by my students.* (Teacher Interview Z-2-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z mentioned that in his previous teaching, he seldom considered his role as a designer or director of students' learning. In his mind a good teacher was

characterized by profound knowledge, and that the role of the teacher was to introduce new knowledge as much as possible. But he never thought of teaching as tactical and skilful. He professed his regret that he never had the chance to learn the educational theorising about teaching and learning previously. He also emphasized that actually using the new teaching practices was another way to develop and deepen his beliefs about teaching, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

… Actually when you introduce the beliefs of New Zealand teachers, I agree to and accept these beliefs. But at that moment, it is only an agreement or acceptance in my perception. Once I practiced the teaching, I think I have got a deeper understanding about the beliefs. I think I began to touch them by practicing them. That's different. Before I take part in your action research, the school asked all the teachers to reform their teaching to improve students' oral English language. However, there isn't any instruction or guides for us to follow. At that time, I think it is right but I haven't got a thorough understanding about student-centred teaching. So, I don't know how to practice in my teaching. (Teacher Interview Z-2-1,TRANS)

After his teaching experiment in the first cycle of the research and based on his current understanding about teaching, Mr. Z mentioned that his thinking about teaching had been suddenly broadened and he now had more to consider when thinking about teaching. Focusing on students' learning, he was currently planning

214

to organize some activities to establish a positive English language learning environment for his students. He thought that interaction and cooperation among students were very important for effective learning, thus, a proper chance for students to socialize in the target language was necessary.

Encouraged by the progress made in Cycle One, Mr. Z reported that he was full of confidence to improve his professional knowledge gradually. Firstly, he wanted to improve his spoken English language ability. Secondly, he wanted to refine the learning activities he designed for students in order to achieve better results. Besides these, he intended to change his students' beliefs about learning because he thought that teaching should serve learning, and if students didn't change their ideas as well, his changes in teaching became meaningless.

I do want to improve my spoken English. But I know I only can do it step by step. I plan to speak English as much as I can. If possible, I will plan or even write down the sentences that I might speak in class and practices more before the class. Although it seems cumbersome, it might be effective for me. But I do worry whether I have enough time and patience to do that (smiling). Another thing that I want to do is to refine the activities that I have practised in class. For example, in previous classroom observation, there are some disorders in the game about word. ... I think I need to refine the activity. Furthermore, whenever I design new activity, I should remind myself to think about all the details of the activity. In this way, I can do better. It is not only a

test but also a lesson for me. ... The third change I want to make is about my

students. I want them to change their beliefs about learning. ... I mean I want

my students to like group work and learn by themselves. Meanwhile, I try to

design this activity with challenges and interest. Once they get used to it, their

learning beliefs might change. (Teacher Interview Z-2-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z was satisfied with the classroom discipline and the relationship between himself and his students. He reported that he would keep on improving his teaching so as to maintain a good discipline and relationship with his students. In the next section, themes from the in-action research will be reported.

During-action research

Mr. Z's next phase of teaching lasted 100 minutes and there were six teaching and learning activities involved. In preparation for the first part, the teacher had asked the students to devise a role play. According to Mr. Z, this activity was aimed to improve the learning atmosphere in and after class (Field Notes, Z-2). He had divided the whole class into four groups with six members in each group. Each group was asked to make up a story in English and act the story out in groups at the beginning of each class in turn. Students selected the topic which they were interested in and wrote it up into a story. After that, they assigned roles to each group member and practised their own role play. All the above activities were finished in their spare time. Then, at the beginning of this class, each group role played their story in turn. When all the groups finished, the whole class elected

216

the most popular actor and actress by vote. This part lasted eight minutes. In the second part of the lesson, the teacher introduced the learning content for that day in English. It was an article about Einstein. He gave a brief introduction about Einstein including his life, his work, and his contribution to the development of human science using the language of English. This part lasted about five minutes. In the third part, the teacher organized the class into groups of four students. He wrote each of Einstein's characteristics on a piece of paper and then provided each group one piece of paper and asked them to find relevant stories, evidence or details from the text to support the characteristics. This part lasted about 24 minutes. Mr. Z employed English as the language of communication when helping students in this activity. In the fourth part, when all the groups had finished, each group presented their stories or evidence to the whole class. After the presentation, they named one of the students in other groups to summarize the characteristics of Einstein according to their description. This part lasted about 44 minutes. In the fifth part, the teacher asked students to evaluate the performance of the students in other groups. Then, the teacher gave his own evaluation for each group. This part lasted about six minutes. However, Mr. Z used Chinese this time. In the last part, the teacher asked students to refine what they had learned from the group work and presentation and go over the whole text. He walked around the class and was ready to provide help for students in Chinese. This part lasted about 13 minutes until the class was over.

The researcher noticed that in this second teaching episode Mr. Z tried to speak

more English in class, and this was confirmed by him after the class. He said that he spoke more English than before because he had prepared in advance (Field Notes, Z-2). According to him, it was easy for him to speak English in Activity One, Two, Three, and Four, which did not challenge his spoken language. However, in Activity Five, he needed a higher level of spoken language to evaluate the students' performance in detail and so he used Chinese (Field Notes, Z-2).

The researcher also noticed that Mr. Z tried to provide timely and detailed assessments on the students' language performance. For example, after the role play finished, he commented in Chinese on each student's performance including pronunciation, facial expression and so on. In Activity Five, after each group had finished their presentation, he used peer assessment as the strategy to ask students to assess their performance. After peer assessment, he provided his own assessment and comments for each group's performance. He pointed out the places where students should pay more attention and make progress. In his comments, his classroom discourse was friendly and full of praise to encourage students. In effect, he was using assessment for formative purposes, to improve the learning outcomes.

Mr. Z's teaching impressed the researcher with the friendly and harmonious relationship between teacher and students. There were negotiations whenever disagreements occurred, which, the researcher thought indicated the democratic

and equal relationship between them. Furthermore, the researcher noticed that Mr. Z kept his smiles, patience and friendly discourses from beginning to the end. This was confirmed by students in the following interviews.

Besides the above, the researcher also noticed that the teaching activities designed by Mr. Z attracted students' attention and participation, especially the first activity. This was confirmed by students in interviews which will be discussed in the next section.

Post-action research

After the classroom observation, the student and teacher interviews were conducted respectively. The themes from these will now be reported.

Students' responses

Eighteen of the 24 students took part in the interview. Most of them thought that Mr. Z's teaching was becoming more interesting and that student-directed learning or self-learning was taking a higher proportion of class time. They liked this teaching style. Some of them mentioned that the new teaching approach provided a more active learning atmosphere because they liked the activities and were happy to participate in (Student Interview Z-2, S2, S6, and S10). One of the students mentioned that the new initiative in learning activities was just what they needed and being a language major, this was very important for successful learning (Student Interview Z-2, S1). Most of the

students agreed with this opinion and some of them reported that they wanted themselves to be more active in class and the activities designed by teachers played an important role in getting them to be more active in using English in the lessons (Student Interview, Z-2, S1, S5, S6, and S10). They thought the activities not only encouraged them to practise language use actively but also made them responsible for their learning. As some of them mentioned:

... Mr. Z provides us much more time to practice our speaking abilities. ... We not only read the text, but also recite it in our own words. [There is] lots of reading and speaking. And also [there are] challenges [in these activities]. (Student Interview Z-2, S4, TRANS)

... he gives us more control on our learning. We cannot depend on his illustration completely; we have to understand the text by ourselves. (Student Interview Z-2, S3, TRANS)

Besides the benefits in learning, the students also said that the new teaching enhanced the communication and friendship among them:

I think the new teaching brings us more chances to cooperate with others. Before, most of the students in our class used to study separately. Only those who are good friends study together. So, in our class, there are many small groups. [It is not just a learning group but a group of students who get on

220

well with each other] There was less communication among students. However the group work brings us together. And we can learn from each other. ... (Student Interview Z-2, S8, TRANS)

The students also identified some disadvantages. Firstly, they pointed out that there were not many teacher-student interactions. They thought that most of the time was used themselves and their learning efficiency was not very high and they hoped that the teacher could involve himself in their learning so as to improve their learning efficiency (Student Interview, Z-2, S3, S7, and S13). Secondly, some students mentioned that some of the activities were a little difficult for them, especially answering questions in their own words (Student Interview Z-2, S14). In brief, students affirmed Mr. Z's new teaching and its positive role in helping and improving their learning.

Mr. Z's responses

During the post-action-research interview, Mr. Z mentioned that he spent lots of time and energy in designing the activities he used. The principle for his design was that a good teaching activity should not only be interesting and challenging but also transmit knowledge or information about knowledge to the students. He emphasized that it was the most valuable experience that he had learned from his teachings in Cycle One. On one hand, he had to make students' learning practical; on the other hand, he had to provide them the possibility of acquiring some knowledge by being involved in these activities.

Mr. Z was satisfied with his new attempt in Cycle Two and he thought that the best reward for his efforts was that he became more confident with his teaching, achieving a goal of his. As he claimed, the new teaching not only engaged students in the learning but also stimulated more interactions:

... I think that the learning activities make the whole class engage in effective learning. I am very happy to see that my students are interested in these activities. ... That's what I am expecting from them. Another thing that I am satisfied is that there are many interactions between students. ... It is helpful to enliven the classroom atmosphere. And a positive learning atmosphere is very helpful for students' learning. And also I think I try my best to interact with students. During the whole teaching process, I am not the centre but more like an audience. ... (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2, TRANS)

Mr. Z mentioned that classroom management was very important for a successful teaching. He reiterated his own opinion that effective teaching and learning pedagogy helped to maintain good classroom discipline.

I don't think I do it consciously. These days, I realize that classroom management skill is also very important for successful teaching. But to tell the truth, I don't think that I have extra energy to consider that matter. What I can do is to design effective teaching and learning activity to attract students into effective learning. (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2, TRANS)

Mr. Z pointed out that classroom management is a common problem faced by teachers. It might be very difficult or even impossible for teachers to involve all students in these kinds of learning activities, especially in a large class. For him, the strategy of setting rules employed by New Zealand English language teachers might be more useful in a smaller class. Personally, he preferred employing effective teaching pedagogy and he thought that it had been proved in his new teaching practice:

… As to the classroom management, I think in the (new) teaching, I make use of effective teaching pedagogy to maintain a good classroom discipline. It is much better than before. But I still think that I need practising more to control and manage students' behaviors in class in order to help them learn more effectively. (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2, TRANS)

Mr. Z felt happy that his new teaching enhanced his classroom management although he mentioned before that he was satisfied with his classroom discipline. He emphasized that effective teaching helped him to maintain a better classroom discipline.

As in the previous cycle, Mr. Z was satisfied with his relationship with students:

… I am satisfied with my relationship with students. After class, we are friends. Even in class, I never think that we are distant from each other. I like

the equal, democratic and friendly relationship with my students. (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2, TRANS)

Mr. Z liked an old saying in China, that is, "genuine knowledge comes from practice" because by practising, he said, he could always find some problems and then make progress. In this cycle, when asked to identify the problems or difficulties that he faced, he firstly mentioned his spoken English. He thought that he needed more time and patience to improve it. For him, it would take a long time to improve his spoken language. In addition, the other two difficulties, according to Mr. Z, came from gauging the level-of-difficulty of the new teaching and learning activities and students' lack of group learning skills.

Although to design challenging learning activities was one of the principles of Mr. Z, he mentioned that it was hard for him to grasp the level of difficulty properly.

... One is the level of difficulty in each activity. For example, in the student group activity and presentation, I think, it might be a little harder for some students to report their ideas in English with a limited time to prepare. So, I am considering arranging some activities for students to prepare after class and practice in class. The role play is a good example. ... However, during the presentation, those with poor spoken English language abilities are too shy to present. Otherwise, I should lower the level of difficulty. I'm afraid too difficult tasks might do harm to students' interest in English and their

confidence with themselves. (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2, TRANS)

Another problem that he identified was that his students lacked the skills in group learning, which according to Mr. Z reduced the efficiency of learning:

... I found that most of the students don't know how to cooperate with others efficiently. They spent too much time. ... I think that might be because they have less experience in group work. And I also find that some students in group activity are not serious. They might think it interesting. But I hope that they have serious attitudes towards learning although it can be carried out in a funny form. (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2, TRANS)

Mr. Z thought that since teaching and learning involved cooperation between teacher and students, and that teaching and learning could not be separated, it was necessary for his students to change their learning beliefs and improve their skills in group learning.

People always say that teaching and learning cannot be separated from each other. I think it is reasonable. When I am changing my teaching, students have to change their learning as well. Perhaps, in my following teaching I should talk about this question with my students (laughing). After all, teaching and learning is the cooperation between teacher and students. (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2, TRANS)

In Cycle Two, Mr. Z confirmed the positive influence of New Zealand English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices on his teaching. He told the researcher that all the changes he had made were based on the New Zealand teachers' teaching practices and beliefs. He employed these practice and beliefs to design his teaching activities and the more he practised, the more he found the beliefs helpful (Teacher Interview –Z-2-2).

At the end of the interview for Cycle Two, Mr. Z mentioned that it was an important task for him to improve his spoken English language and to design more effective learning activities by making them not only interesting and challenging but also covering as much knowledge as possible in order to improve his teaching.

This ends the themes in Cycle Two of the research with Mr. Z. In the next section, Cycle Three for Mr. Z will be summarized.

6.1.3 Cycle Three

In this section, the data of the action research for Mr. Z in Cycle Three will be presented.

Pre-action research

At the start of Cycle Three, the researcher introduced the notion of formative assessment (see Appendix 6-4) in a professional development seminar. In the

professional development meeting, the two teacher participants discussed their ideas about New Zealand English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices, and reflected their own beliefs and practices with respect to formative assessment.

In this meeting, Mr. Z mentioned that the students and their learning had attracted the most attention in his teaching. How to effectively help his students by practicing formative assessment became what he was concerned with. In contrast to his previous understanding reported in Cycle One and Cycle Two, Mr. Z said he was now thinking about how to use the strategy of formative assessment to help his students in learning activities (Field Notes, Z-3). In the following interview conducted after the seminar during the pre-action research phase, he further mentioned his consideration about this issue:

(To practice formative assessment) I think it is important for me to have a clear understanding about the roles [of students] in my teaching and their learning. I know they should play the main role in the learning activities. However, to what a degree they should and they can? Reflecting on the knowledge that I have about my students, I think it is still far from enough. Previously, I had thought that I have learned enough about my students. Actually, it is not. (Teacher Interview –Z-3-1, TRANS)

In the interview, Mr. Z expressed that although he had lots of contacts with his

students after class, his knowledge about their learning abilities and their potential to learn was not enough. He was deeply impressed that there were so many things that he needed to learn about students and teaching. By reflecting on his own teaching and learning from New Zealand teachers, he mentioned that his students' needs and learning were currently becoming the core of his teaching. He no longer "teaches the book":

> *I think in my future teaching, I should no longer just focus on the teaching books and the way that I "speak out". Instead, I think about how I can help my students digest the knowledge by themselves, how I can facilitate their learning and how I can help them practice (the knowledge) effectively. Sometimes, I even imagine the situation and their performance in the activity that I want to employ.* (Teacher Interview –Z-3-1, TRANS)

Although his beliefs about teaching were changing and developing, he was still experiencing some pressure which, according to Mr. Z, not only reduced his teaching effectiveness but resulted in a disparity between his beliefs and teaching practices, which he sometimes found stressful. The pressure mainly came from his insufficient knowledge learnt in university, especially his insufficient spoken language, the lack of student-centred teaching and learning experiences, and his busy schedule:

> *I think the change is necessary since it does improve teaching and learning*

outcomes. But on one hand, I think it does challenge me and on the other hand, what I have learnt in university is insufficient for me. Firstly is my English speaking ability. Secondly ... New Zealand teachers' teaching experience and beliefs are abstract since I have never visited their classes. So, I think that there are difficulties for me to practice new teaching successfully. And that is also the reason for me to be very tired in practicing the new teaching. There are lots of things to learn including my own language ability, knowledge about language and contents of textbook. I always feel that time is so limited and I don't have enough time to prepare for my teaching. (Teacher Interview –Z-3-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z told the researcher that the pressure troubled him and prevented him from fulfilling his teaching beliefs. He had nothing to do but tell himself to do what he could:

... That's really what I can do currently. In other words, I can only learn the forms of teaching of New Zealand teachers, but I cannot control the language as well as they do. However, it does influence my teaching. It is still a big problem for me. (Teacher Interview –Z-3-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z expressed that since the beginning of the research until now, during the changes he had made to his teaching, his emotions and mood were also changing constantly. Sometimes he was excited especially when he saw that his students

were highly motivated in learning or were interested in learning activities that he designed. Sometimes he was depressed when he had difficulties. Sometimes, he was confident with himself especially when his students liked his teaching. Sometimes he was disappointed especially when he could not see any progress or improvement. He commented that this experience made him realize that the journey to be a good teacher was not always smooth. And he had to learn to deal with the difficulties and pressures.

When talking about the changes that he wanted to make, he mentioned that based on New Zealand teachers' teaching practice and beliefs, he was considering enhancing the thinking abilities of students while speaking and listening in the target language. Therefore, his principle for designing activities was to be practical, interesting, challenging, and full of thinking and information.

I think it is important for students to command English language as well as to develop their thinking. I hope that they acquire something during practising English language. (Teacher Interview –Z-3-1, TRANS)

Mr. Z. mentioned that when he surfed the Internet, he found that topic-discussion was a popular teaching method in oral English class. He benefited from this knowledge and thought that it was not only an effective way to practice speaking but also a positive way to stimulate and develop students' thinking in English. Therefore, he wanted to introduce this activity into his class. Mr. Z also mentioned that in designing his new teaching, he would also pay much attention to the

difficulty of the activity. Summing up his experience in the previous two cycles, Mr. Z thought that this experience was of extreme importance in achieving successful teaching. He told the researcher that he would consider some measures to ensure that the activities were adapted for students of different levels. Furthermore, Mr. Z emphasized that he intended to speak more English and involve himself into student activity as much as possible.

During-action research

As with the previous two cycles, the new teaching for Cycle Three lasted about 100 minutes. Mr. Z designed the teaching and learning activities based on what he mentioned in the interview described above.

In this cycle, he designed eight activities. First was the topic-discussion. The topic was "*What does love mean to you*". In order to achieve a better result, Mr. Z had asked students to think about the question and prepare for it before discussion in class. Before the discussion began, Mr. Z wrote some words on the blackboard such as *family*, *friendship*, *lover*, and so on. Then he asked students to express their own ideas using the words he had listed. Students could choose any word that they thought represented love most. The discussion was very intense and Mr. Z listened to them carefully and he shared his own opinions and stories with his students from time to time. During the discussion, Mr. Z invited those silent students to give their responses to others' stories since they were not active in telling their own stories. This activity lasted about 21 minutes. The researcher

noticed that during the whole process, both the students and Mr. Z employed English to express their ideas and the lively discussion made the learning atmosphere active. According to Mr. Z in the conversation after class, he found the topic about love on the Internet and had prepared for it elaborately (Field Notes, M-3).

Then, Mr. Z introduced the story about a prodigal son. He wrote the title on the blackboard but began with two other stories in English which were relevant to the text. Then he asked students to discuss their ideas in English and after three of them gave their ideas, Mr. Z made a conclusion about these two stories. This part lasted about 15 minutes. Based on the two stories, Mr. Z listed some questions on the blackboard and asked students to recite parts of the story in the text to answer the questions. Students could use their own words or if this was too difficult, they could read the relevant plots in the text. For each of the questions, the teacher asked different students to recite or read. This activity lasted 23 minutes.

After that, Mr. Z introduced the main idea about the text and the key points to learn for that day. However, in this part, he employed Chinese rather than English. According to him, it was because using Chinese was much easier for the students to understand clearly and correctly (Field Notes, Z-3). This activity lasted 13 minutes.

In the next activity, the teacher asked some students to read the text in class. This

part of the activity lasted six minutes. Then he provided some time for students to ask any questions related to the text. Once a question was raised, he asked all the students to give their responses. This part of the activity lasted 14 minutes. The remaining eight minutes was used by students to go over the text and Mr. Z walked around the students and answered questions from them using Chinese.

During the classroom observation for this teaching session, the researcher noticed that most of the time in class was dominated by student talk. According to the time analysis calculated by the researcher, 79% of the time was used by students. During the teaching and learning activities, students not only practiced their speaking, listening and speaking abilities but also developed their thinking. For example, activity One and Three stimulated students to combine the target language input, processing and output together. In these two activities, the students had to think, organize and express their ideas in English language. It echoed what Mr. Z had mentioned in the interview: that he wanted to develop students' thinking abilities in addition to their communicative language abilities.

In addition, the researcher also noticed that Mr. Z used formative assessment as a teaching strategy to help his students in learning activities in Activity One, Two, and Three. For example, in Activity One, the topic-discussion activity, Mr. Z provided feedback after some of the students presented their opinions. It was noted that Mr. Z used English language to express his feedback. In providing feedback, Mr. Z either commented his students' ideas or asked some questions to

get the students to think in more depth. However, in Activity Two and Three, although Mr. Z used formative assessment as well, his feedback became less frequent, which, according to him was due to his insufficient preparation (Field Notes, Z-3).

It was also noticed that Mr. Z still employed some traditional teaching methods, for example, in Activity Five, he explained the language points to improve students' knowledge about grammar, words and phrases. However, this part of the activity only took 13% of the time. According to him, it was impossible to get rid of the traditional teaching methods from class; otherwise, students' grammar foundation would be weakened (Field Note, Z-3).

With respect to relationships and classroom management, the researcher noticed that the whole teaching process in this third teaching session was full of amity, democracy and cooperation. The class discipline was good. Since Mr. Z asked most students to give their opinions, the students were serious and undistracted.

Post-action research

After the classroom observation, the researcher conducted student and teacher interviews respectively. Themes from these will now be reported.

Students' responses

Sixteen of the 24 students attended the interview. As in the previous cycles, Mr.

Z's new teaching gained the acknowledgement of students. According to students, the new teaching achieved its purpose of livening up the learning atmosphere in and after class. Students reported that they preferred the in-class learning activity to be extended to after-class self-study. Most of them confessed that they were not good at self-discipline; therefore, the assignment from the teacher reminded them of learning. Otherwise, time was wasted.

Another advantage identified by the students was that the new teaching was enlightening. In the interview, the students said that they liked the activity of topic-discussion. They thought it was full of interest, joy and knowledge. They not only practised their English language abilities but also gained something from reflecting on themselves and listening to others. They also mentioned that they noticed Mr. Z left more time to them to explore answers by themselves. They expressed that they liked it because they thought it helpful to improve their awareness of how to learn. As one of them said:

> *Our teacher gives us more and more things to do in class. He seldom gives us the correct answers. We have to discuss with our classmates. (Smiling) He asks us to speak English. He is right. Nowadays, I think I speak more and more English in class. It seems that we are gradually having the opportunity to speak English.* (Student Interview Z-3, S3, TRANS)

When asked about the areas where their teacher should improve further, most of

them insisted that Mr. Z should speak more fluent English in class. The students said that the level and frequency of their teacher's spoken English influenced their learning greatly.

Mr. Z's responses

Mr. Z commented that what he had done in his new teaching for Cycle Three was to keep developing his teaching based on his developing teaching beliefs and practice in the previous two cycles. In his opinion, any new teaching was based on previous teaching experience. Reflections on previous teaching practices in Cycle One and Cycle Two provided him with the potential for creating new teaching activities. He thought that it was necessary for a good English language teacher to master a series of teaching methods and be fluent in the English language. However, for him, it was much easier to try different methods than improving his professional knowledge. Therefore, he intended to make it as a starting point for his professional development.

Mr. Z continued by stating that the activity of topic-discussion came from the role-play activity. The success of role-play made him realize that students liked to practice English by themselves in a relaxed way, and it was important to establish the language speaking environment for them in and after class as well. Furthermore, he mentioned that he wanted to avoid routine work; otherwise students might lose their interest. Based on this idea, he thought that he should design an activity to increase students' awareness and initiative in English

language learning. Spending lots of time and energy, he had decided to employ the activity of topic-discussion as the new teaching method.

I think it is not only a way to practise their speaking and thinking in English but also a good way for me to learn about them, to learn about their thinking. In class, from the students' performance in this activity, I think I am right. Most of the students are very interested in this topic and they are active in stating their own ideas. ... their performance gives me confidence (smiling). (Teacher Interview Z-3-2, TRANS)

Mr. Z thought that this activity provided students with the possibility of fulfilling their roles and responsibility in learning, which further stimulated their initiative and motivation in learning. Besides that, this activity considered students' different learning levels and allowed them to contribute according to their respective levels. Therefore, he thought that good English language teaching should not only have the quality of practising, considering students' various ability levels, but also being attractive in both form and content. In the conversation after the classroom observation, Mr. Z told the researcher that topic-discussion provided students with the opportunity to organize their learning themselves. It was not only practical but also relaxed in form and organization. Students expressed their ideas without any pushing. And the topic itself was attractive enough for students as well (Field Notes Z-3).

Although the activity of topic discussion proved successful, Mr. Z thought that he did not provide his students with effective and enough feedback on their speech. He mentioned that it was a bit difficult for him to provide timely and helpful feedback on his students' learning. He commented that formative assessment demanded a good knowledge of student leaning and teacher professional knowledge:

But I think that my problems are exposed in this activity. It is a pity that my preparation for this topic is not sufficient. If I could provide them (students) with enough feedback for each of their speech, the learning results will be much better. And also if my oral English was good, I might develop it as a debate since students have got different ideas about the topic and they are so interested in this topic. I do think that formative assessment places too much pressure on me. The more I try, the more I think I need to learn. (Teacher Interview Z-3-2, TRANS)

There is always difficulty (smiling). Formative assessment demands too much. For me, I have to think about all the issues that I have to consider (when provide feedback). That is the demand basically. I may call it the demand for hardware. I also have to learn how to use the software to operate it well. So, there are too many things to do at the same time. It is really a challenge for me to fulfill the assessment strategy. (Teacher Interview Z-3-2, TRANS)

When asked whether he is satisfied with his new teaching, Mr. Z seems excited and exudes great confidence. He thought that he was making progress and felt very satisfied since he had learnt lots of things from the changes.

Mr. Z also commented that he was deeply impressed that teaching was a profound branch of learning. The more he practised, the more he needed to learn. The most valuable experience that he had learned from this research was the new and deeper understanding about teaching. He thought it was very important to possess a correct and thorough perception about teaching because it provided him the guidelines for practising teaching. Although there were still more and more things to learn, he felt confident with himself as he had already taken his first step. He called his teaching experience in this research an "unforgettable experience". According to him:

> *This is an unforgettable experience for me, for my teaching. Previously, I explore by myself. There are so many questions that I cannot find the answers. It is so slow for me to develop my teaching. ... I think I am making fast progress these days. But I do think that teaching is learning and to be a teacher is to be learning teaching.* (Field Notes Z-3, TRANS)

Besides the above, Mr. Z confirmed his idea that effective teaching pedagogy helped to manage the class. He thought that teachers played a proactive and preventive role not only in students' learning, but also in maintaining good

relationship with students and good discipline in class. According to Mr. Z, effective teaching was the most important and the first way to achieve the above goals:

> *Just like what I have done in the last cycle. I think effective teaching methods are workable to control the class. I believe that it is the responsibility of teachers that students show no interest in learning. It perhaps is because of your teaching. I like the old saying in China, that is, there is only the teacher who doesn't know how to teach; there isn't a student who cannot be instructed. So is the relationship between teacher and student. I think a friendly and helpful teacher with excellent teaching must be very welcome by students. So, for me to improve my teaching is a very important factor to keep a good relationship with students.* (Teacher Interview Z-3-2, TRANS)

So far, themes from the three cycles in the action research with Mr. Z have been summarized. During the change process, Mr. Z continuously developed his understanding of teaching and his role of being an English language teacher. Firstly, he began to think about students' learning and reconstruct the relationship between teaching and learning, that is, learning is at the core of teaching. He regarded that an important standard of good teaching was to develop students' interests in learning. Secondly, Mr. Z, through developing his new teaching, realized the issues that hindered his professional development, including his English language proficiency, subject matter knowledge, and his heavy teaching

load, also provided him with the direction for future professional development. Thirdly, Mr. Z enhanced his confidence in himself to practise new teaching which aimed to improve his students' oral communicative competence. He also realized that teaching is complicated and involved life-long learning. In sum, during the change process of Mr. Z, New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices played a positive role in his professional development. In the next section, themes from the action research with Miss M will be represented.

6.2 Case study II

The case study of Miss M will now be presented. In each of the three cycles, themes in Miss M's data will be summarised in terms of pre-action research, during-action research, and post-action research.

Miss M was the other teacher participant in this research. She graduated from a southwest China's provincial university in 2005. Her major was Business English. After graduation, she began her teaching career in this college. She told the researcher that since the beginning of her teaching, she had a heavy teaching load because of the shortage of teaching staff. According to Miss M, the teaching schedule was compulsory and she had to accept it. During the past three years, she had been engaged in the teaching of more than three specialized subjects. She said that she was continuously learning what was in the teaching books, one by one, because of her insufficient professional knowledge, and this made her extremely busy and tired. Sometimes, she felt that she could not endure it.

Although she thought that she had done all she could, she did not think that her teaching produced the effects she expected. She described her teaching as rigid and boring. She was upset that in the staff evaluation each semester, she fell behind her colleagues. Therefore, Miss M reported that she had a definite purpose for taking part in this research to improve her teaching. According to her, a busy schedule and heavy teaching tasks prevented her from thinking about teaching, much less improve it. She felt it was not easy to make herself understood by students.

Miss M introduced the subjects that she currently taught which included *Business Oral English*, *Marketing English* and *College English* for non-English majors. Among them, she selected *Business Oral English* as the experimental subject because she thought it was the most challenging subject for her and an important subject for the Business English major. The instructional material was *Business English Dialogue* published by China Machine Press (Jiang et al., 2006). According to the foreword, this book mainly focuses on the English language used in the contexts of practical business and business operation as well as some frequently used business knowledge and professional vocabulary. In the context of foreign trade, this book consisted of model dialogues, key sentences, frequently used words, and phrases (Jiang et al., 2006). According to Miss M, among all the subjects taught for this major, *Business Oral English,* this subject functioned as one of the bridging subjects which linked English language and business

knowledge. Therefore, she considered it one of the main subjects for Business English majors in the college.

Miss M also provided the information about her students. There were in total 34 students in her class. All of them were Business English majors in their second year of study. According to Miss M, most of the students in this class worked very hard and that was another factor which had stimulated her to select this subject to focus on in this research. Like Mr. Z, Miss M had already accepted the need for change before the action research started. Miss M took part in three cycles of the action research. In each cycle, she participated in seminar about education theory, a professional development meeting discussing New Zealand English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices, reflected on her own teaching, designed and practised new teaching, and attended interviews. The following chart outlines the time frame of the activities that Miss M was involved in. After that, the stories about her and her teaching will be presented.

Date / Activity	Cycle One	Cycle Two	Cycle Three
Professional Development Seminar	11/03/2008	29/04/2008	03/06/2008
Professional Development Meeting	20/03/2008	09/05/2008	06/06/2008
Pre-action research Interview	26/03/2008	19/05/2008	12/06/2008
In-action Classroom Observation	03/04/2008	26/05/2008	19/06/2008
Post-action Research Interview	08/04/2008	27/05/2008	27/06/2008
Student Interview	14/04/2008	30/05/2008	02/07/2008

Table 6.2 Time frame for Miss M in the action research

6.2.1 Cycle One

In this section, the data of the action research for Miss M in Cycle One will be presented.

Pre-action research

Before the action research, Miss M self-disclosed the troubles she had in teaching. She told the researcher that the students were not interested in her teaching. Even she herself felt that her teaching was dull and when she asked her students to do some activities in class, she found that they were reluctant to do so. She felt that time passed so slowly in class and teaching became a torment for her. It had troubled her for a long time; however, she didn't know what to do to address her problems.

After participating in the seminar and professional development meeting, Miss M reflected on her teaching and agreed to the researcher's interview. She told the researcher that compared with New Zealand English language teachers' practice, her teaching was full of teacher explanation and students' memorization and imitation. She classified her teaching in the traditional knowledge-transmission teaching mode, and reported that neither she nor her students liked this teaching mode. However, as she described it, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. The reasons lay in both her busy teaching schedule and limited content knowledge. When talking about the problems existing in her teaching, Miss M attributed the cause to her lack of effective pedagogy. In the mean time, she pointed out that her current pedagogy was limited by the structure of the teaching material and the purpose of the teaching. As she claimed:

> *I think I need more teaching strategies to enrich my teaching and students' learning. ...I think it is my case...and...my teaching approach is very simple. You know, my text book is full of dialogues in business background. I want to help my students understand these sentences, memorize them and know how to use them correctly. Therefore, most of the time in class is dominated by me. I tell them the language points and key sentences in each dialogue and ask them to recite all the dialogues.* (Teacher Interview M-1-1, TRANS)

However, she also mentioned that there was a contradiction between her current teaching practice and the teaching she desired. In the interview, she mentioned that

she didn't like her own teaching but failed to provide any opinions about the teaching that she preferred. She realized that there were some inconsistencies between her teaching and the students' needs:

Yes, it is boring, I understand, because I was a student. This method leads to deepened language abilities in grammar and sentence structure, but neglects students' communication abilities, while, students, nowadays, pay significant attention to their communication abilities with foreigners. So, this is a paradox for me. (Teacher Interview M-1-1, TRANS)

Miss M thought that teaching influenced the relationship between her and her students. According to her, the relationship was different for her in-class and after-class interactions with students.

… I contact with my students frequently after class. I always chat in Chinese with some of them online after class. Some of them like to talk with me about their school life, feelings and something like that. (Smiling) We're friends! They like to share their stories with me. Sometimes we talk about my teaching and their learning. They are implicit in the feedback they gave me, especially when we talk about my teaching and when I ask them about my teaching. But I know most of them are not satisfied with my teaching and they hope I will perform better in class. If I can do that, I will be more popular among my students. ... Whenever I stand before my students, I feel the distance between

246

them and me. I cannot chat with them freely. So, in class and after class I am totally different. That's really a trouble for me. (Teacher Interview M-1-1, TRANS)

According to Miss M, she was competent and communicative when she got together with her students after class. However, once she stood before her students in class, she felt helpless and out of control. She felt that there was a wall between her and her students and she knew that it was her teaching which distanced her and her students. Therefore, when she noticed that some students showed no interest in learning or did something unrelated to learning in class, she thought that it was her failure and she believed that good teaching was the key to guarantee good class discipline since her students were already adults and setting rules might be improper for them.

They are adults and they have got their own thoughts. If they are not interested in your teaching, they still will not concentrate on listening and learning. In my opinion, it is teaching that plays the key role. (Teacher Interview M-1-1, TRANS)

Miss M emphasized that adult learners had the ability to regulate themselves. If she set some rules to manage their behaviors, it might produce exactly the opposite results. Therefore, in her opinion, pedagogy was more important for her, than teacher and student relationships and classroom management skills.

When asked about her thoughts on New Zealand English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices, she mentioned that they were helpful for her and she had experienced their teaching style when she studied at university. She thought that they were student-oriented and emphasized learning by students. With respect to her own teaching, she reported that the teaching beliefs and practice of New Zealand English language teachers were helpful and useful. She commented that her current teaching was an imitation of her previous teachers and was too outdated for today's learning. Through current learning, reflecting and thinking, she defined her teaching aims as being to improve her students' language proficiency rather than language knowledge and key sentence explanation. She planned to organize some group work for the students to practise, as this was an activity frequently used by New Zealand teachers. She also intended to make the activities interesting so as to motivate students. In view of her previous teaching experience, she said that it was necessary to make the learning challenging and full of new knowledge; otherwise, students might not be interested in it.

At the end of the interview, Miss M mentioned that as well as her teaching activities, she would also pay attention to some of her unconscious teaching behaviors in class. For example, she commented that the way she talked and the tone of her voice in teaching were boring, which estranged her from her students.

During-action research

One week after the interview, Miss M invited the researcher to visit her class. The class lasted 100 minutes, during which time she introduced and discussed three dialogues. For each of the dialogues, Miss M employed the same methods, in the same sequence. There were in total five steps involved. Firstly, she introduced students to the background information about each dialogue in the text book, including the events that had occurred, the people involved, their titles, positions and relevant business knowledge. In this step, Miss M primarily employed English. However, when she came to the relevant business knowledge, she changed to Chinese. She used Chinese to introduce some words and phrases that might be used by the students in constructing the dialogue. After that, the students were asked to make up a dialogue with their desk mates by practising what the teacher had introduced. Two or three minutes later, Miss M, without asking whether the students had finished, named some of the students to present their dialogues to the class. Then, Miss M told students to open their books and read the dialogue. She introduced the language points in the dialogue using the language of Chinese. Lastly, students role-played the dialogue with their desk mates.

The researcher noticed that in the first step, Miss M employed English as the communicating language to introduce the background information, which not only practised students' listening abilities but helped to concentrate the students' attention. However, because of her limited language speaking abilities, she switched to Chinese. This was confirmed by Miss M in the after-action research

interview. In the second step, the researcher noticed that while students were doing their dialogue, Miss M stood at the teaching desk reading her teaching plan for the next steps (Field Notes M-1). Miss M told the researcher in a conversation after the class that she had to because:

... When the students are doing at the dialogue, I think I have lots of things to do. For example, I have to go over the following contents and think about how I could express myself in English. (Field Notes, M-1, TRANS*)*

In the following step, the researcher noticed that there were no volunteers to present their dialogue and Miss M had to select speakers. However, the students named were very serious and most of the other students listened carefully. Some of them gave humorous dialogues which made the whole class laugh. When the presentation finished, Miss M commented by saying "good" or "well done" as her feedback. In the fourth step, Miss M explained the usages of some key words and phrases. However, she employed Chinese from the beginning to the end. According to her explanation given in the conversation after the class, some of the key words were left out in order to save more time for student learning activities (Field Notes, M-1). In the last activity, the student role-play, the researcher noticed that Miss M once again named the students who had to give a presentation in the role-play activity. The students named performed very well and some of them even repeated the dialogue in their own words. Miss M again commented on their performance as "good" or "very good". However, the non-participating students

showed no interest in this activity and most of them read the dialogue themselves (Field Notes, M-1).

In addition, the researcher also noticed that Miss M's voice was low and lacked confidence and enthusiasm. The matter-of-fact tone and serious facial expression ran throughout her teaching. She never walked around the class to interact with students or to check their learning but stood at the teaching desk all the time. The researcher calculated the proportion of time in each dialogue for teacher and student talking. In the first dialogue, 57.8% of the time (15 minutes out of 26 minutes) was dominated by students and 42.2% of the time (9 minutes out of 26 minutes) was dominated by the teacher; in the second dialogue, 51.4% of the time (18 minutes out of 35 minutes) is dominated by students and 48.6% (17 minutes out of 35 minutes) by the teacher; in the third dialogue, 55.9% of the time (19 minutes out of 34 minutes) was dominated by students and 44.1% of the time (15 minutes out of 34 minutes) was dominated by the teacher. The remaining 5 minutes were left for students to go over the three dialogues. According to Miss M, compared with her previous teaching, students were given more time for learning and practising by themselves (Field Notes, M-1). The researcher noticed that the significant change that Miss M made was to empower her students in the learning activities by allowing them more time to control and be responsible for their learning.

With respect to the classroom management, the researcher noticed that Miss M demonstrated few skills in managing class discipline. Although most of the students engaged themselves in learning activities, some of them, especially those sitting at the back, were not as active as others. They sent messages or played with their cell phones. But, Miss M did nothing to stop this behavior.

With respect to teacher-student relationships, the researcher felt that Miss M lacked emotional communication with students. For example, the researcher noticed that in class, there was less eye contact and fewer interactions between teacher and students. And her serious facial expression and way of talking distanced her from her students.

Post-action research

After the classroom observation, the researcher interviewed the teacher and her students. They both provided their opinions of and responses to the new teaching.

Students' responses

Twenty-five of the thirty-four students took part in the group interview. At the beginning of the interview, there were some disagreements about Miss M's changes in her teaching. Sixteen of the students (64%) mentioned that they noticed the changes and that they liked the changes because the changes gave them more interaction, practice, involvement, and joys of learning:

I think the most obvious advantage is more interactions occurred in class. In her previous teaching, it was only she who made sounds in class. We always kept silent and were busy taking notes. [It was] very boring. I learnt English that way in middle school and high school. However, at that time because of the pressures from examinations, I seldom thought it boring. However, at this moment, being a language major, I do think it boring and not practical. In her new teaching, she tried to provide us the chance to practice the sentences in textbook. I think it good. At least, it makes the language learning a little bit practical to us. (Student Interview M-1-S5, TRANS)

I think the design of classroom activities is very important for us. We like new activities, especially those that are attractive to us and can engage us in learning. I think that Miss M should try some other new teaching methods. But I like the changes. (Student Interview M-1-S4, TRANS)

However, three students (out of twenty-five) did not think that Miss M had made any changes in her teaching (S3, S9, and S13). They told the researcher that they could not learn what they expected to, from Miss M. When asked what was they expected, all of them kept silent and none of them expressed themselves. One of the students expressed:

It's hard to say exactly. ... It's business English. We want to learn not only business English, the language itself, but also business knowledge, which is related with the language. Actually, we still haven't got a clear purpose for this subject. So, different students have a different understanding about this subject. (Student Interview M-1-S3, TRANS)

Most of the students showed their agreement by saying "yes" or nodding their heads. They thought that Miss M should target her teaching clearly and provide clear learning goals and objectives. Although opinions varied, most of them agreed that Miss M was working to improve her teaching and they would benefit from it.

During the interview, students also pointed out some disadvantages in Miss M's teaching. For example, they thought that Miss M lacked confidence with herself, that her voice was too low, and her pronunciation was not clear (S7, S8); some thought that Miss M used too much working in pairs and too much repetition made them uninterested (S3, S10, S12). And when S13 mentioned that Miss M seldom considered their learning outcomes, most of the students showed their agreement. They reported that Miss M seemed to be trying to finish the textbook and their state of learning was rarely considered. At the end of the interview, the students stated that they hoped that Miss M could organize class activities in English and depend less on the teaching books, so as to provide them with a good learning environment (S2, S4, S6, S9, S14, and S15).

Miss M's response

Miss M told the researcher that her changes in teaching focused on one aspect of her teaching. In view of the deficiencies in her previous traditional teaching, she expected to change her teaching to provide her students with more freedom and control in practising English language. She reported that she chose team work as the way to help her fulfill this desired change. As she said:

> *You know, in the textbook of Business English, there are lots of dialogues. If I always focus on the analysis of key words and sentence patterns, teaching is boring. And I don't think that students will go over and try to remember all of the language points after class by themselves. So, it is necessary for me to change my teaching from knowledge transmission to the teaching which provides students with more practising opportunities. In the new teaching, I employed team work as the teaching activity to stimulate students' effective learning.* (Teacher Interview M-1-2, TRANS)

Recalling her previous teaching, Miss M described her feelings as sad because she always saw the disappointed faces of her students in class. She told the researcher that she knew she could not satisfy their needs. Therefore, when she tried the new teaching, she was under a lot of pressure because she had put so much hope on it. According to Miss M, she was worried that she might make some mistakes or might forget something during teaching process; therefore, she had to think about

and remind herself all the time. In the mean time, compared with traditional teaching modes, the new teaching made her feel unsafe and worried. As she said:

Previously, I always provided students with lots of language points or grammar in class. Although it looks boring, I do provide some knowledge and information that are helpful for their language learning. As long as I spend some time to prepare the language points carefully, I am able to give them a clear and well-organized class. However, when I try the new teaching, I worry a lot that I might neglect my own responsibility as a teacher and I worry that students might not learn anything in class as well. (Teacher Interview M-1-2, TRANS)

Miss M mentioned that the new teaching brought her difficulties because of the challenges. She said that her professional knowledge about business and limited English language abilities were the biggest challenge for her, which made her focus too much on her own teaching and ignore her students' learning. She emphasized that she could not combine her teaching with her students' learning and provide them with effective assessment. Sometimes, even though she had some ideas about business knowledge, she could not express these ideas in English fluently. Furthermore, this situation influenced her confidence in teaching. She described it as a "vicious circle".

However, Miss M was satisfied with her new teaching. She thought it worked and she read this from her students' smiling faces. She stated that although it was not the best result, she had achieved something. However, she thought the success was due to her students' good comprehension, their cooperation and good behavior; otherwise, her teaching might fail or at least not be as successful as it was. Through empowering students in learning, she thought that her beliefs about teaching had changed:

> *I think my teaching beliefs do change. I begin to trust my students, trust their learning abilities. I begin to have the courage to leave learning my students and allow them to use the time in class by themselves. [It is] a different understanding about teaching and learning, yes, different from my previous understanding. I think that good teaching is the teaching that motivates students and promotes students' interest in learning rather than a clear, well-organized lesson plan with a list of knowledge to be learnt.* (Teacher Interview M-1-2, TRANS)

When asked about her relationship with students, Miss M mentioned that she had maintained a good personal relationship with her students after class because she was an easy-going person. However, she hoped to improve it in class by improving her teaching because she believed students liked and respected teachers, who excelled in teaching.

... I keep a good relationship with them. However, it's different. I can only say that the personal relationship is good because I am an easy-going teacher... After class, I like to keep in touch with my students. They like talking with me. I think they like me and respect me, not as a good teacher but a kind "old sister". I do hope that one day they will respect me as a good teacher. ... At least, effective teaching approaches can improve my classroom teaching practice, which, in turn improve my relationship with students. (Teacher Interview M-1-2, TRANS)

With regard to classroom management, Miss M mentioned that she needn't worry about the discipline because her students were very good and she only needed to engage them in effective learning. She believed that effective teaching was helpful for her to achieve this engagement.

Lastly, when talking about the application of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices, Miss M mentioned that they were helpful to improve her teaching and provided her with a new way to think about teaching. Through practising, she thought she had changed her beliefs about teaching and had begun to consider the students' learning outcomes, which she had previously neglected. Finally, Miss M reported that she would like to work more on providing effective and timely feedback and assessment. She also wished to design rich and varied learning activities.

In this section, all of the data for Cycle 1 has been summarized. Cycle 2 of the action research for Miss M will be presented in the next section.

6.2.2 Cycle Two

In this section, the data about Miss M's understanding of English language teaching pre- and post-action research and her new teaching practice in Cycle Two will be presented and summarized.

Pre-action research

In Cycle Two, Miss M willingly took part in another seminar and professional development meeting. She told the researcher in the meeting that she was happy with trying a new teaching activity - team work. She mentioned that since the new teaching in the last cycle (Cycle One), she had continuously made attempts to make her teaching better. According to her, the new pedagogy made her teaching relaxed and more active than before (Field Notes, M-2). However, several days later, in the pre-action research interview in Cycle Two, she reported that her feelings about the change were mingled with both hope and fear. On one hand, she saw signs of improvement; on the other hand, she had increased the pressure in herself with the challenges of teaching in a new approach. She reported that the new teaching approach was similar to the teaching that she had expected when she was still a student. She had wished to be given more time and freedom in learning by her teachers. However, when she became a teacher, she found that too many worries prevented her from doing that:

Actually, when I was a student in university, I had thought that a teacher should give more time and freedom to students in class. But, once I became a teacher, I found it is not as easy as I had thought. On one hand, I worry that if I give too much time to my students, I might not finish the teaching tasks; on the other hand, I worry that my students might not learn enough knowledge by themselves. So, it is really a paradox for me. (Teacher Interview M-2-1, TRANS)

However, in the interview, Miss M further mentioned that although hope and fear mingled, she still had full confidence in trying new teaching especially after learning about the educational theory and the New Zealand teachers' beliefs. She said the new teaching practices not only taught her to think more about her teaching practice but influenced her beliefs:

I think these days, I am learning to be a designer of the class and let my students take the main role in their learning. I am learning to think about any possible teaching activities to enrich my teaching, any possible activity to avoid my disadvantages in teaching. ...I think my perception about the role of a teacher has been changed into a designer and a director. ... a director to guide students to perform better just like the director of a film. It's very interesting... I like the role. (Teacher Interview M-2-1, TRANS)

According to Miss M, the new teaching beliefs not only enabled her to think of her teaching from a new point of view, but these new beliefs also exposed flaws in her current teaching. In the interview, she mainly discussed two factors which prevented her from effective teaching: the lack of effective teaching activities and her English language speaking abilities:

> *... Firstly, I need more effective teaching approaches because students think it boring if I always use the same activity in my teaching. It has been proved in my class. ... if I employ the same teaching methods or a fixed teaching pattern, I myself will become less and less interested in teaching, let alone my students. Therefore, more and more new teaching activities are very important for me. ... Furthermore, I am not a native speaker and my English speaking ability sometimes limits my teaching and prevents me from effective teaching.* (Teacher Interview M-2-1, TRANS)

When asked whether New Zealand English language teachers' teaching practices were helpful to develop her teaching, Miss M mentioned that they were, but she had to consider the contexts of teaching and learning. According to her, Chinese students were influenced by a traditional learning culture, and they always expected to learn something concrete from each lesson. As she said:

> *... In my opinion, most Chinese students expect that they could learn something concrete from each lesson, such as some knowledge about the usage of English*

language. A traditional understanding of good teaching is that the teacher provides large amount of knowledge in a clear and acceptable way. New Zealand English language teachers' practice involves lots of student activities and interactions among students. I know that this kind (of teaching) helps to stimulate students' interest. However, some students might not think it is an effective way to learn more knowledge. (Teacher Interview M-2-1, TRANS)

Therefore, she had to achieve a balance between motivating student to learn and the amount of knowledge they acquired:

... I have to consider my own teaching and learning contexts, especially my own teaching. I like their teaching style, however, it is hard [for me] to be the same. The greatest challenge for me is that I have to not only design the interesting activity to engage students into effective learning but also help them to learn enough. Too much activity takes too much time in class and students might feel that they learn less. It's a hard job. (Teacher Interview M-2-1, TRANS)

Miss M mentioned that interesting and formative teaching was what she desired. She was thinking about moving her teaching into a multi-media classroom where she could use technologies to design the teaching activity to avoid her poor speaking and provide her students with more English language inputs.

262

When talking about the relationship with students, Miss M expressed that her students gave her pressure because they were English majors and they had a high expectation of her. Therefore, she emphasized that "the prerequisite (to improve the relationship with my students) is that I have to improve my teaching. I must have actual strength in teaching" (Teacher Interview M-2-1). Hence, she anchored her hope in improving her teaching. In addition, she also realized that she should communicate more with her students in class, which she believed would also be helpful to close the distance between her and her students. However, she claimed that gaps in her content knowledge prevented her from communicating more. In spite of the difficulty, Miss M mentioned that she would do what she could to change her teaching, little by little, based on what she had done as well as the New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices, which she thought provided her with "the direction for change" and provided her with "the hints to generate" new ways of teaching (Teacher Interview M-2-1).

During-action research

The classroom observation occurred one week after the interview and a twenty-minute short conversation with Miss M was held after class because she had the time and she was happy to discuss her teaching with the researcher. In the following section, the observations from class will be interwoven with Miss M's opinions expressed in the post-observation conversation in order to achieve a complete understanding about her new teaching.

At the beginning of the class, the researcher noticed that the furniture arrangement of the multi-media classroom was fixed and there were 42 seats in six rows of seven. In each row, on each side, two students sat together. In the middle, three students sat together. Each student had an earphone to receive instructional information and a small screen to view visual information. The teacher's table was at the front of the room with an operational screen. There was a big screen on the front wall opposite students for PowerPoint presentations.

As in the last cycle (Cycle One), the teaching lasted 100 minutes and consisted of three dialogues. The same methods and sequences were employed for each dialogue. Six steps were involved in each dialogue. The first dialogue lasted 23 minutes, the second lasted 38 minutes and the last one 34 minutes. Take the second dialogue for instance, Miss M firstly employed English as the mode of communication and asked students to read the dialogue by themselves, which lasted five minutes (13.2%). In this dialogue, the researcher noticed that the students were serious and earnest in reading by themselves. Miss M sat at the teaching desk reading her teaching plan and she looked around at students from time to time. As she expressed in the conversation after class, she just checked whether the students were concentrating on reading (Field Notes, M-2). Then, she played the recording of the dialogue and told students to listen carefully and pay attention to the pronunciation and intonation while listening. The playing of the dialogue lasted about two minutes (5.3%). It was noticed that students listened carefully. However, Miss M failed to check whether they could hear clearly and

264

whether there were some difficulties in their listening and speaking. This was confirmed by Miss M in the post-lesson conversation. She mentioned that she had forgotten to do that although the purpose of this activity was to make up for her deficiency of spoken language and help students master correct pronunciation and intonation (Field Notes, M-2).

After playing the recording, Miss M introduced the next activity. She firstly spoke in English to introduce the background information about the dialogue and then analyzed the key words and phrases in Chinese. All the examples and model sentences were demonstrated in PowerPoint. According to Miss M, in the conversation after class, in order to provide more English language input, she wrote the background information in English on a piece of paper in advance and tried to get familiar with it and speak fluently in class. However, she appeared to find it too hard to clearly explain the key words in English and she reverted to Chinese (Field Notes, M-2). This activity lasted about seven minutes (18.4%). The researcher noticed that when Miss M spoke in English, the students listened carefully; and when she illustrated the language points, students were busy taking notes.

After that, Miss M asked the students to listen to the dialogue once again, with the Chinese translation demonstrated in the PowerPoint. This activity, according to Miss M, was aimed to strengthen students' understanding, and the Chinese translation linked the target language and Chinese, thus, making the understanding

easier (Field Notes M-1). This activity lasted about two minutes (5.3%). Then, Miss M asked the students to practise the dialogue with their partners, which lasted about ten minutes (26.4%). During the process, Miss M took off her earphone and walked around the class to check students' learning. The researcher noticed that sometimes Miss M stopped and listened to the students from time to time. According to Miss M, this activity was aimed to strengthen the cooperative learning between students and to allow them time to practise their oral language and she walked around the students in case that they had any questions or problems (Field Notes M-2).

Lastly, she asked students to recite the dialogue in pairs according to the translation she had provided in PowerPoint, which lasted 12 minutes (31.4%). According to Miss M, this activity was aimed to encourage students to speak English in public and helped her to check whether the students could recite the dialogue with the correct pronunciation (Field Notes M-2). However, the researcher noticed that while the students named by Miss M recited the dialogue, the other students showed little interest in listening.

According to the time analysis calculated by the researcher, 81.6% of the talk time was dominated by students and 18.4% by the teacher. It was also noticed that during the whole process, during most of the students' activities, she failed to provide timely and detailed assessment. For example, after the students had

recited the dialogue, she said "good" or "very good" as the evaluation and made few comments about pronunciation and intonation. She used only praise and not feedback on their learning. The researcher also noticed some improvements compared with the teaching in Cycle One, for example, in Cycle Two Miss M refined the language points and reduced the size of the learning, and she walked around the class to check students' learning during students' activity.

With regard to classroom management, the researcher noticed that the discipline of the whole class was good. Most of the students engaged themselves in the learning activity except during the activity of *Dialogue Reciting*. When the teacher reminded students to listen carefully, things became better. With respect to the teacher-student relationship, it was noticed that Miss M's voice was still a bit low and she employed the same matter-of-fact tone, which made her teaching lack enthusiasm.

Post-action research

After the classroom observation, the researcher interviewed Miss M and her students respectively. They all expressed their own views.

Students' responses

Twenty-three of the thirty-four students took part in the group interview. When asked whether they noticed the changes made by Miss M in the second cycle, it

was agreed that the new teaching involved more chances to practise reading, speaking, and listening. They particularly welcomed the listening activity and agreed that it provided them with the chance to listen to a native speaker's pronunciation and intonation (S2, S5, S9). Some of them thought that the new teaching provided them with a new learning environment to practice their listening, reading and speaking synchronously rather than separately, which was of help for them (S1, S2, S5, S7, S14).

... the new teaching method Miss M employed is of help for us. In our previous lessons, we practised listening in listening classes and we learnt grammar and vocabulary in intensive reading classes, we practised oral English in spoken language classes and we practised writing in writing classes. The language skills are practiced separately. While, in Miss M' new teaching, we can practice more language skills together. That's very good. (Student Interview M-2, S2, TRANS)

Some of them thought that Miss M became more considerate as she began to care about the students' learning needs. One of them mentioned:

I think Miss M considered our needs in her new teaching. Some of the students in our class always ask her for the translation of the texts after class. And we even borrow the reference book from her because sometime we

cannot record the usages of some words or translation of the text. We found that she provided the Chinese translation for us in class and gave us the time to take notes. She is kind and considerate. (Student Interview M-2, S3, TRANS)

Besides the changes, students recognized the efforts that Miss M had made and mentioned that they appreciated Miss M's hard work in improving her teaching, which they thought influenced their initiative to learn (S1, S6, S7, S10, S11). As one of them expressed:

I think Miss M is working hard. In her previous teaching, when she introduces us the language points and the text, she seldom used English. However, nowadays, I have the feeling that she is trying to speak more English in class. She does set us an example of speaking English. (Student Interview M-2, S6, TRANS)

Twenty-one of the 23 participants (91.3%) stated that they liked the changes in the new teaching. Some of them said that they didn't like the fixed teaching pattern or mode, and they said that the changes in her teaching approach brought them fresh experiences and stimulated them to learn meaningfully (S5, S6, S8, S12). Some of them mentioned that the new teaching activities gave them more choice in managing their learning (S4, S7, S9, S13)

Besides the above, the students pointed out some deficiencies still existing in Miss M's teaching. For example, S2, S5, and S12 mentioned that Miss M should make better use of the technology to help their learning; S2, S3, S8, and S15 mentioned that Miss M should provide some exercises relevant to the dialogue learned so as to consolidate what they had learned; S3, and S7 mentioned that Miss M should provide more challenging learning tasks. Most of the students hoped that Miss M would speak more and more English in class and interact more with them.

Miss M's response

In the interview after the teaching session in Cycle Two, Miss M reported that she intended to supplement her poor speaking skills with the aid of technology. The first change she made was to ask the students to listen to recorded dialogues with the aim of practising the students' listening and improving their pronunciation and intonation. By employing this strategy, she aimed to make up for her deficiency in correct pronunciation as well. The other change was to provide the Chinese translation to facilitate the students' understanding, which, according to her, was a way to take into account the students' learning, since most of her students habitually marked the translation in their books. Miss M emphasized that these two changes were both minor changes compared with those in last cycle. Therefore, there were little difficulties in her practising them.

However, she thought she still suffered from the difficulties in last cycle, for example, the difficulties in providing students timely and helpful feedback and assessment. She claimed:

...It is hard for me to find some words or comments on students' performance. I know their performance is good or not. But I cannot provide detailed comments. So, I simply say 'good" "ok" or "well done". Yes, it is not enough. I should tell them the advantages and disadvantages of their performance so as to help them to do better next time. But... (Teacher Interview M-2-2, TRANS)

Besides that, Miss M also mentioned that she had difficulties in involving students in the learning activities. She claimed:

... just like what happened in the first cycle, when I ask some students to recite the dialogue, most of the time, they are very shy and I have to name them to do that. At that time, I always doubt my teaching and myself. For example, I will think that might be because my teaching is boring and they don't like my teaching and they don't have interest in this activity. You know, at that time I always lose confidence with myself. ... (Teacher Interview M-2-2,TRANS)

Miss M thought that the difficulties mainly came from her limited subject knowledge, because she needed time to improve and become confident with the subject knowledge. She was spending more and more time learning the business subject knowledge and improving her English speaking language abilities. She felt these activities were explicit, and she knew how to work toward them. But, compared with these, it was harder for her to organize student learning activities

and to involve students in them. She concluded that good teaching needed both professional knowledge and learning activities. She thought that a teacher with rich teaching experiences was able to combine professional knowledge and proper learning activities, thus, achieving effective and motivating teaching, which, she thought, was extremely important for meaningful, not rote, learning.

When asked whether she was satisfied with her new teaching, Miss M reported that it was hard to tell since the changes in this cycle she had made were just minor changes. On one hand, the changes she had made were workable and helpful for students' learning and made up for some of her disadvantages. From this aspect, she was satisfied. On the other hand, she found the new teaching failed to motivate students to be as active as she expected, which concerned her. From this perspective, she was not satisfied.

When she talked about the relationship with her students and classroom management, Miss M mentioned that for her, she thought the relationship with students was the next most important thing to the teaching approaches. And she had tried to close the distance by communicating more with and smiling to her students in class, as she claimed:

... More communication is very important. ... I did try to do something to make some improvements in this aspect, for example, I reminded myself to walk around the class and answer the questions from my students. I tried to

keep smiling while teaching, but, a little difficult for me. Actually I am not used to it. But, I am sure the verbal and non-verbal communications between teacher and students are very important. (Teacher Interview M-2-2, TRANS)

Miss M said that she needed time to get used to smiling as she was always serious in class. And sometimes, she had to pay so much attention to teaching that she neglected her facial expressions. However, she was happy that she had realized it. With regard to classroom management, she reported that what she needed to do was to remind the students how to learn effectively, since most of them worked very hard and were able to focus themselves. As in the last cycle, she insisted that quality teaching was helpful for maintaining good discipline. However, she said that a matter that she should consider in the future was how to help students who were off-task.

Lastly, Miss M mentioned that she was happy to combine New Zealand teachers' teaching beliefs and practices into her teaching. Although it seemed impossible and often went beyond her ability to copy their teaching, she did benefit from learning about them. She felt that teaching was complicated and she had more to learn about teaching. She also mentioned that the first imperative was to improve her professional knowledge.

This ends the themes taken from Cycle Two of the research for Miss M. In the next section, Cycle Three for Miss M will be summarized.

6.2.3 Cycle Three

In this section, the data of the action research for Miss M in Cycle Three will

be presented.

Pre-action research

As in the last two cycles, Miss M participated in a seminar, this time about

formative assessment and also in a professional development meeting. In the

meeting, she reflected on her recent teaching. She told the researcher that although

she worked hard these days to improve teaching, she still thought that her students

were not as interested in her teaching as she expected. In her mind, there was

always a gap between her actual and ideal teaching. Although she knew she was

making progress, without the improvement of her professional knowledge and

being more fluent in speaking English, it was too difficult for her to achieve

substantial progress as she regarded these two areas as the core for change. Miss M

confirmed her idea further in the following interview when she talked about the

relationship with her students. She said that she was trying hard to get close with

her students and she did feel that the relationship was becoming closer because of

her efforts. However, she mentioned that her limited professional knowledge

prevented her from better teaching, which, she thought acted as a wall between

herself and her students.

Miss M told the researcher in the interview that she thought there were so many

things that she had to learn in order to improve her teaching. Through practising

new learning activities, she learned that it was easy to employ new teaching methods; however, it was difficult to achieve good results. She thought even the same methods, when used by different teachers, might produce different results. For her, the biggest problem was to make her teaching motivating and involving of students. Miss M thought that in the last two cycles, she learnt to practise the teaching activities, but not as successfully as she expected. And she believed there was still room for her to improve her practice. As she said:

> *… Through teaching practices these days, I think that there is still some room for me to improve my teaching. I always feel that there is some distance between my actual and ideal teaching. I just command the surface of New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practice. There is a long way to go before I truly command them and make good use of them to serve my teaching. Professional knowledge and [English] language ability is the key for me to achieve this goal…* (Teacher Interview M-3-1, TRANS)

Miss M reported that she believed there were two factors which caused the distance between her practice and her ideal teaching. One was her own professional competence, the other is her busy teaching schedule arranged by the school. According to her, there is a contradiction between these two factors. On one hand, she needs more time to develop professionally; on the other hand, her busy schedule prevents her from doing that. This contradiction not only troubled her but also made her less confident with herself. Miss M told the researcher that

she had to accept the heavy work load with a thick skin because of the institution being short-staffed.

When asked what changes she might make in her teaching after the seminar in Cycle Three, Miss M told the researcher that she would still make use of technology to assist her teaching. The reason for this was that modern technology had the advantage of providing standard pronunciation, and helped to organize listening and speaking learning activities, which, she, at the moment, might not be able to provide for her students. As she said:

Modern technology is a helpful tool in teaching. The most important is that it makes up for my disadvantages in providing standard English language input. In class, when I play the record of dialogue, my students and I both have the chance to learn about standard and native speaking… It saves time in class as I needn't spend extra time in writing on blackboard. And students have more time on their learning… (Teacher Interview M-3-1, TRANS)

Miss M further mentioned the teaching approach that she might employ in her new teaching. According to her, her new teaching in this cycle would be based on those she had employed in last two cycles. She said she didn't want to do any big changes, which, she thought went beyond her ability. However, she would make changes within the scope of her ability. Although she did not have a clear idea

about the new change, she was planning to try some exercises about the dialogues to be learned. She emphasized that this was also her students' inclination.

With regard to the relationship between herself and her students, Miss M thought that her serious facial expression and way of speaking were not helpful in maintaining a friendly relationship with her students. Although, it was a little hard to change these behaviors as they had been her style for a long time, she still tried to improve gradually. She expressed her desire to develop her own teaching style, acceptable to students and based on her personal characteristics. However, it was just her initial idea and the picture was not clear. She said that she believed she could improve the relationship with her students in class at that moment by continuously exploring effective teaching, communicating more with them, and learning more about their learning needs.

Regarding classroom management, Miss M insisted, as she did in the last two cycles, that effective teaching played an important role in maintaining good classroom discipline. Besides that, she added that a good relationship between teacher and students was another powerful factor. These three aspects, classroom management, effective teaching approaches and classroom relationships interacted with each other but the teaching aspect was the most important.

During-action research

Miss M's new teaching occurred one week after the interview. As in the last cycle, she taught in the multi-media classroom. The class lasted about 100 minutes. There were three dialogues involved and for each of them, Miss M employed the same teaching methods. Take the first dialogue for instance, which lasted 37 minutes. Miss M first introduced the background of the dialogue, which was about technology transfer. This part lasted about four minutes. Rather than English, Miss M employed Chinese as the communicating tool. According to the conversation with Miss M which occurred after class, the large number of terminologies and the large amount of professional knowledge about business operations made it too hard for her to explain clearly in English (Field Notes M-3).

After the background information introduction, Miss M asked the students to listen to the recording three times. This part lasted about six minutes. Three groups of the students (with three students involved in each group) were named to read the dialogue. While the researcher noticed that there were some mistakes in students' pronunciation, Miss M failed to point them out and correct them. But she played the record once again and asked students to pay attention to their pronunciation. This part lasted about 6 minutes.

In the third part, Miss M illustrated the language points in this dialogue. This part lasted about eight minutes. She made use of PowerPoint to demonstrate all the language points and explained them in turn. She said that all the language points

were carefully selected by her in order to help the students grasp the key parts of the dialogue (Field Notes M-3). In order to explain clearly, she employed Chinese (Field Notes M-3).

Once the explanation of language points had finished, she played the record again and then provided students with five minutes to read the dialogue themselves and prepare for reciting them. Three groups of students were named to recite the dialogue. The researcher noticed that all three groups recited the dialogue smoothly and fluently. As in the last two cycles, Miss M failed to provide detailed feedback about students' learning to them. She just said "Good" and "Very good" as the assessment. The researcher also noticed that when the students were reciting, some of the other students didn't listen carefully. Instead, they were either talking or reading in a low voice (Field Notes M-3).

After reciting the dialogue, Miss M asked students to close their books and do a spoken exercise about the dialogue. It was a fill-in-the-blank exercise demonstrated on the PowerPoint. She had deleted some of the key words from the dialogue and the students were required to finish the sentences, according to what they had learned and remembered. For each blank, she named one student to fill in the missing word. After all the blanks were finished, she deleted the key words again and asked one group to recite. After that, she deleted more words, and another group was required to finish. Then, she deleted more words again and this time there was only one word left in each sentence. Another group was required to

279

finish. Lastly, she deleted all words and asked the whole class to recite the dialogue together. The researcher noticed that the students were active in this activity and they recited carefully (Field Notes M-3). This was confirmed in the student interview. According to Miss M, this activity was a highlight of her teaching. She had designed this in order to enhance the learning challenge for students as the level of difficulty became higher and higher (Field Notes M-3). This part lasted about 9 minutes. Then another two minutes were given for students to go over the dialogue by themselves.

According to the time analysis calculated by the researcher, 68% of the time was occupied by students' listening, reading, and speaking, 63.2% of which involved student interaction. However, there was not any interaction between student and teacher. It seemed that Miss M played the role of student learning organizer and guider; however, she had not interacted with nor mediated the students' learning (Field Notes M-3). Furthermore, through the classroom observation in these three cycles, the researcher also found that Miss M tended to name some of the students frequently, while the other students seldom had the chance to practise in class. That might be the reason that some students were not active in class. It was felt by the researcher that Miss M's speech lacked attraction and cohesion, and this reduced the attractiveness of her teaching and enhanced the difficulty of classroom management. For example, in the third part of dialogue reciting, when Miss M asked the frequently named students to recite the dialogue, it seemed that there was nothing to do for the other students. Some problems in previous

teaching from Cycle One and Cycle Two still existed, for example, in the feedback and evaluation of student performance. Even though Miss M had learned about formative assessment in the professional development meeting, and had a thorough understanding at that time, the researcher observed that she could not practise it in teaching (Field Notes M-3). According to Miss M, she had the awareness to use formative assessment, however, the researcher noted she was unable to organize her feedback logically and systematically (Field Notes M-3), which was confirmed by Miss M, as she said:

I think I have the awareness to provide feedback to students' learning. However, how to provide it timely and effectively is a big challenge for me. Sometimes, during students' activities, although I realized and I told myself that it was the time to give them feedback, I found it hard to do. It might be because of my limited professional knowledge. I could not organize what I wanted to say effectively and efficiently ... (Teacher Interview M-3-2, TRANS)

Post-action research

After the classroom observation, the researcher interviewed Miss M and her students respectively. They all expressed their own views, which will now be summarized.

Students' responses

Twenty-six of the 34 students attended the group interview. Most of them did not

think that the changes in Miss M's teaching were as clear in this cycle. Some of them mentioned that they liked Activity Five described above, during which students were asked to fill in the blanks and complete the dialogue that they had learned. They thought that the activity itself helped them to grasp the dialogue step by step since they were asked to fill in more and more blanks gradually. They agreed it was the activity that impressed them deeply and might be the only change that Miss M made in her new teaching. Compared with her previous teaching, including the teaching in the last two cycles, most of the students thought that Miss M was making progress. However, their overall impression was that her teaching still lacked passion and vitality. As one of them said:

... (in her new teaching), sometimes, I felt interested, sometimes, I felt boring. It seemed rigid that she assigned us some task and then check, then turn to next task. I think we need some vital learning atmosphere... (Student Interview M-3, S3, TRANS)

The students reported that they liked a teacher with passion in teaching and one who was never stuck in a fixed teaching pattern. Miss M always followed a regular teaching sequence, which they hoped that she could change in future.

Miss M's response

Miss M told the researcher that she was not confident with her new teaching because it became more and more difficult for her to break through her current

teaching in the foreseeable future. She mentioned that she had exhausted ways to change her teaching. Unless she made some substantial development in professional knowledge, it would be too difficult to achieve a major improvement in her teaching. As she said:

... It is becoming harder and harder to design new and effective teaching pedagogy for me. Furthermore, some teaching pedagogies seem attractive themselves, may not produce the expected effects. ... I think the root of the problem lies in me. Without sufficient professional knowledge, it is hard to achieve substantial improvement. (Teacher Interview M-3-2, TRANS)

Focusing on her new teaching in this cycle, Miss M said that the only change she had done was the exercise asking students to complete and recite the dialogue, which was based on the students' feedback from last cycle. As she mentioned in the pre-action research interview in this cycle, there were two reasons for her to employ this activity. One was that it was requested by the students; the other was that it was within her control. Therefore, as she mentioned, although she worried about the whole of her teaching, she was still confident with this minor change. And she was also satisfied with the effects of the change. As she said:

Although it is the only change, it produces my expected effects. I found (in this activity) students are active to complete and repeat either in public or

privately. The learning atmosphere becomes a little bit positive. That's what I

want. ... (Teacher Interview M-3-2, TRANS).

Compared with the changes she had done in previous cycles, the change she made in this cycle, Miss M thought, was not a big one. But she reported that whether the change was big or not was not important. The most important thing was that she had tried. That was also what she had learned from the research. Miss M told the researcher that at the beginning of the research, she had expected a fast and big change in her teaching; however, during the process, she realized gradually that it needed lots of time, even to improve a little.

When asked about the improvement she thought that she had achieved in this cycle, Miss M mentioned that it was not clear. However, she said her teaching beliefs were changing as her teaching practices changed. According to her:

I don't think that I have achieved some clear improvement. I mean in the

aspect of teaching practice. I know that some old problems still exist. But it's

hard to improve in short time. However, in the aspect of teaching beliefs, I do

think that I have learned more about it and my own understanding is

changing all the time. ... (Teacher Interview M-3-2, TRANS)

Miss M told the researcher that student learning was becoming more and more what she had intended when designing her teaching. And teaching had to work in relation to learning, which she never realized in her previous teaching.

When talking about the old problems such as her classroom speech, facial expression, and the interaction with her students, she said that she was troubled by these problems. She mentioned that she knew about these problems, but it was hard to change, especially the former two problems.

> *... I know that but it's hard to change myself most of the time. Sometimes, I don't realize; sometimes, I do realize and try to change. But I always feel that my smile is not natural. For my discourse, I think it a long term habit...*
> (Teacher Interview M-3-2, TRANS)

With respect to the aspects of teacher-student relationships and classroom management, Miss M insisted that effective teaching played an important role in maintaining a good relationship and classroom discipline. However, she added that a teacher's personality also played an influential role. She thought that her limited professional knowledge, which reduced the effectiveness of her teaching, distanced her and her students and increased the need for classroom management as well. Miss M furthermore added that her limited professional knowledge played a critical role in her lack of self-confidence and in her lack of presence in class. According to her:

... I think it is my limited professional knowledge that prevents me from presenting a normal and natural "me". And it deprived my confidence as well. I think it may be the reason for my problem of discourse and facial expression... (Teacher Interview M-3-2, TRANS)

Miss M mentioned that whenever she prepared new teaching activities, it seemed that she had to learn something new before presenting it to her students, which made her lack a feeling of authority in the knowledge that she delivered to her students. She even worried that she might make some mistakes. Therefore, for her, the area that she needed to improve most was her professional knowledge. It was an urgent task for her.

When asked about the role of New Zealand English language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices, she mentioned that they were useful and helpful. Looking back at the changes she had done in these three cycles, Miss M mentioned that New Zealand teachers' beliefs played an instructional role. She contributed her progress to learning about New Zealand colleagues' teaching beliefs. However, she further stated that the most important thing for her was to form and develop her own teaching beliefs and teaching styles based on her beliefs because the educational contexts in China and New Zealand were different. What she would continue to do was to continuously reflect on and learn from the New Zealand teacher's beliefs, combine them with her own teaching in the Chinese context, so as to achieve better teaching results.

In this chapter, the results from the three action research cycles for the two participants have been reported. Using New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices, both Mr. Z and Miss M constructed and developed their understanding of teaching and the meaning of being an English language teacher in terms of pedagogy, classroom management, and teacher-student relationships. Among the three aspects, both of them showed more interest in developing their teaching. They designed and practised new teaching activities, which aimed to address students' learning needs and thinking. During the process, the role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices in stimulating Chinese teacher participants to develop their teaching were acknowledged by both teacher participants, and the problems existing in their teaching and the factors which prevented them from more effective teaching were identified as well. Among them, English language proficiency and professional knowledge were regarded as two important factors which were seen to hinder effective teaching. In the next chapter, these findings will be discussed in light of the literature.

CHAPTER SEVEN THEORIZING THE APPLICATION OF NEW ZEALAND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN CHINESE CONTEXTS

This chapter will firstly discuss the role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs in helping Chinese English language teachers develop their teaching practices (7.1). Secondly, it will focus on the role of New Zealand teachers' practices in promoting Chinese English language teachers' understanding and practice of teaching (7.2). In this section it will be argued that New Zealand teachers' practice together with their beliefs provide a useful topic and catalyst for Chinese English language teacher development. Finally the chapter looks into the factors that influenced the Chinese English language teacher participants to use New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices to develop their own beliefs and practices (7.3). In this section, sociocultural contexts and teaching expertise will be explored respectively. The central argument in this chapter is that, although New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices were embraced by the Chinese teacher participants, their application also had to consider the sociocultural contexts in which teaching and learning occurs and the expertise of Chinese teachers themselves. Without acknowledgement of the contexts and expertise, changes may be superficial. It is advocated that cultural congruence and pedagogical reconciliation have to be achieved in order for Chinese teachers to develop their beliefs and teaching practice, based on New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices.

7.1 The role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs

In the action research described in this thesis, New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs were introduced to the Chinese teacher participants by the researcher. These beliefs were based on an interview with one experienced New Zealand English language teacher and 20 Chinese students who had English language learning experiences both in New Zealand and China, as well as the literature about English language teaching as a second and foreign language. Data generated from the research indicated that New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs not only provided a new point of view for the Chinese English language teachers to reconstruct their understanding of teaching and learning, but also helped them to reflect on, and develop their teaching practices. These findings have some implications for the mode of English language teacher development in China.

Firstly, the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs provided a new angle for Chinese English language teacher participants to rethink their own understandings of English language teaching and learning, and of being an English language teacher. Data generated from the beginning of the action research indicated that the two Chinese English language teacher participants possessed their own understanding about teaching and learning based on their personal experience, schooling, and teaching experiences. They both commented that their beliefs about teaching were deeply influenced by the teachers who had given them lessons and that their beliefs about teaching were deeply molded by

289

Chinese education culture. For example, Mr. Z claimed, at the beginning of the action research, that he understood English language teaching as the exact English language knowledge transmission from teacher to students, which, according to him, came from his own learning experiences for college entrance examination. He reported that during his study for the college entrance examination, he had to remember all that his teacher taught and that he did lots of exercises to enhance the knowledge he learnt. This knowledge became a standard with which to judge a student's English language level. Hence, the examination-orientated education system had determined his teaching beliefs.

At the same time, it was found that great confusion existed in the two teachers' beliefs concerning English language teaching and learning. That is, they embraced knowledge-transmission teaching beliefs on one hand, and questioned the efficiency of their beliefs on the other hand. In the present study, both of the teacher participants reported their confusion about English language teaching. Mr. Z mentioned that although he made great efforts to fulfill his responsibilities to explain language knowledge clearly to his students, his students' English language abilities, especially their underperformance, made him question his beliefs and his teaching (Teacher Interview Z-1-1). Miss M's confusion came from her teaching being unable to satisfy her students' learning. In the first cycle of the action research, she told the researcher that there was a distance between her teaching and her students' learning needs. According to her, she was confused about how she could close the distance and she even felt "a loss"(Teacher Interview M-1-1).

Furthermore, both of the teacher participants regarded their own language learning experiences as "not successful" (Teacher Interview Z-1-1) and they were "not satisfied" (Teacher Interview M-1-1). Through reflecting upon their own learning experiences, they began to question the effectiveness of their teaching.

Another important factor which prevented teacher participants from developing their teaching came from their school culture. In this research, both the teacher participants mentioned that they have limited access to academic research and articles about English language teaching and learning and "the academic culture in this college is very poor" (Teacher Interview M-1-1, TRANS). According to Miss M, the only resource to assist her English language teaching is the teaching reference book and the school never provided any support or chance for her to access English language teaching and learning theory or academic research. While they had internet access, they did not know where to search the English information about teaching.

The stories of the teacher participants, on one hand, supported a constructivist view of learning in the literature that teachers' beliefs are mental constructions of their experiences including their personal, learning and teaching experiences (Archer, 2000; Muchmore, 2001; Taylor, 2002). However, their stories, on the other hand, indicated that the teachers' experiences limited their understanding of teaching. In this research, the teacher participants' beliefs were confined by their teaching and learning experiences and personal experiences, and they could only

291

understand teaching and learning within the scope that Chinese culture and society provided.

According to sociocultural theory, teachers' experiences are socially and culturally embedded. From this perspective, teachers' beliefs are seen as socially and culturally constructed and limited by the sociocultural contexts as well. Thus, growing up and working in Chinese sociocultural contexts, the teacher participants found it difficult to imagine a different form of teaching from what they had already known. However, as discussed in Chapter One, with the rapid development of the Chinese economy, China's English language teaching is facing great challenges from the market. The traditional teaching strategies do not appear to satisfy the demands of Chinese society to enhance students' communicative abilities in English. Hence, the changes in the Chinese sociocultural contexts have intervened and challenged the teacher participants' beliefs about teaching. The teachers are now in a dilemma, that is, the teacher participants need to change their beliefs and practices constructed and embedded within new Chinese sociocultural contexts; meanwhile, they cannot go beyond the limitations of Chinese sociocultural contexts.

Under these circumstances, this research found that the introduction of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs provided a new angle for teacher participants to rethink their meanings of teaching. English is a foreign language in China and English language teaching is deeply influenced by the philosophy of

Chinese language teaching based on traditional exhortations (Kelen, 2002). For example, Chinese language teaching stresses the prescriptive use of words, that is, for a particular situation; there is always a correct word. This leads to the grammar-oriented teaching patterns of Chinese English language teachers. However, great differences exist between the languages of English and Chinese and problems emerge once the teaching strategies which are suitable for Chinese, are used in English language teaching. In contrast, New Zealand is an English-speaking country. Compared with Chinese English language teachers, New Zealand English language teachers are native speakers of the language and live in a society in which the language is used. In this study the introduction of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs provided a new angle for Chinese English language teachers to think about EFL teaching and learning from the perspective of native speakers. The present study showed that New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs were helpful in allowing Chinese teacher participants to think about English language teaching. For example, Mr. Z had thought that his teaching was rigid as his teaching mostly focused on knowledge transmission (Teacher Interview M-2-1). After the first teacher professional development meeting where New Zealand teachers' beliefs were introduced by the researcher, he expressed the belief that English language teaching activities should involve as much listening, speaking, reading, and writing skill practices as possible. According to him, New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs opened a new door for him and let him see another side of English language teaching (Field Notes Z-1). Miss M reported similarly that New Zealand teachers'

293

beliefs made her reflect upon her teaching, in her words, "shake off some of the shackles" of her thinking about teaching (Teacher Interview M-2-1). As she said:

I think my thinking about teaching is too limited (before I learned about New Zealand teachers' beliefs). And I feel that there are always something limited my thinking and my teaching. It seems that New Zealand teachers' beliefs help me to shake off some of the shackles and allow me to think in a different way. (Teacher Interview M-2-1, TRANS)

A second role of the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs was that of a "catalyst" in Chinese teacher participants' belief (cognitive) development. This research argues that New Zealand teachers' beliefs, like a catalyst, stimulated and promoted Chinese teacher participants' cognitive development (the development of beliefs). This help is evident in the results of this study. Take Mr. Z for instance, at the beginning of the action research, his understanding about teaching, in his own words, was "examination-driven" and most of his efforts were spent on teaching "language knowledge". The exposure to New Zealand colleagues' English language teaching beliefs provided in the current study appeared to shift his attention from teaching to students' learning and made him realize that students' learning was neglected in his previous teaching. During the first cycle of the action research, the exposure to New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs helped Mr. Z connect his teaching with students' learning and made him realize that "any teaching that fails to achieve good learning is not good teaching"

(Field Notes Z-1). After trying out aspects of New Zealand English language teaching practice in the first cycle, Mr. Z, in the second cycle, began to construct his own understanding of teaching. He concluded that the role of teachers was "a designer, a director and a guider of student learning activity" (Teacher Interview Z-2-1). He became so active and positive in teaching that he not only engaged himself in designing his new teaching activities but decided to improve his professional knowledge in areas which he thought prevented him from being a more effective teacher. His understanding of teaching continued in the third cycle of the action research. He realized more and more the importance of students' learning as a hallmark of achieving successful teaching and he also realized that his students' knowledge was limited. For him, teaching was no longer teaching "the books" but became more and more complicated, involving many issues which he had never thought about in his previous teaching. Meanwhile, Mr. Z was aware that there were so many things that he needed to learn about teaching and learning. In his own words New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs opened a "window" through which he could learn about a new conception of teaching, and provided him a "platform" from which he began his new teaching (Teacher Interview Z-3-2).

New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs helped Miss M in developing her understanding of teaching as well. Before the action research, Miss M told the researcher that she was at a loss because her students were not interested in her teaching. She knew that there must be some problems in her teaching, but she had

no idea what the problems were and no ideas about how to deal with them. However, after being exposed to New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs, she realized that English language teaching should focus on students' language abilities rather than knowledge explanation. In her new teaching practices in the first action research cycle, she adopted group work from the practices of New Zealand teachers. After the new teaching in this first cycle, Miss M developed her understanding of teaching further. She became aware of both the students' potential capacity for learning, and also the importance of her professional knowledge in teaching. In the second cycle, Miss M continued developing her understanding of teaching. Although she acknowledged the help of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs in developing her own teaching, she pointed out that teaching and learning contexts must also be considered where pedagogy is concerned. She noticed the distance between her new beliefs and her existing teaching practices. In order to close the gap, in the second and third cycles, Miss M continuously identified her own weakness. She claimed that her limited English language proficiency and professional knowledge prevented her from teaching more effectively. When summarizing the influence of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs on her own practice, Miss M commented that their beliefs and her new teaching based on those beliefs made her understanding of teaching develop and she began to pay more and more attention to students' needs and realized that teaching serves learning.

The present study found that using New Zealand English language teachers'

beliefs as a stimulus was helpful for both of the teacher participants. The process of practising aspects reflecting these new beliefs made them take a new perspective on their teaching. Hence, the New Zealand teachers' beliefs embodied the role of "catalyst" in two aspects. One is that they made the changes in Chinese teacher participants' beliefs occur; the other is that they promoted the changes by arousing teacher participants' awareness of their own teaching.

Thirdly, the process of teaching and development was made easier by the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice. Both participants were majors of English language and before taking part in this research, both of them had little knowledge about pedagogy. However, they had both consciously taken every opportunity to improve that by themselves (Teacher Interview Z-1-1; M-1-1). This illustrates what Xia (2002) claimed: that in China most of the English language teachers are language majors rather than education majors, resulting in the trend for Chinese English language teachers to value teaching over learning, to stress knowledge, and to ignore communication ability. Therefore, it is hard and long-term work for those non-education-majored Chinese English language teachers to explore, construct and develop their knowledge about education beliefs and teaching pedagogy so as to improve their teaching competence, especially for those who undertake a heavy teaching load. However, there is evidence in the present study that the introduction and application of English language teachers' beliefs from another cultural context can not only help teacher participants make their teaching and changing goals clearer but also reduce some

uncertainties during the change process. According to Miss M, the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs "provides a clear direction and makes change relatively easier" (Teacher Interview M-1-1). Mr. Z reported that in his three cycles of teaching practices, the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs played a critical role in his teaching design and the development of his understanding of teaching. He also claimed that the application process helped him "avoid detours" (Teacher Interview Z-3-3).

As mentioned in Chapter Three, change is not a linear process but complex and full of uncertainty. In the teacher development process, a teacher's previous values, teaching and learning culture may be challenged and may conflict with the new. Under these circumstances, teachers may be confused and even lose confidence in themselves as teachers. For example, Miss M claimed that to improve her teaching was a great challenge for her since she herself was not ready for it. Her lack of knowledge of pedagogy made her "lose the way" (Teacher Interview M-1-2). In the process of changing, teachers may feel a loss of control of their teaching, and be unable to predict the results of their teaching actions. The loss of control and uncertainty of change may make teachers lose confidence with their teaching.

Discussion

The application of teaching beliefs from one culture (New Zealand) into another cultural context (China) appears to indicate that English language teaching beliefs may be transcultural. In this research, the data generated indicated that the

transplantation of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs into Chinese educational contexts benefited the Chinese teacher participants. They designed and used teaching activities based on New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs. The change in their teaching was positively received by their students, who when interviewed commented on the changes, as recorded in Table 7.1:

Progress Achieved	Mr. Z	Miss M
More interactions	Student Interview Z-1	Student Interview M-1
More involvement	Student Interview Z-1	Student Interview M-1
Promoting learning interest	Student Interview Z-1; Z-3	
Making learning relaxed	Student Interview Z-1	Student Interview M-1
Enhanced students' participation	Student Interview Z-1	
Enhanced students' learning abilities	Student Interview Z-1; Z-3	
Establishing active learning atmosphere	Student Interview Z-1; Z-3	Student Interview M-2
Activate students' initiative	Student Interview Z-2; Z-3	Student Interview M-2
More language practicing	Student Interview Z-2; Z-3	Student Interview M-1; M-2
Enhanced communication and friendship among students	Student Interview Z-2	
Care about students' needs		Student Interview M-2

Table 7.1 Progress achieved in the action research as reported by the students

The above results imply that although teaching beliefs are regarded as contextually-situated by the literature (Beswick, 2004; Borg, 1996; Kane et al., 2002), some beliefs constructed in one context might be able to be transferred into another context. Although those beliefs are not directly from their own experiences, teachers can balance those transplanted beliefs against their own experiences and then construct their new beliefs. In other words, the teachers' established beliefs helped them to judge, screen out and assimilate those borrowed beliefs which were regarded as helpful for their teaching. For example, when Mr. Z was asked why he preferred the New Zealand teachers' beliefs that English language teaching should involve as many language skill practices as possible, he told the researcher that in his previous learning and teaching, listening, speaking, reading and writing were regarded as separate skills, and the disconnections among them resulted in the unbalanced development of these four basic language skills. Therefore, his personal experience enabled him to adopt the beliefs as the way to develop his students' language competence. From this point of view, the present study claims that teachers' beliefs can come not only from their personal experiences in teaching and learning, but also from others in another culture. This is especially so for those beliefs they think might be helpful to solve perceived problems in their teaching.

The teacher participants' existing beliefs not only helped to identify beliefs from another context that could be useful but also to reject those regarded as not helpful. For example, at the beginning of the action research, the New Zealand teachers'

beliefs were introduced in terms of pedagogy, classroom management, and teacher-student relationships. Both of the teacher participants mentioned that they preferred New Zealand teachers' pedagogies, but in terms of classroom management and teacher-student relationship, they insisted that they were satisfied with their current practice; they did not think that the strategies used by New Zealand teachers were useful for them. This implies that within the system of teachers' beliefs, where the teachers perceived problems, they accepted new beliefs, so long as they were not culturally inappropriate.

It is worth mentioning that few previous studies have explored the influence of inter-cultural interaction on teachers' beliefs. The literature claims that teachers' beliefs are a mental construction, based on the teacher's prior knowledge and experiences (Archer, 2000; Muchmore, 2001; Taylor, 2002). Whilst the Chinese English language teachers in this research did not observe or experience New Zealand teachers' pedagogy in practice, the New Zealand teachers' beliefs did enable the Chinese participants to construct alternative beliefs by providing alternative views because both of the teacher participants recognized that their own schooling experience in English language learning was not successful. As mentioned previously, in China, it is a common phenomenon that most of the English language teachers who are making efforts to implement teaching that helps to develop students' communicative abilities, have not experienced that form of instruction as a student (Wu, 2005). It appears that an idea being taken up from one culture into another culture only occurs when a teacher perceives the

301

limitation of their own practice.

Meanwhile, the findings in the present study showed that although the application of teaching beliefs from another culture did help teacher participants develop new teaching beliefs and practices, the construction and development of new teaching beliefs did not mean the deconstruction of old teaching beliefs and the latter still played a role in teaching practices. For example, in the second professional development meeting, both Mr. Z and Miss M agreed with New Zealand teachers' beliefs that effective English language teaching and learning comes from authentic social interaction and communication in class. However, at the same time, both of them expressed that they had a "bottom line" for interaction and communication with their students. In Mr. Z's opinion, social interaction and communication should be designed "without destroying the authority of being a teacher" (Professional Development Meeting Z-2). He said that every teacher had to have a public image for his/her students. For him, a positive image, first of all, came from the amount of knowledge that he possessed. And, an important factor of effective interaction and communication was that he was capable of fulfilling his role of being authoritative about knowledge during the interaction.

Similarly, Miss M talked about her understanding on teacher authority, which according to her, involved both a teacher's authority in knowledge, and in the teacher-student relationship. According to her, teacher authority is "absolutely necessary" and without the respect for teacher, students might lose their

confidence in the teacher. Both Mr. Z and Miss M reported that they needed and desired respect from their students, which they regarded as "approval" for their teaching (Professional Development Meeting M-3) and "a sense of personal achievement" (Professional Development Meeting Z-3). Even when designing new teaching activities, they were concerned about whether their authority might be challenged.

In further discussion about their new teaching, it was agreed by the two teacher participants that some traditional teaching beliefs were still helpful and played a critical role in students' learning, which, they thought, could not be changed all at once and they considered a balance between knowledge transmission from teacher to students and inquiry based learning by students.

The balance that Mr. Z and Miss M mentioned, to achieve between teacher authority and empowering students, between didactic knowledge transmission and developing students' responsibilities for learning, indicated an interaction between their old beliefs and the new beliefs developed based on New Zealand teachers' beliefs. It also implied that in the process of change, some core values are difficult to change and may not need to be changed. Although the teacher participants claimed that they appropriated New Zealand colleagues' beliefs, it did not mean that they had to give up their old beliefs totally. Rather, their previous beliefs coexisted with the new beliefs. The Chinese core values of the participant teachers are culturally-based and therefore are social constructions, that is, constructed and

accepted by the modern and traditional Chinese societies.

According to the discourse of change (Newman & Nollen, 1998), if the changes that teacher participants practised dwelled on superficial changes with the aim to introduce an alternative option in the existing system without challenging teachers' beliefs and the predominant educational culture and values, the changes would be meaningless as had been the case China's English language educational reforms in the past (see Chapter One). In this research, "the balance" and the "compromise" which the Chinese teacher participants mentioned, provided an example of the relationship between what existed in teachers' current belief system and what was introduced from New Zealand colleagues. It involved the modification of old beliefs which were no longer suitable for the current educational situations nor could meet students' learning, and selectively borrowing from New Zealand colleagues' beliefs. The "balance" that the Chinese teacher participants mentioned is achieved this way. Based on the above findings, this thesis argues that New Zealand teachers' beliefs, once used by Chinese English language teachers, needed to be reconsidered in relation to the different sociocultural context, which include core values.

Furthermore, this thesis argues that cultural congruence between New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and Chinese sociocultural context has to be achieved in order to benefit Chinese English language teaching. By discussing cultural congruence, it is argued that the Chinese English language teacher

participants should be culturally sensitive and responsive by acknowledging the differences between Chinese and New Zealand educational cultures. Cultural congruence, on one hand, involved the Chinese teacher participants in further inquiry into how, and to what extent, that New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice might help them; on the other hand, cultural congruence involved Chinese teacher participants in further inquiry into culturally appropriate new teaching activities that take both Chinese teacher participants' existing beliefs and values, and Chinese sociocultural context into account. This is shown in Figure 7-2:
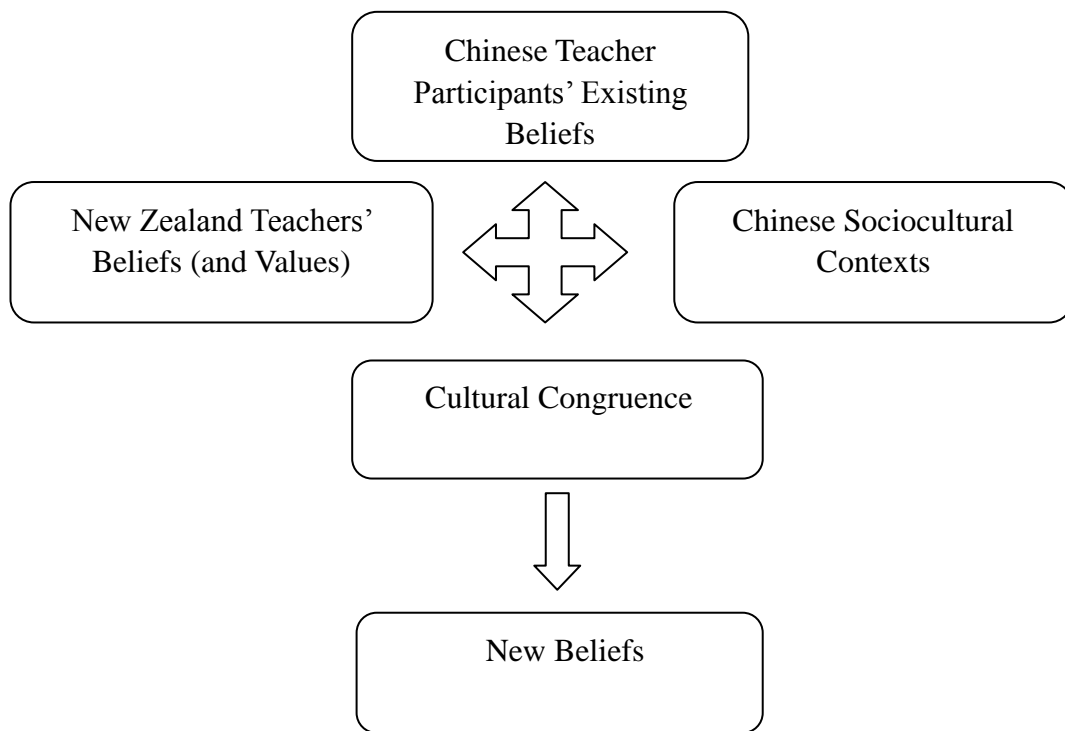

Figure 7.1 Interactions between NZ beliefs and Chinese contexts

A belief about teaching, as mentioned previously, is a sociocultural construction. Teaching beliefs originating from one specific culture inevitably reflect that culture including core values. There were two issues which the Chinese English

language teacher participants had to deal with, so as to develop their teaching beliefs. One was how to develop the advantages of Chinese culture and eliminate the limitations from the culture in their understanding of teaching and learning. The other is how to understand an unfamiliar culture and its beliefs about teaching, so as to learn from others and utilize their successful teaching as a source of reference. In the present research, cultural congruence played the role of integrating the issues above. The Chinese teacher participants refined their own beliefs (Chinese culture), legitimated New Zealand teachers' beliefs (New Zealand culture) which were regarded as helpful for their teaching, and constructed socioculturally adaptive beliefs about teaching. So, culture congruence was a part of the teacher development and indicates the changes of teacher beliefs.

The findings in this study also indicate that the two teachers' established beliefs enabled them to judge what is good teaching and what is helpful for their teaching. However, the same beliefs might generate different pedagogical practices in different contexts. This will be discussed in the following section in detail.

7.2 The role of New Zealand English language teachers' practice

In this study, New Zealand English language teachers' pedagogical practices were introduced to the two Chinese teacher participants in monthly professional development meetings. Data generated from their use in the Chinese classrooms, indicated that New Zealand teachers' pedagogical practices were helpful for the

Chinese teacher participants to design new teaching practices and develop their teaching beliefs.

Firstly, the research findings indicate that introducing both the New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice was beneficial for the Chinese teacher development and learning. Teaching beliefs are not equal to teaching practices. According to Wu (2005), the transformation from beliefs to practices involves complex teacher cognition, as well as the contexts within which teacher cognition comes into being. Although teacher beliefs are instructional for teaching practices, once adopted by other teachers, they have to be restored to tangible teaching and learning activities which might be different from person to person. In cross-cultural contexts, it might be even more difficult since beliefs are socioculturally constructed, and inclusive of cultural values.

In this research, both teacher participants mentioned that they preferred the introduction of New Zealand English language teachers' practices as well as beliefs to other forms of professional development. As Mr. Z mentioned in the teacher interview,

> *I like the organization (of the research). It is different from pure educational theory learning. I read some books about teaching. They are too abstract and even hard to understand for those young teachers like me because of limited teaching experience* (Teacher Interview Z-1-1).

For Mr. Z, the role of abstract educational theory (for example, New Zealand teachers' beliefs) in developing his beliefs and practice of teaching was limited. The two Chinese teacher participants stated that learning both New Zealand teachers' beliefs and their practices at the same time, helped to promote the learning and development of their teaching. They agreed that New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practice "bring out the best with each other" (Teacher Interview Z-3-3). According to Mr. Z, it enabled him to learn more about New Zealand teachers, including what went through in their minds and what they actually did in their practices. The New Zealand teachers' practices helped him to better understand their beliefs, and made it easier for him to construct and use new teaching strategies. For example, at the beginning of the action research, both participants mentioned that they liked the New Zealand teachers' classroom teaching activities. Compared with the skills of classroom management and maintaining good teacher-student relationship, pedagogy, according to the participants, was a "much more pressing task" (Teacher Interview M-1-1). Both of them expressed that they were troubled by their classroom pedagogical practice and needed more to improve their students' learning outcomes. For example, before taking part in the research, Miss M found that her teaching was dull and students had no interest in it. However, she had no idea how to deal with her teaching problems. According to her, the New Zealand English language teachers' pedagogical practices enlightened her and gave her some ideas for improving her own teaching practices. In using New Zealand teachers' pedagogical practices, she continuously improved her

teaching by allocating students learning tasks and enabling them to be responsible for their own learning in the form of group work. Similarly, Mr. Z claimed that he liked the pedagogical practices that combined listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as much as possible. And in each cycle of the application, he designed students' activities according to what he was told New Zealand teachers did. In the opinions of both Miss M and Mr. Z, New Zealand English language teachers' practices gave them an example of alternative ways of teaching, which were tangible for them. Combined with the introduced beliefs, the practices helped the two teacher participants enhance their understanding of teaching and their newly developed beliefs.

A second aspect of the introduced New Zealand teaching practice was that although the teacher participants claimed that they liked the New Zealand teachers' pedagogical practices, neither of them copied the teaching strategies exactly, but adapted and tailored the New Zealand practice according to their specific teaching and learning contexts and their own personalities. For example, Mr. Z said it was unrealistic for him to copy the practice exactly in his class because of the different contexts like classroom size, students' target language level and so on (Teacher Interview Z-1-1). He further mentioned that some of the pedagogical practices were too difficult for him to copy, although he liked them, because of his personality and limited oral language competence, for example, although he liked New Zealand teachers' humor in class, it was hard for him to copy.

It was noted that in the application process, the teacher participants' personalities played a role in adapting and tailoring the teaching activities. For example, Mr. Z, who was confident with himself and had established a good relationship with his students in class, tended to empower students more by designing his new teaching practice, that involved more interactions among students and interactions between himself and students. In contrast, Miss M said that she was not confident and the relationship between her and her students in class was not as good as that after class. She tended to be cautious in empowering students in their learning. Compared with Mr. Z, Miss M was more conservative in changing her teaching and using new teaching practices. For instance, in each cycle of the application, she retained group work between students. However, interactions involving more students, and between the students and herself, were seldom involved. She said the changes had to be minor and within her control, otherwise she would be too nervous to finish her teaching tasks. While both Mr. Z and Miss M faced the same problems with their teaching practices, the pace and extent of their changes were different.

Thirdly, New Zealand English language teachers' pedagogical practices helped the two Chinese teacher participants narrow the gap between their newly developed beliefs and their pedagogical practices, by identifying problems and insufficiencies in their own teaching. It was pointed out in Chapter Five that there was a gap or discrepancy between what the Chinese English language teacher participants claimed to believe and what they actually did in classroom. Data

concerning their understanding of teaching and their current teaching practices indicated that both Chinese teacher participants' practices lagged behind their teaching beliefs or desired view of teaching. Hence, developing their teaching practices and narrowing the gap between beliefs and practices, became an important concern in the Chinese English language teachers' professional development. In China, most of the literature concerning teacher professional development (Li, 2006; Liu, 2006; Wu, 2005; Xia, 2000; Xu, 2008; Yang, 2005; Zhou, 2002; 2005; 2008) stresses the importance of changing teachers' beliefs about teaching. They claim that English language teachers in China have a strong desire to improve and develop their teaching and profession. However, how a teacher might go about improving and developing their classroom teaching practices to implement new beliefs in classroom teaching practices, is less frequently mentioned. As has been summarized in Chapter Five, English language teaching reform in China shows that, English language education needs teachers who not only know what English language teaching is but also know how to implement it and achieve good learning outcomes. From this perspective, this research argues that the teaching has a dual nature: one is theoretical, the other is practical. Both of them are indispensable for good teaching. That is, good teaching is marked by appropriate teaching practices based on educational theory and beliefs.

A fourth aspect of the benefit of learning the New Zealand teachers' practices was that of clarification of teaching problems. By trialing the new practices in class,

the teacher participants identified the areas they wish to change in their teaching. In each cycle of the application, both Mr. Z and Miss M found challenges in applying the new teaching activities, which included their self-perceived limited language proficiency, insufficient subject knowledge, and inability to provide formative assessment. In this way, they were able to design more effective teaching and learning activities to address their limitations. For example, Miss M, in order to compensate for her limited English language proficiency and nonstandard pronunciation, used technology by moving the class to a multi-media classroom. Similarly, Mr. Z employed learning activities involving more student interaction and English language practising so as to address the disadvantages he perceived in his spoken English language. Their efforts were recognized by their students.

Bell (1993) claimed that one important issue in teacher development is the need for teachers to clarify any problems in their teaching so that they see the necessity and direction of change. In this research, the development mode not only enabled teacher participants to think about teaching in a more comprehensive way by considering students' needs and students' learning, but it also helped the teacher participants to identify perceived problems and be responsible for their own learning. For example, Mr. Z, in Cycle One, identified problems that he believed hindered his teaching, including the skills of employing effective teaching pedagogy, limited subject knowledge in terms of English language culture, language proficiency, and poor assessment for students' learning. These problems

established his direction for learning and development in the next cycle. In Cycle Two, he made progress in speaking English and providing timely assessments of student performances. In order to provide more language input, he prepared and practised what he intended to speak in advance. This is evidence of Bell's (1993) statement that once teachers accept their problems in teaching and are willing to change, teacher development can begin.

Discussion

This research has demonstrated the importance and benefits of the two Chinese teachers trying out New Zealand teachers' practices in Chinese classrooms. In China, it is a common phenomenon that English language majors, once graduated, become teachers without any pre-service teacher education (Yang, 2005). Recently, in-service teacher education has gained more and more attention. However, most of the teacher education programmes focus on improving teachers' English language proficiency for academic diplomas (Yang, 2005), and this kind of teacher education programmes fails to adequately meet teachers' professional development needs (Zhou, 2008). Essentially, these programmes are concerned with "what to teach" rather than "how to teach". Hence, teachers' abilities to implement effective teaching and their abilities to solve the problems in their teaching practice are ignored. Furthermore, China's educational system and policies attach greater importance to the development of teachers' beliefs rather than teaching practice. For example, Liao (2004), when discussing the need for communicative language teaching in China, argued that it was the Chinese

government who decided on the use of communicative language teaching (CLT) methods, introduced the teaching syllabus, and compiled the textbook series for teachers. However, the channels for Chinese English language teachers to learn about CLT were mostly through written materials. Although the original purpose of introducing CLT was to change Chinese English language teachers' beliefs about teaching, it was hard for them to convert this into teaching practices. After all, knowing educational theory does not equate with putting the theory into practice. This might be one of the reasons why some teacher education programmes failed to improve teachers' practice in the classroom.

In this research, the introduction of New Zealand English language teachers' practices, together with the beliefs underlying the practices to the two Chinese English language teachers helped the teacher participants develop both their beliefs and practices of teaching and their core values, cultural values, did not change. Take Mr. Z for instance, he mentioned after using a new teaching practice in the first cycle, that New Zealand English language teachers' practices enhanced his understanding of their teaching beliefs. According to him, the introduction of their teaching practice was very important as they presented and illustrated their beliefs in concrete activities, which not only helped him to understand the abstract beliefs better but also provided him some examples for his own teaching practices. He also claimed that New Zealand English language teachers' practice profiled, for him, an outline of a teacher whose teaching was to develop students' communication competencies, and that this outline made it much easier for him to

put New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs into practice. In his opinion, the practice of New Zealand English language teachers, to a certain degree, set him a yardstick against which he could measure his own teaching practice.

The benefits of combining teachers' beliefs and practice as a teacher development mode is supported by sociocultural theorizing, which posits that we can only make sense of a person's actions, if we understand the beliefs in their mind, and the contexts in which they take action. Hence, teacher development as teacher learning should go beyond merely "receiving" and absorbing some "factual" knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.33). Rather, as an integral part of social practice, teacher development should link teacher cognition with social practice. When learning New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs as well as their practices (based on their beliefs), the two teacher participants were able to learn how New Zealand teachers made sense of English language teaching and put their beliefs into practice in the New Zealand context.

In this research, the introduction of New Zealand teachers' practices, together with their beliefs, enabled the teacher participants to negotiate teaching beliefs and practice for the Chinese context. That is, the negotiated beliefs and practices were learnt by the Chinese teacher participants constructing, analyzing, clarifying, and filtering New Zealand teachers' beliefs against their existed beliefs, values, and experiences. The practices that the Chinese teacher participants selected from, or designed according to New Zealand teachers' practice, were based on the

315

negotiated beliefs and cultural values. Data generated in this research indicated that learning and using New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices made it easier for teacher participants to develop negotiated beliefs and practices, underpinned by these negotiated beliefs. As a Chinese proverb states: 'Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth'. The advantage of developing negotiated beliefs and practices lies in that it helps participants to test, verify, and enhance new beliefs by trying out new practices in the Chinese sociocultural context. Another advantage of the negotiated beliefs generated from the application process, is that it promoted the teacher participants' innovation in developing new beliefs and designing new teaching practices since both of them actively linked New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices, with Chinese sociocultural contexts and developed culturally appropriate beliefs and practices. The process can be summarized in the following figure 7.3:
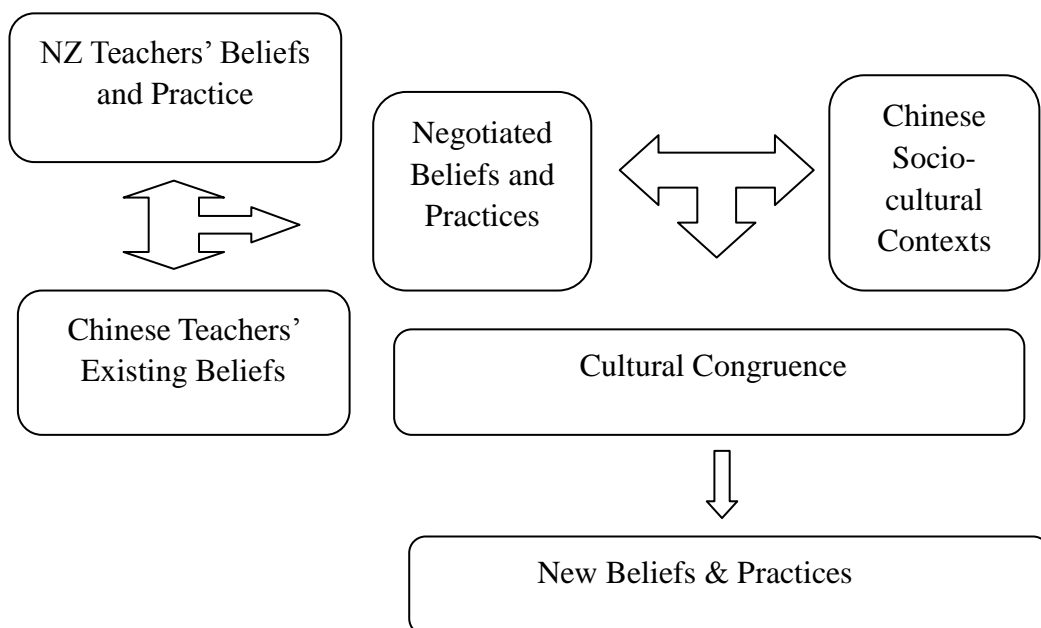

Figure 7.2 Model of beliefs and teaching development in the research

Thus, the introduction of both New Zealand English language teachers' practices and beliefs refines the definition of teaching to include both teachers' mental activities and their in-class teaching practices. The results from this study indicated that in a teacher education programme, both of them are needed for teacher development. As mentioned previously, most of the teacher education programmes in China emphasize educational theory learning and ignore teachers' classroom teaching practices, thus reducing the effectiveness of the education programmes (Wu, 2005; Xia, 2000; Xu, 2008; Yang, 2005; Zhou, 2002). The mode employed in the present study showed that teaching beliefs and practices develop in a complementary way. Although there is still a gap between beliefs and practices, the latter do promote the development of the former.

7.3 The factors that influenced the application of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice

Another implication in the present research is that the process of adapting is complicated because many external and internal factors influence the application. The factors identified in this research include the sociocultural context of China's English language education in terms of teaching and learning cultures and language learning environments (7.3.1), teaching expertise which includes Chinese English language teachers' language proficiency (7.3.2), subject matter knowledge (7.3.3), and pedagogical content knowledge (7.3.4).

7.3.1 Socio-cultural contexts for English language teaching and learning in China

Language acquisition not only occurs individually, but also socially and culturally. It always takes place in a sociocultural context (Bell, 2005; Afonso, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Afonso (2006), the sociocultural context provides the learner with the circumstances within which knowledge is built. New Zealand and China are two different learning contexts. The teaching beliefs and pedagogies which are appropriate in New Zealand may not be appropriate in China since different teaching beliefs and pedagogies arise from different cultural contexts, including values. Furthermore, there is no teaching belief and pedagogy that is universally appropriate (Harmer, 2007). Hence, the change of teaching and learning contexts requires changes in teachers' beliefs and pedagogies. The application and practising process described in Chapter Six implies that a direct transplantation of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practice to Chinese contexts is unrealistic and inappropriate. It was therefore essential that the two teacher participants adapted the New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices to suit the sociocultural contexts in China. The following discussion will point out the important distinction between the two contexts and the significance of pedagogical reconciliation in the process of applying new teaching practices. In terms of this research, these mainly include teaching and learning cultures, and the language learning environments.

Teaching and learning cultures

It was pointed out in Chapter One that teaching and learning culture is a very

important concept in people's interpretations and perceptions of teaching and learning, as it not only defines teachers' beliefs and expectations about classroom teaching and learning, but also has a tremendous impact on the practice of teaching and learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006).

As mentioned in Chapter Five, English language teaching and learning in New Zealand is characterized as being student-centred. According to Bell (1993), student-centred teaching posits student thinking and learning as the core of teaching activities. A student-centred teaching and learning culture stresses students' abilities in constructing knowledge for understanding rather than knowledge reception. In particular, democratic knowledges and practices are emphasized. According to Dobbins (2010), New Zealand education is "driven by efforts to balance the notion of education as a human right and education as human capital" (p.156). From this perspective, the values of democracy underlie New Zealand education beliefs. In democratic education, teaching goes beyond "telling and testing" (Noddings, 1998, p.34). Instead, democratic teaching involves students in democratic life by "living democratically" (Noddings, 1998, p, 35). Noddings describes the democratic life in classroom as the follows:

... Students working together on common problems, establishing the rules by which their classrooms will be governed, testing and evaluating ideas for the improvement of classroom life and learning, and participating in the construction of objectives for their own learning. (Noddings, 1998, p. 35).

319

The New Zealand democratic educational culture is also characterized by egalitarianism. According to Yang (1993), in an egalitarian culture "people are more comfortable in horizontal relationships and are ambivalent about people in authority or people in vertical relationships" (p.5). Hence, New Zealand education beliefs value efforts made to establish equal relationships between teacher and students, and to create the atmosphere of equality, as much as possible given the teachers' responsibilities.

Using democratic values in education is supported by a sociocultural viewpoint that language acquisition occurs in social interaction, communication with others by students being immersed in the language experience, rather than being taught spelling, sound, grammar, and the like. During the process of fostering students' language ability, teachers become mediators and facilitators who provide stimulus to engage students in genuine learning. New Zealand education culture is output-oriented and it emphasizes students' productive learning. In the language classroom, more time is controlled by students. Teachers are listening to students rather than talking themselves (Bell, 1993). Teaching serves and supports learning. In addition, the New Zealand language teaching and learning culture values practical communication in the target language rather than learning by rote. Students are socialized into genuine communication and interaction in class.

In contrast to the New Zealand education culture, China's English language teaching is deeply influenced by Confucianism. This thesis argues that there are

conflicts between the doctrines of Confucian culture and New Zealand education

beliefs, which hinder Chinese teacher participants from adapting their teaching

using New Zealand teachers' beliefs and values. Firstly, Confucianism values

teachers' dignity and authority, emphasizes knowledge, knowledge presentation,

and transmission rather than students' learning. In return, students "show their

respect to the teacher by their meekness and obedience in class (Ng & Smith,

2004, p.95). The values of Confucianism determine the "bottom line" that the

teacher participants mentioned in this research, that any new teaching activity

could not challenge their authority as a teacher. Maintaining the authority of the

teacher, hinders teaching within an equal relationship between teacher and student,

and teaching and learning. The "bottom line" claimed in this research is echoed in

the literature stated in Chapter One, that in a Confucian culture, people pay

attention to their public images (Peng, 2007), which explains why the two Chinese

teacher participants "avoid(ed) some teaching activities" which they knew "might

bring more effective results" (Teacher Interview Z-2-2). It was found in this

research that the role that Confucianism endowed to the teacher participants,

conflicted with some of New Zealand teachers' beliefs and values. They used the

New Zealand teachers' practices only if they could still maintain core cultural

practices, such as how respect and obedience are communicated by themselves

and their students.

Secondly, Confucian culture is characterized by collectivism which values social

harmony, rather than "individual rights" in the classroom. Yang (1993) discussed

four characteristics of collectivism including individuals as interdependent entities, hierarchism, cooperativeness, and self-denial. According to Yang (1993), in collective cultures, individuals are subordinate to the collective and "they are valued only when they contribute to the collective in some way" (p.6). Collective cultures prohibit individuality and reward self-denial. For example, in the present research, it was found that Miss M always named a small group of students to practice English and answer questions in class, for which, Miss M responded that she had to consider the whole class students' learning and if she spent too much time on low-level students, she might impact most other students' learning and even couldn't finish her teaching tasks. Miss M's response indicates that in a collective culture, the "equality" in learning is relative and individual "equality" has to follow the "harmony" of the whole. The opposed views and values in New Zealand and Chinese education culture regarding collectivism inevitably hinder the Chinese teacher participants from practising some New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices.

English language teaching and learning environment

The findings in the present study indicate that teaching and learning environments played a role in the two teacher participants' practising new teaching as well. For example, both of the participants mentioned that their English language proficiency was influenced by the teaching environment. Since they had little chance to practise, it became hard for them to provide their students with more language input in English. Being a sociocultural practice, teaching and learning is

always connected with specific contexts. Hence, learning about the contexts in which teaching and learning occurs, is essential when learning about the teaching and learning process. This learning involves developing a sense of how teaching and learning is socially and culturally oriented. Williams and Burden (1997) argue that the importance of the appropriate teaching and learning contexts cannot be underestimated. An understanding of the ways in which aspects of teaching and learning environments affect the application of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices is necessary.

Significant differences exist in the English language teaching and learning environments between New Zealand and China. New Zealand is an English-speaking country, where English functions as the instructional medium as well as the daily-life communicating tool. For those Chinese students who learn English in New Zealand, English is a second language (ESL). The aim of ESL is to help those students whose native language is not English to develop their language proficiency in English as quickly as possible and to support them in their efforts to participate in the mainstream programme because English language is a prerequisite for them to achieve academic success (Garner, 1991; Kalinowski & Carder, 1991). Therefore, communication skills are paramount and become a major concern for ESL teaching and learning. Increased emphasis on spoken English language incorporating classroom activities is at the core of the pedagogy. In fact, many good pedagogies for native language students are appropriate for second-language students (de Jong & Harper, 2008). De Jong and Harper (2008)

argue that pedagogies for native speakers based on constructivist and social interactionist perspectives are helpful for ESL students' oral language development.

ESL is characterized as a needs-based programme and is organized in a highly flexible way (Garner, 1991). It caters for the needs of students and is geared to what students are expected to achieve (Kalinowski & Carder, 1991). ESL teaching is based on students' needs and expectation depending on such factors as previous school experience, previous language experience and students' current English language proficiency and so on. As a result, ESL teachers have substantial freedom in planning and implementing their lesson as well as accommodating students' needs. ESL teachers usually use various syllabus types and techniques so as to achieve positive teaching effects (Kalinowski & Carder, 1991). There is no single syllabus which is proven to be best for all students in English language learning. Therefore, a combination of syllabi provides ESL teachers with the chance to make use of various sources and to maximize the possibility of achieving more effective teaching and learning. Furthermore, in ESL settings, teachers are generally concerned with "ways to get students to speak English in class, ways to use authentic language teaching materials ... and getting students to take on more responsibilities for their learning" (Gebhard, 1996, p.3).

Residing in the English-speaking country, students have the opportunity to be immersed in the language community and practice their language skills in

authentic language situations (Li, 1999). Students have sufficient amounts of exposure to the use of the target language. They can learn English both inside and outside classroom. Li (1999) describes that ESL students have more sources of learning and environment support as newspapers, TV, programs, advertisements, street signs all become potential learning sources, and provide students with an authentic language learning situation, which is not available for EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. For ESL students, to learn English language is not only a prerequisite for their academic success but also to acquire "survival skills" in foreign countries. For them, oral communication and participation in the community is more important than meta-linguistic knowledge.

In contrast, China is a non-English speaking country, where English is not the language of instruction but a foreign language (EFL). In China, Chinese is the first language and English is only used to communicate with English-speaking people; however, students have little chance to speak with them (Liao, 1996). Compared with ESL students, EFL students have limited or partial contexts in which they can practise the target language. English cannot be heard or learned outside class. Students are only exposed to English language within class. Furthermore, Chinese English language students have less access to an authentic language learning situations to learn and acquire English language naturally like ESL students. Chinese English language teachers and text-books make up the main resources of learning (Li, 1999) and the learning environments are artificial in class created by teachers and students.

In China, English is a key curriculum subject in which most students are involved and achievement in English is crucial and connected with a student's career development or the access to higher levels of education (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Being an independent subject, English in China is different from that in New Zealand, where it functions as the central and instrumental position for students' success in academic life. In China, English is taught and examined as part of the whole curriculum (Garner, 1991). In order to get good grades in examinations, teachers often teach students to learn the language through grammar-translation rather than to use language for communication. As a result, students perform inappropriately in real-life situation (Liao, 1996). Furthermore, in China, the educational system is highly centralized and the design of teaching syllabus is top-down. Teachers have no freedom to change or design the teaching syllabus themselves but follow and implement the syllabus given by central government.

In contrast to ESL students who learn English for communicative and practical purpose, Chinese English language students learn English language as a major, a compulsory subject, or a tool for their life-long career (Li, 1999). Traditionally, the primary goal for them studying in the education system was to pass English examinations. Although the basic language skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing are emphasized in the centralized curriculum, students are expected to learn the language by memorizing linguistic forms, analyzing sentence structure, and translation. However, the profile of Chinese English language students is rapidly changing because of the effect of socioeconomic

326

change in China. In this research, data from questionnaires in Part One and interviews in Part Three indicated that adolescent English language learners in China have new expectations which contrast with traditional expectations. They have their own learning expectations and purposes and are longing to improve their communicative skills and English language cultural knowledge (see Chapter Five). These changes alongside the changes called for by the government call for changes in English language teaching and a new conception of learners.

Discussion

As mentioned in Chapter One, the introduction of English language teaching and learning into China was originally for national service ends (Lam & Chow, 2004) with the philosophy of Ti-yong, meaning 'Chinese essence in foreign bottle' (Turner & Acker, 2002). According to Gao (2009), the tensions around Ti-yong have "become a central issue in China's foreign language education in various historical periods" (p.60). Although, the Chinese government has debated the value of foreign cultures versus Confucianism for many years, it is a nation that wants to "maintain a strong national identity" whilst learning English (Spring, 2006, p. 247). Thus, in China's present market economy society where "the Yong is geared particularly to economic needs and the value of English as a form of economic capital is highlighted", the Ti-yong dilemma is highlighted. (Gao, 2009, p.63). The Ti represents the Chinese essence or core cultural values that mediate the use of teaching beliefs and practices from foreign countries, for example, New Zealand.

In terms of this research, the dilemma can be summarized as the contradictions and conflicts between language knowledge and communicative ability, input and output, rote learning and communication. The former represents the teacher participants' previous beliefs about teaching and the latter represents New Zealand teachers' beliefs. However, it was found in this research that within each of these areas of conflict, neither pole is complete without the other. For example, without the input, English language teaching and learning loses its foundation; however, without the output, it is hard to achieve the desired teaching and learning outcomes. From the views of foreign language acquisition, the former is a means of language learning, and the latter is an end of English language teaching (Liao, 1996). Traditional Confucianism inclines to the former (Ti) as teachers emphasize the meta-linguistic competence and overlooks the communicative function of language (Liao, 1996); while, China today's market economy inclines its balance to the latter (Yong). The point about the Ti-yong dilemma when considering the application of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices in Chinese contexts is the dilemma between the teacher participants' beliefs that value democracy (for example, students' rights and responsibilities in learning) and their teaching practices that maintained teachers' authority (for example, the "bottom line" for changing teaching mentioned by the teacher participants).

In dealing with the Ti-yong dilemma, teacher participants encountered further dilemmas. One dilemma came from the teacher participants' traditional beliefs

about teaching, and the teaching and learning resulting from their own teaching and learning experiences (see Chapter Six). This discrepancy made them embrace New Zealand teachers' beliefs and be motivated to develop new beliefs which value students' learning. However, the mismatch between their new beliefs and Chinese sociocultural contexts put them into another dilemma between new beliefs and pedagogical practices. In dealing with the mismatch between beliefs and the pedagogical practices, it was Chinese cultural knowledges which the teacher participants used to interpret and judge their new pedagogical practices. Therefore, rejection occurred when the pedagogical practices challenged the core values of the Chinese teaching and learning cultures. In other words, it is the relationship between pedagogical practice and teaching and learning culture that played a key role in the application. A teaching belief may be culturally appropriate. However, pedagogical practice, once applied in different teaching and learning cultures, may not always be appropriate.

The previous discussion of the differences in cultures and the discussion of Ti-yong dilemma in China's English language education suggest that a reconciliation of pedagogical practices is critical. This reconciliation aims to reconcile the conflicts between New Zealand teachers' beliefs and Chinese sociocultural contexts to ensure the effective use of New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices in promoting Chinese students' communicative language abilities and developing Chinese teachers' understanding of teaching and their teaching practices as well. For Chinese English language teachers, reconciliation involves constructing

knowledge about English language pedagogy, developing awareness of cultural differences, and building respect for both New Zealand and Chinese sociocultural contexts and the beliefs generated from the contexts. However, how far the reconciliation can go might depend on how powerful the dominate culture is, and how strongly held are the culture's core values. The teaching and learning culture affects and restricts Chinese English language teachers' perceptions, interpretations and judgments of the New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as their abilities to adapt the beliefs and practices to the local culture. It also underpins the significance of teachers' constant reflection, exploration and inquiry in order to avoid cultural imposition and value clashes (Li, 1999). However, culture is dynamic and Chinese culture, including Confucianism itself, has experienced a long developmental and transitional process. The development of Confucianism also indicates that Chinese culture is comprehensive and open. As discussed in Chapter Three, the changing cultural environment provides Chinese English language teachers with the intrinsic motivation for their professional development, and what they need to do is to learn how to cope with limitations from the traditional teaching and learning culture, and how to grasp on to the changing trends of the culture.

7.3.2 Teaching expertise

Data collected in the present study also indicated that the teacher is another important factor that impacted on the application of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices in Chinese context. As the

agent of change, the role of Chinese English language teachers cannot be underestimated. As mentioned in Chapter Three the literature shows that the improvement of English language teaching and learning in China depends on the professional development of Chinese English language teacher (Wang, 2007). In other words, changes in teaching and learning require changes in teachers. Change occurs from both outside and within. The socioeconomic development in China provides the external conditions for change, and, teachers themselves are another important factor from within in the change process. A central issue raised in the change process documented in the two participants in the present study concerns how the Chinese English language teacher participants' expertise enabled him/her to manage his/her new teaching based on newly developing teaching beliefs. This issue will be discussed in this section in terms of teacher's English language proficiency, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

English language proficiency

English language teachers' proficiency of language skills is a prerequisite for their profession. Compared with New Zealand colleagues who are native-speakers, Chinese English language teachers are at a disadvantage. In this research, English language proficiency was a major issue that Chinese English language teachers were concerned about during the process of change in their practice.

Miss M is a typical teacher whose confidence was reduced by her self-reported poor language proficiency. In her teaching story, we found a teacher with two

identities. In class, Miss M was a solemn teacher with limited teaching pedagogies and distant from her students; after class, she was confident, warm-hearted and inclined to communicate. According to her, she had no confidence with herself in class and one of the important reasons she identified was her poor English spoken language. She believed that fluent oral language was one of the most important criteria of an English language teacher. She felt so sorry that she could not provide her students with enough language input to improve their language skills. This kind of feeling always made her feel embarrassed when she faced her students. In designing and applying the new teaching during this study, she suffered from this problem once again. Whenever she designed the new teaching activities, she worried that she might not fulfill her students' expectations and be accepted by students.

It was also indicated by the research findings that the lack of confidence in her spoken English seemed to make Miss M unable to be creative. Miss M acknowledged that she relied too much on knowledge-oriented teaching because of her poor spoken language. When designing her new teaching activities, she was troubled by her limited language proficiency as she realized that the more interaction students and teachers had in the target language, the better the teaching and learning became. However, her limited English language instruction made the "room" for development of her teaching, become "less and less" (Teacher Interview M-2-2). She told the researcher that although she knew that some teaching activities, which involved more English language instructions and

332

interactions with students, might be effective in achieving better learning results, she worried too much about her language level and finally gave up using those teaching activities.

Secondly, the results of the present study show that English language proficiency seemed to influence whether the new and existing teaching practices could be acted fully. Mr. Z mentioned, after his new teaching in the second cycle, that if he spoke English in class for a long time, he had to focus all his energy on wording and organizing sentences. In this way, all his efforts were spent on oral language, thus, students' learning and classroom management were neglected. He also reported that it was impossible for him to employ proper teaching activities to help students' learning.

Mr. Z further pointed out that his limited language skills did not allow him to respond to some unexpected questions from his students, which made him embarrassed and at that time he could not always make quick decisions about how his teaching should go. Likewise, Miss M mentioned that she experienced the same problem and that it made her "lose the control of teaching and learning" and her mind "went blank" (Field Notes, M-1).

Thirdly, the results of the present study show that a high proficiency in English language helps teachers to practise more communicative teaching pedagogies. During the process of developing new teaching beliefs and practice, the two

teacher participants were challenged by how to improve their students' communicative abilities. Communicative pedagogy with a student-orientation is a significant characteristic of English language teaching in New Zealand generally (see Chapter Five). However, the self-reported limited language proficiency of Mr. Z and Miss M prevented them from implementing such a communicative pedagogy thoroughly in their teaching. Both of them mentioned that in view of their language proficiency and skills, they could only adapt the new pedagogical practices selectively.

The findings in the present study indicated that teachers with self-perceived low language proficiency may have more difficulty in creating a target language speaking environment in class, and thus, provide less chance for students to develop their communicative competence, than those teachers with a higher proficiency. This supports Farrell and Richards' (2007) claim that low language proficiency leads to "the excessive use of mother tongue rather than English with practice of the language limited to exercises from the textbook" (p.63). When teachers and students discuss an English text or dialogue in Chinese, English becomes "pure signs or symbols" rather than meaningful language.

Subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge

Subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge form the foundation of knowledge underpinning teaching activities in any classroom. In this research, the data collected showed that subject matter knowledge and

pedagogical content knowledge played an important role in achieving the goals of teaching and learning.

In a traditional teacher-centred English language classroom, subject matter knowledge is the knowledge about the English language seen as being transferred from teacher to students directly in the form of "chalk-and-talk". Pedagogical content knowledge is used in transmission teaching. For example, a lecturer will sequence and segment the subject matter for ease of learning. In a student-centred class, with teaching informed by sociocultural learning theory, teachers help students to construct subject matter knowledge by employing their pedagogical content knowledge in a different way. Student-centred teaching has a higher demand for teachers' subject matter knowledge as it requires that teachers not only have a good command of the structure, scope and sequence of the subject as well as a thorough understanding of the subject so as to prioritize content topics and connect content with life experiences, but it also requires teachers to know how to facilitate students constructing the knowledge effectively and efficiently. In other words, a simple understanding of subject and expository teaching prove insufficient because subject matter knowledge is no longer something fixed waiting to be transferred from teachers' brains to students' brains. Teachers have to have a good knowledge of the subject so that they are capable of controlling and integrating it into teaching and learning activities, in other words, transforming subject knowledge into effective pedagogical content knowledge. Hence, sufficient subject matter knowledge forms the foundation of effective pedagogical

content knowledge and pedagogical practices.

In the present study, data from the application process indicated firstly that a strong foundation of subject matter knowledge was the basis of good teaching for the two participants. Miss M's teaching story supports this view. Being a teacher of business English, Miss M had to cope with lots of knowledge related to business activities in addition to English language knowledge. Miss M said she was too busy keeping up-to-date with the business subject knowledge, to also keep up-to-date with new pedagogical knowledge. She claimed that it was not easy for her to explain to students the knowledge covered in the textbook clearly and logically. To think about more effective teaching pedagogy was even more difficult for her.

Miss M's teaching experience in the research shows that sound subject knowledge has two-dimensions. It involves not only the amount of knowledge but also the depth of knowledge. Chapter Three discussed the idea raised by the literature that in-depth subject knowledge is more important than the breadth of knowledge as it is the basis for teachers to adapt materials and achieve effective teaching (Kolis & Dunlap, 2004; Phelps & Schilling, 2004); however, the present research argues that both the breadth and depth of subject matter knowledge are equally important for teachers to design effective teaching and learning activities. This research findings show that a wide range of subject knowledge is necessary for teachers to gain a thorough understanding of the subject. Based on this knowledge, teachers

can decide what is more important for students' learning and what is the sequence for better learning. From this perspective, the breadth of subject knowledge commanded by teachers is equally crucial for teachers to achieve good teaching.

In addition, data from the application process in the present study also indicated that in-depth subject matter knowledge is needed to derive and develop pedagogical content knowledge. Data collected from the two teacher participants echoes what the literature claims: that teachers' subject matter knowledge is closely related with pedagogy and sound and adequate knowledge about the subject is the precondition for teachers to design and choose effective pedagogy (Ball, 2000). Subject matter knowledge cannot guarantee effective pedagogy; however, without adequate knowledge about the subject, it is extremely hard to achieve effective pedagogy. Mr. Z mentioned the importance of subject matter knowledge in designing pedagogical practices. According to him, only when he had a sound and thorough understanding about what he intended to teach, can he predict and respond to the possible results of the pedagogies. He also mentioned that sufficient subject matter knowledge helped him to be creative in connecting content with pedagogy. This supports the claims that teacher knowledge is not isolated but interactive in an integrated system (Guerrero, 2005), that is, one kind of knowledge was able to generate and promote another kind of knowledge. In this research, it is shown that the two teachers believed that their subject matter knowledge enhanced their pedagogical content knowledge.

Pedagogical content knowledge is another important factor in achieving good teaching and learning. It has been discussed previously that Chinese English language teachers' practices lag behind their teaching beliefs, which Shulman (1987) calls a "missing paradigm" in teacher education programs. The discrepancy or distance between what teachers claim to believe and what they actually do in class shows, on one hand, that teachers tend to use their own learning experiences as the basis of their teaching; but on the other hand, they lack the knowledge about the nature and process of foreign language learning, which makes them unable to transfer what they believe to practical activities in class. A weakness in pedagogical content knowledge might be one of the important reasons that lead to the discrepancy between beliefs and practices in the two participants in this research. This supports the idea that the analysis of pedagogical content knowledge is helpful in exploring the relationship between what teachers believe and what they actually do in class (Segall, 2004).

Pedagogical content knowledge is seen as the synthesis of subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and teaching skills generated from the synthesis of the knowledge. PCK is the knowledge represented in the form of teaching after being filtered, selected and re-organized according to the needs of teaching (Wu, 2005). As both a personally and socially constructed knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge is the accumulation of teachers' teaching and learning experiences. Therefore, it is a long-term construction. In this research, the process of change in the action research indicates that although the teacher

338

participants were making progress in their teaching, there was still a distance between their newly developed beliefs and practices. It took time for the teacher participants to close the gap. For example, from the beginning to the end of the application, teaching pedagogy was the area that the two teacher participants wanted to improve. After practicing in each cycle, new problems were identified. Hence, progress was slow and there was a lot for them to work on. This suggests that it takes time for teachers to adapt their pedagogical content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge reflects the accumulation of teaching experience and learning.

Teaching and learning is a dynamic process. During the process, teachers have to cope with problems that can occur at any time and they have to adjust and reorganize the content and select appropriate pedagogy. The whole process includes using knowledge of students' learning, pedagogy, subject matter, English language and culture, and curriculum, which all contribute to the category of pedagogical content knowledge in English language teaching. Because of this complexity, this thesis argues that the changing of teaching beliefs and practices is a long process. In the present study, after being exposed to New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practice, the two Chinese English language teachers explored subject matter knowledge, which is suitable for English language teaching, and pedagogical content knowledge, which is appropriate for the subject knowledge of English language, by constructing and reflecting on the New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practice. In this way, they were able to internalize new beliefs and

practices and put these into practice in terms of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge.

Discussion

Based on the discussion of the factors which influence the application in this research, Figure 7.3 can be re-developed into Figure 7.4. This figure indicates that using New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices in China, in a country so different from New Zealand, is a complex situation that goes across both sociocultural and pedagogical traditions and practices.
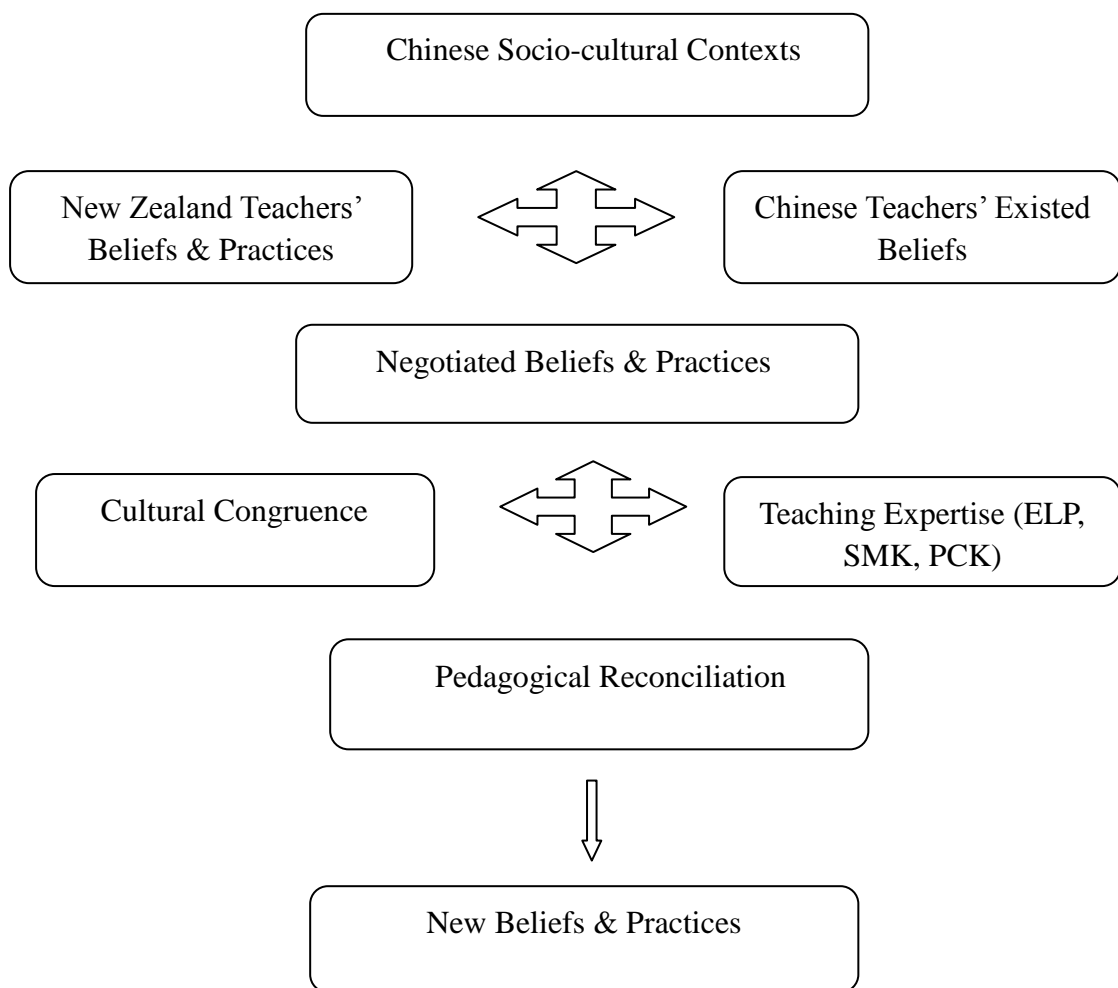

Figure 7.3 Model of beliefs and teaching development in the research

Based on the previous discussion and the discussion of the factors that influenced the application of new teaching beliefs and practice, this research further argues that cultural congruence and teacher expertise function respectively as the sociocultural and individual dimension of pedagogical reconciliation. These two dimensions interact with each other during the negotiation of beliefs and practices, to develop new beliefs and practices.

In terms of the sociocultural dimension of pedagogical reconciliation, this research argues that the Chinese teacher participants had to be aware of the need for reconciliation between what is introduced to their pedagogies and the local context in which their teaching occurs. Pedagogical reconciliation sees the differences and conflicts between New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices and Chinese sociocultural contexts in a positive way and allows Chinese teacher participants to rethink their own experiences, analyze "otherness", question their own beliefs, identify the sources of conflict, the impacts on their teaching, and explore new alternative practices. The literature argues that culture defines appropriateness (Lau et al., 2004), thus, pedagogical reconciliation should be culturally appropriate. In the action research of the present study, data about teacher participants' new pedagogical practices indicated that culturally appropriate pedagogy enabled teacher participants to learn from New Zealand teachers by making the best use of their beliefs without losing their identities and without threatening their cultural values.

In terms of the individual dimension, this research argues that to achieve pedagogical reconciliation, the Chinese teacher participants had to be aware of the reconciliation between what is introduced to their pedagogies and their own teaching expertise. The findings in the present study confirmed the close relationship between teaching expertise and pedagogical reconciliation. Firstly, being aware of their own teaching expertise helped them to make effective choices in pedagogical reconciliation. It is a long-term task to develop teaching expertise as it consists of a complex repertoire of teacher knowledge and skills (Parris & Block, 2007). Thus, in the action research in the present study, the teacher participants had to tailor their new teaching practices to fit their own teaching expertise. Secondly, teaching expertise influences teacher participants' creativity in pedagogical reconciliation. Freire (1978) said that "experiments cannot be transplanted; they must be reinvented" (p.9). On such a premise, pedagogical reconciliation attempts to support creativity in pedagogy. It was noted in the research that good teaching expertise helped the teacher participants to be confident with themselves and be creative in designing new pedagogical practices. Finally, to achieve pedagogical reconciliation, the Chinese teacher participants had to be aware that the process involved their constant enquiry, exploration, negotiation, reflection, and tolerance. That means, teachers' patience, willingness and the effort they spent in professional development became another important factor in the pedagogical reconciliation to use teachers' beliefs and practices from another cultural setting.

7.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the role of New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices in helping two Chinese teacher participants develop new teaching beliefs and practices. The factors which influenced the application have also been explored. The findings show that the introduction of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs with the support of sociocultural learning theory was successful in developing Chinese English language teachers' beliefs and practices. The New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practice firstly and most importantly provided a new point of view for the Chinese English language teachers to re-examine their existing beliefs. Although the introduction of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices was helpful for Chinese English language teachers, the present study identified that they were only helpful if Chinese traditional teaching and learning culture, contexts, and teachers' personal teaching expertise were acknowledged and incorporated in the process. This chapter has pointed out the distinctions between New Zealand and China with respect to teaching and learning cultures and language learning contexts. It argues that beliefs and practices which are appropriate for one context may not be appropriate for another. Thus it might be naive to attempt to directly transplant New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices into the Chinese cultural context. It is suggested that pedagogical reconciliation has to be achieved so as to develop new beliefs and practices which are culturally appropriate for the Chinese context. To achieve pedagogical reconciliation, the sociocultural dimension (cultural congruence) and the individual dimension (teaching expertise) have been

343

discussed. It is pointed out that pedagogical reconciliation not only considers the sociocultural contexts from where New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practice are transplanted, but also pays attention to teachers' individual teaching expertise, so as to tailor new teaching beliefs and practices. Also indicated is that it is the socioculturally appropriated beliefs and practices that have currency in Chinese contexts.

CHAPTER EIGHT CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the major findings and the implications of this study (8.1). The research constraints and further research recommendation (8.2) will be discussed as well.

8.1 Major findings and implications of the research

This study inquired into the role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices in helping Chinese English language teachers develop their understanding of teaching and their teaching practices so as to improve Chinese students' communication competence in the target language. This study provided significant insights into the questions under investigation and it explored the process of using New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices as a stimulus to bring about changes in two Chinese English language teachers' practices. In addition, problems which occurred in the process were identified. The major findings and implications of this research will now be presented.

8.1.1 Major findings

This study explored the role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices in developing Chinese English language teachers' understanding of teaching and their teaching practices. Date generated indicated that New Zealand teachers beliefs and practices played a positive role in promoting the two Chinese

teacher participants' beliefs and teaching practices. The transplanted beliefs and practices provided the two Chinese teacher participants with an alternative view to construct and reconstruct their teaching beliefs and the meaning of being an English language teacher. During the process of construction and reconstruction, the teacher participants' existed beliefs judged and assimilated the beliefs that was regarded as helpful to solve the self-perceived problems in teaching practices. However, during the process, teachers' existing beliefs still played a role in teaching practices, which implied that in the process of change, some core values were hard to change and may not need to be changed. Therefore, Chinese English language teachers need to achieve cultural congruence when they use New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices in Chinese contexts. Chinese teachers need to be culturally sensitive and responsive by acknowledging the differences between Chinese and New Zealand educational cultures.

Another major finding of this research is that the introduction of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs together with their pedagogical practices benefited the teacher participants' teaching practices. Once the practices were transplanted in a Chinese context, the teacher participants adapted and tailored the pedagogical practices according to their specific context, which motivated their creativity in developing pedagogy. It was also found that the using and application of New Zealand teacher pedagogical practices helped the teacher participants to narrow the gap between their beliefs and practices by identifying problems and insufficiencies in their teaching. The combination of teaching beliefs and practices

might be an effective mode of teacher professional development as it linked teacher cognition with social practice. The process of the action research in this research indicated that this mode of teacher professional development helped the teacher participants to develop culturally appropriate beliefs and practices when they considered the Chinese sociocultural contexts in their new teaching practices.

The factors which influenced the application of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices were explored as well. Chinese educational culture and learning environment influenced the application. The teaching beliefs and pedagogical practices which were appropriate in New Zealand might not be appropriate in China since different beliefs and practices had different cultural implications. It was therefore unrealistic to transfer directly New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices to Chinese contexts and it was essential to adapt New Zealand colleagues' beliefs and practices to suit the situation and contexts in China. Furthermore, significant differences existed in English language teaching and learning environments between New Zealand and China. In New Zealand, English language was learned by Chinese students as a second language (ESL) since English was the native language; however, in China, English was a foreign language (EFL). The differences in learning aims, major concerns, appropriate teaching pedagogy, characteristics, amounts of exposure to the use of the target language between New Zealand and China determined that Chinese English language teachers had to bridge their own teaching and learning contexts and New Zealand teachers' beliefs so as to develop teaching pedagogies

347

which were appropriate for Chinese teaching and learning contexts.

Teacher expertise was another factor that influenced the application. As the agent of change, teachers could never be underestimated. It was found in this research that teacher's English language proficiency, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge played a critical role in designing and controlling the teacher participants' new teaching practices based on their newly developed beliefs. The findings in this study indicated that English language proficiency was a precondition of quality English language teacher. It influenced the teacher participants' confidence in practicing new teaching and the lack of confidence made them unable to be creative. It was also found in the present study that teachers with self-perceived low language proficiency might have more difficulty in creating a target language speaking environment in class, and thus, provided less chance for students to develop their communicative competence, than those teachers with a higher proficiency.

Subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, in this research, were identified as the basis of good teaching for the two teacher participants. To practise New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices, the Chinese teacher participants need to have in-depth subject matter knowledge and good pedagogical content knowledge. Subject matter knowledge could not guarantee effective teaching. The gap between the two teacher participants' beliefs and practices indicated that they lacked the knowledge about the nature and process of

foreign language learning, which makes them unable to transfer what they believe to practical activities in class. Pedagogical reconciliation was found as the key to achieve socioculturally adapted pedagogical practices in Chinese context, as data generated demonstrated the discordance between New Zealand teachers' pedagogical practices and Chinese sociocultural contexts. To achieve socioculturally adapted beliefs and pedagogical practices, Chinese teachers have to achieve pedagogical reconciliation, which balances and integrates what is introduced to their teaching, and what existed and influenced their teaching before.

8.1.2 Implications of the research

This study has presented evidence that New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs functioned as a "catalyst" for development of Chinese English language teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. In addition, learning about and using New Zealand teachers' practices, together with their underlying beliefs, provided Chinese English language teachers with a mode of teacher development and teacher education. The findings of the present study provides some implications for China's English language teacher education and educational reform. These implications include that Chinese English language teachers need an awareness of professional development, change in teaching should begin with changes in teachers, changes in teaching should be based on the needs of teachers and help to solve self-identified teaching problems, and teacher in-service education and training is imperative for Chinese English language teachers. Furthermore, implications were also given to New Zealand English language teachers from the

349

Chinese teacher participants. These will now be discussed in turn.

Firstly, Chinese English language teachers need an awareness of professional development. Data generated from this research indicated that most of English language teachers involved in this research (20 Chinese English language teachers) had a strong awareness for the need for professional development. However, the data also indicated that the needs, no matter how strong they were, did not guarantee effective development. The literature suggests that teacher professional development is a complex process which consists of different stages with different purposes (Bell, 2005). Therefore, a broad understanding of professional development awareness by teachers and government officials is necessary. The present study argues that culture is a point of view for Chinese English language teachers to develop their understanding of teaching. And to develop an awareness of professional development, Chinese English language teachers need to develop their understanding of the meaning of teaching by inquiring into the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese traditional teaching and learning, and considering alternative views of teaching. Nuthall (2001) claims that "culture shapes our understanding of both teaching and learning process" (p.2). Teaching itself is a cultural activity developed for conducting the process of acquiring culture (Nuthall, 2001). The influence of culture is omnipresent and "it becomes so much a part of ourselves that we can no longer see it for what it is" (Nuthall, 2001, p.2). For Chinese English language teachers, the challenges that Chinese traditional culture brings are that they have to understand teaching and develop their

understanding of teaching through the interpretive lenses of their own specific culture on one hand. On the other hand, they have to be aware of the limitation of their own culture by down-playing "objectivity" and highlighting "subjectivity" in order to discover the profound meaning implicated in teaching.

In addition, this research claims that to develop the identity of being an English language teacher help Chinese English language teachers develop an awareness of professional development. Identity refers to "the way a person understands and views himself, and is often viewed by others, at least in certain situations -- a perception of self that can be fairly constantly achieved" (Horn et al., 2008, p.62). Teacher identity is a key factor to the way that teachers think about their work (Brown and Miller, 2006). Cargill (2006) takes the position that "different cultures of communication generate different expectations of how learning and teaching are to be carried on, and what the ultimate goal of language teaching and learning is" (p.171). According to Cargill (2006), teaching beliefs and practices generated from New Zealand English language teachers which were appropriate for the New Zealand context, once applied in the Chinese sociocultural context, might threaten the identity of the Chinese English language teachers. During the application process, the two Chinese English language teachers had to re-examine, reflect, question or even deny their taken-for-granted teaching beliefs, pedagogy and classroom practices. It means that they had to think about the constructed relations between themselves and the society, or the community which they

belonged to, in light of the lens that New Zealand English language teachers provide. That is, the "self" and "who I am", that was built up through and on their everyday experiences and social interactions, was challenged. Once the original and current identity, the intersection of the inner and outer forces, has to be changed, the relations between the individual and the social have to be re-constructed (Norton, 2006). This provides an explanation for the reports, during the application phase of the present study, by the two teacher participants when they thought that they had lost the control of their teaching and felt "unsafe" or even "lost confidence".

Teacher development is the development of teacher identity (Bell, 1993) as teacher identity includes teachers' expectation of their roles in teaching practices. It orientates teachers in interactions with students and prompts teachers to "take up and reject the various teaching practices they encounter" (Horn et al., 2008, p.70). In Chinese traditional teaching, teaching takes the leading position and learning is subordinate to teaching, which determines that the teacher plays the role of knowledge authority and students can only be passive learners and knowledge receivers. To develop Chinese students' English language communication competence, the Chinese English language teachers have to rethink the relationships between teaching and learning, and the roles of teacher and students in teaching and learning. In the framework of sociocultural theorising, the role of teachers is defined as facilitators or mediators of students' learning. Thus, to develop the understanding of teaching, Chinese teachers have to re-orient

their position in teaching and learning activities and reconstruct new identities in the teaching activities.

Secondly, changes in teaching should begin with changes in teachers. Being the practitioner, the teacher's role can never be ignored. In this study, the application process indicated that the teacher was the source of innovation and creativity. Mao (1937) argued that any change is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors are the basis of change, external factors are the condition of change, and external factors play a role through the internal factors. Thus, bottom-up change has superiority over top-down change in achieving more extensive outcomes, since the former enables teachers to actively participate in, plan, and be responsible for the changes (Head & Taylor, 1997; Rodriguez, 2010). In this way, teachers are not a passive receiver but an active explorer. Teachers' conscientiousness, enthusiasm and creativity in teaching are utilized. Hence, one of the most important implications of this study is that successful teaching development can be achieved by giving teachers the impetus to change themselves. The power of this approach to the professional development of teachers is that it not only enables teachers to carry out changes or reform of their teaching practices and beliefs but it also enhances teachers' awareness of innovation and encourages them to develop themselves.

Thirdly, changes in teaching should be based on the needs of teachers and help to solve self-identified teaching problems. This research supports the notion that

teacher development is teacher learning (Bell, 2005). During the process of change in the present study, the two teacher participants explored and learnt about teaching by analyzing and solving the problems which they perceived in their teaching. Through identifying and solving these problems, teacher participants enhanced their teaching practice. From this perspective, teacher learning and professional development are characterized as inquiry-orientated. The findings in this study suggested if the changes are helpful for teachers to solve the problems they perceived in their teaching and meet the needs of their teaching, the changes are more likely to be successful. It is also indicated in this study that teacher learning is the precondition of teacher development and thus teacher learning is a requirement for changes in teaching to occur. Problems and needs in teaching became the resources and motivation of teacher learning. Therefore, the content of teacher professional development should be based on meeting the needs of teaching and solving the problems in teaching. In other words, the content of teacher professional development and what to change should be teaching-oriented and teacher-oriented.

Fourthly, teacher in-service education and training is imperative for Chinese English language teachers. It was mentioned in Chapter Seven that most of English language teachers in China are majors of English language rather than of education. This leads to the fact that many Chinese English language teachers are weak in teaching pedagogy and they have to refer themselves to the teachers who taught them and imitate their teaching. However, with students' needs changing,

some teaching pedagogy might not be suitable. Data about English language teaching in China collected in Phase One showed that pedagogy innovation is pursued by most Chinese English language teachers. In the Action Research in Phase Three, what the two teacher participants wanted to improve in their teaching practices focused on pedagogy. Indeed, for the Chinese English language teachers involved in this research, teaching reform appeared to mean pedagogical reform. This indicates that being English language majors, Chinese English language teachers lack education knowledge especially knowledge about teaching and being a teacher. Data generated in this research also indicated that most English language teachers were "fighting a lone battle" as they had to make up for their missing pedagogical knowledge by themselves. From this perspective, this study suggests that teacher in-service education and training for Chinese English language teachers is imperative. With the help of the education and training programs, teachers might be able to learn about teaching in practice.

Finally, data generated from the action research indicates that Chinese teacher participants provided some implications for New Zealand English language teachers. One is that pedagogy of transmission with a grammar-orientation is still workable for Chinese students who are learning English language in New Zealand. The results of this research show that although the transplanted New Zealand English language teaching beliefs and practices were helpful, Chinese teacher participants had to adapt them according to the sociocultural contexts. In China, English is a foreign language, students have limited access to practice English and

355

grammar becomes an important way for them to learn English. This is the main reason that the two teacher participants in this research cannot get rid of grammar transmission, but have to achieve a balance with the introduced New Zealand teacher's pedagogy which focuses on communicative competence, students learning and Chinese traditional pedagogy. So, for New Zealand English language teachers, if they teach students from China, they should be aware that with changes in learning contexts, Chinese students might need some time to adjust their learning. New Zealand teachers should address the students' learning needs and their perceptions on English language learning.

Another implication is Chinese teacher participants' dedication and their respect for students' views. Data generated from the action research indicates that Chinese teacher participants' dedication played a facilitating role in changing teaching. During the whole process of the action research, both of them showed a strong desire to improve their teaching, which functioned as a strong driving force for teaching innovation and professional development awareness. This shows that teacher personal quality is an important factor in teacher professional development. Furthermore, both of the Chinese teacher participants showed their respect for students' learning and views in implementing their new teaching activities. Whenever they designed their new teaching, they brought students' learning in mind and improving students' learning became a key aim in their new teaching activities, which contributed greatly to their professional development in the action research.

To sum up, this section focuses on the five main implications from the research presented in this thesis. It firstly claims the need for Chinese English language teachers to develop an awareness of professional development by inquiring into the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese traditional culture and considering alternative views of teaching. It is also discussed that changes in teaching should begin with changes in teachers and changes in teaching should be based on the needs of teachers and help to solve self-identified teaching problems. It is acknowledged that teacher in-service education and training for Chinese English language teachers is imperative. Finally, implications from Chinese teacher participants to New Zealand teachers were discussed as well. Now research constraints and further research recommendations will be outlined.

8.2 Research constraints and further research

In the search for possible answers to the research questions identified in Chapter One and Chapter Five, this study explored English language teaching in both China and New Zealand. The inquiry involved a range of concerns: sociocultural theorising concerning EFL, teachers' beliefs, teacher learning, teacher professional development, teacher knowledge, and the discourse of change. The purpose of the study was to identify the role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice in helping Chinese English language teachers develop their beliefs and teaching practices. The answer to the research questions could not be found easily by conducting the research on a narrow range of issues only. The nature of the research questions required a synthesized and deep exploration. However, in

357

this research, there were limitations and external constraints which went beyond the researcher's control. These limitations and constraints will now be identified and related areas for further research will be discussed.

Firstly, the research limitation and constraints come from the sampled participants. The first phase of this study was conducted in China from May to July in 2007. The 20 teacher participants mainly came from a northern province where transmission style of teaching was more widely used than the other provinces in China. In addition, most of them graduated from universities in this province. Their previous learning experience and current teaching experience has shaped their teaching beliefs and understanding of English language teaching in a specific way. Therefore, whether the research results about English language teaching in China from the first phase was representative of tertiary English language teaching in the whole country needed further investigation.

The constraints of this research indicated further research directions. Firstly, as mentioned previously, a large number of teacher participants involved in this study came from a northern province where traditional teaching pattern was prevailing. Their beliefs and teaching competence might differ from those in other province. A replication of this study with more teachers from different provinces is highly recommended to determine if New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice are helpful for promoting their professional development of Chinese English language teachers from across different regions of China.

The second phase of this study was conducted from August to November in 2007. In this phase, only one experienced New Zealand English language teacher was interviewed. It is possible that this experienced teacher might not be representative of New Zealand national English language teachers. A large number of New Zealand English language teachers should have been interviews and their classroom been observed, in this way a broader picture of New Zealand English language teaching in terms of teaching beliefs and pedagogical practices could be explored. A more detailed picture of English language teaching and learning in New Zealand is more helpful for Chinese teacher participants in reconstructing their teaching beliefs, pedagogical practices, and promoting their professional development as well.

In this phase, 20 English language students from China were interviewed. The sampled students learnt English language in three cities New Zealand. Hence, the beliefs and practices identified from teacher participant and the sampled student participants might not represent the repertoire of English language teaching in New Zealand. Further research could study a larger sample of New Zealand English language teachers, and English language students from China to validate the areas identified in this study.

In Phase Three, two teacher participants were involved. On one hand, due to the challenges involved in gathering data, the number is relatively small. The data would have been more convincing if a larger number of teachers had been

involved in the action research. Another limitation relating to the two teacher participants could be linked to their age and experiences: the two teacher participants were both young teachers and with only two and three years' teaching experiences. Their teaching beliefs, practice, teacher knowledge, the process during which they changed their beliefs and practice, and the problems that occurred during the process might not be representative for experienced or other older Chinese English language teachers. Future research could involve teacher participants who are experienced and older to examine whether New Zealand teacher beliefs and practices are effective with this group also. In addition, in the action research, there was a lot of interpersonal contact in the process of teacher individual interviews. Influenced by Chinese traditional cultural, teachers always respect scholars. Therefore, when the researcher discussed new teaching that teacher participants may want to try, or gave some suggestions about the new teaching, they tended to accept. Some degree of researcher effect might exist, and this is inevitable in any research project.

Secondly, another limitation in this study came from time constraints. The action research lasted for one semester (4 months), from March to July in 2008. Professional development is a long-term process. It progresses at a slow pace and maybe does not progress linearly. Therefore, it takes long time to explore the process. From this perspective, the time spent on the action research was relatively short. Future research could examine the progress over a longer period of time.

Thirdly, data about Chinese English language teachers' beliefs and teaching problems upon which the action research is based on was collected from May to July in 2007. Since then, changes may have taken place. What Chinese English language teachers believed and did at the time when the research conducted may be different from what they embrace and practice by now. In addition, data about the process of application in the action research phase was collected from March to July in 2008. What appeared to be problems for the teacher participants at that time may not be problems by now and new problems may have emerged. Further research could focus on Chinese English language teachers' current teaching practices and beliefs and explore the role of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices in current Chinese context.

Finally, this study is about the development of teaching beliefs and practices of Chinese English language teachers by using New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practice in a Chinese educational context. The factors which influenced the application of the New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices had been explored, including sociocultural context and the factors from teacher themselves such as teacher expertise. However, many other sociocultural factors contribute to language teaching and learning. These issues, such as the influence of the English curricular, the textbook issued by the national education department, the pressure from external examination (such as Band Four, Band Eight) and economic pressures [3] , may contribute to the changing process of teacher

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[3] In most universities and colleges in China, teachers' salary is linked with the number of class they have had.

development, thus, need further investigation. Further research in these areas will help paint a larger and more detailed picture of the influences of sociocultural factors in the application of New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices in a Chinese educational setting.

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Invitation Letter to School Principal and Headteacher

for Phase 1 (in China) and Phase 2 (in New Zealand)

Dear Sir/Madam

I am Suxia Gao, a student in Waikato University working on a Doctoral thesis. I am writing this letter to seek your support for my research. My research focuses on the teaching beliefs, teaching practices and teacher development of English language teachers at the tertiary level. Particularly I am interested in whether New Zealand English language teaching can improve English language teaching in china. In this research, I will explore the teaching beliefs, teaching practices of Chinese and New Zealand English language teachers, and the differences between them. Basing on these findings, I will further explore how and in what ways Chinese English language teachers' teaching practices can be developed by using New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices within the Chinese socio-cultural contexts. The objective of the research is to explore some possible ways to change the traditional teaching patterns in China and promote Chinese English language teachers' beliefs and practices as well as improve Chinese students' communication competence in the target language.

I seek your support to approach up to 25 teachers and up to 100 students to invite them to participate in this research. I will be appreciated if you could give the names of the teachers who wish to participate in this research for me to approach. The research involves 3 phases. In phases 1 and 2, the prospective participants will be involved in questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. The questionnaire takes about 20 minutes to complete, the interview takes about 30 minutes. Besides interview and questionnaire, five of the teacher participants with

their classes will be involved in classroom observation. After phases 1 and 2, I will develop up the data for the action research in Phase 3. The action research will last for 4 months with three cycles and only be conducted in China. Two Chinese English language teachers are expected to be involved in. Seminars and professional development meetings will be held and teacher participants' class will be observed in each cycle. Teacher individual interviews and student group interviews will be conducted and each of them lasts 30minutes. In the course of the research, procedures will be used to maximize anonymity as the data collected will be identified by a letter and number code for each participant. Furthermore, participants have the right to decide whether they accept, decline or withdraw from this research. Data collection cannot start unless the informed consent has been gained from prospective participants.

I enclose an information sheet for your information. I believe that during my research, the English language teachers in your school and I can learn a lot from each other and I sincerely hope that my research can be helpful to promote the English language teachers' teaching and development in your school.

If you agree, please contact me at sg57@waikato.ac.nz with the post address of 466 Zhongxing West Street, Xingtai City and phone number 0319-2256887 for the participants in China or 196 Clyde St, Hamilton for the participants in New Zealand with phone number 07-8562958.

Many thanks for your consideration. And I look forward to your prompt reply.

Yours sincerely,

Suxia Gao

Appendix II

Information about the Research

Title of this research

Teacher Development of English Language Teaching in China: Based on English Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in New Zealand

Origins and objectives of this research

This research is motivated by my personal English learning and teaching experience as a student, a teacher in China, and my learning experience in New Zealand. Because of the different education system and sociocultural contexts, English language teachers have different teaching beliefs and practices between China and New Zealand. In this research, I want to examine the differences in teaching beliefs and practices between Chinese and New Zealand English language teachers with the aim to explore some possible ways to develop Chinese English language teachers' understanding of teaching and practices in the classrooms by making using of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices.

Expected benefits of the research

It is expected that this research can benefit English language teaching and learning in China as well as Chinese English language teacher. It is also expected that this research can benefit English language education in New Zealand by providing some implications for New Zealand teachers through applying their teaching beliefs and practices in China.

Methodologies used and participants involved in this research

This research contains three phases. In Phase 1, 25 Chinese English language teachers and 100 students will be involved in. The teacher participants will take part in a 30-minute interview; the student participants will take part in a 20-

minute questionnaire. Five of the teacher participants with their classes will be involved in classroom observation. The teachers involved in classroom observation will be volunteers or selected by invitation from the 25 teachers. Phase 1 will last from early May, 2007 to July, 2007. In Phase 2, 25 New Zealand English language teachers and 100 students will be involved in. They will take part in the interviews and questionnaires respectively with the same questions as those used in China. Five of the teacher participants will be involved in classroom observation. Phase 2 will last from August, 2007 to November, 2007. Based on the findings from Phase 1 and Phase 2, an action research will be conducted in Phase 3, which will involve 3 Chinese English language teachers with their class. The action research will last 4 month from March, 2008 to July, 2008. During the process, teacher participants will take part in seminars about education theory, professional development meetings, and interviews; student participants will be involved in classroom observation, and group interviews. The participants involved in interviews will be asked to confirm their transcripts and return them to me.

Ethical issues in this research

In this research, data collection will not start until the informed consent has been gained from the potential participants. Participants have the right to decline to participate in this research. And they have the right to withdraw from the research. For the participants who will take part in the interviews, they have the right to withdraw up until the time of confirming the written interview research transcripts; for the student participants who take part in the questionnaire, they have the right to withdraw by not returning the completed questionnaire; for the participants who will take part in the classroom observation, they have the right to withdraw up until the time of confirming the written classroom observation transcripts; for participants who take part in the action research, they have the right up until the time the action-research data collection is completed. Some procedures will be employed to maximize confidentiality. During the research, it is unnecessary for

participants to provide their identity and the school where they work or study. Their responses will be identified by a letter or number code. The research will be kept safe and confidential in a locked filing cabinet. The findings will not be used in any staff appraisal or student grades.

Use of data

The data and data analysis produced in the research will be used in my doctoral thesis, academic journals, articles used on the research, and conference presentations. Participants can contact with my chief supervisor as the following name and address if they have any concerns:

Associate Professor Beverley Bell

Department of Professional Studies in Education

School of Education

University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton

New Zealand

phone +64-7-838-4101 (direct line)

fax   +64-7-838-4555

email   b.bell@waikato.ac.nz

home page: http://education.waikato.ac.nz/~beebell

Appendix III

Invitation Letter to Teacher & Student Participants

Dear _____

I am Suxia Gao, a student in Waikato University working on a Doctoral thesis. My research focuses on the teaching beliefs, teaching practices and teacher development of English language teachers at the tertiary level. Particularly, I am interested in how New Zealand English language teaching might benefit English language teaching in China and the development of Chinese English language teachers. There are three phases in this research. In phases 1 and 2, I will explore the teaching beliefs, teaching practices of Chinese and New Zealand English language teachers, and the differences and similarities between Chinese and New Zealand teachers. Basing on these findings, in Phase 3, I will further explore how and in what ways Chinese English language teachers develop their understanding of teaching and practices by making use of New Zealand teachers' teaching beliefs, thinking and practices within the Chinese socio-cultural contexts. It is expected that this research can benefit English language education in both China and New Zealand.

I wish to invite you to be a participant in my research. The teacher participants will be involved in a 30-minute interview. I would be grateful if you would volunteer for my doing an observation whilst you are teaching. The student participants will be involved in a 20-minute questionnaire. I would be grateful if you would like me to do an observation during your class time. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time up until the confirmation of transcripts of interviews and classroom observation. Participants' identity will be kept anonymous and any responses and information that they provide will be kept confidential. The findings of the research will be presented in my doctoral thesis, papers published in academic journals and in conference presentations. The

findings will not be used for any staff appraisal.

If you are willing and able to participate, could you please read, complete and returned the attached consent form to

Suxia, Gao

sg57@waikato.ac.nz

466 Zhongxing West Street, Xingtai City   OR   196 Clyde Street, Hamilton

0319-2256887   07-8562958

(for participants in China)   (for participants in New Zealand)

If you agree, the schedules for interviews and classroom observation will be mailed to you by the end of April or early May, 2007 and to be returned by the end of May, 2007. If at any time you have any concerns or questions about the conduct of the research, please feel free to contact my supervisor at

Associate Professor Beverley Bell

Department of Professional Studies in Education

School of Education

University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton, New Zealand

phone +64-7-838-4101 (direct line)

fax   +64-7-838-4555

email   b.bell@waikato.ac.nz

home page: http://education.waikato.ac.nz/~beebell

Many thanks for your consideration. I look forward to your prompt response.

Suxia Gao

Consent Form

I have read and understand the nature of the research project and I give my informed consent to participate in the research. I agree with the following statements:

1. I have been informed that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw up to my confirming my interview transcript, to my confirming my classroom observation transcript, or by not completing the questionnaire.

2. I have been informed that the general purpose of the interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations is to collect data about tertiary English language teaching and learning.

3. I understand that the interviews, teaching and learning in classroom will be audio taped and transcribed.

4. I understand that I will read and confirm the written transcript of the interviews, and classroom teaching which I will be involved in.

5. I have been informed that there are no expected harms or risks involved in my participation and that the findings will not be used in any staff appraisal or school grades.

6. I have been informed that my identity and that of my school will be kept anonymous and any information that I provided will be kept confidential.

7. I have been informed that my responses will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for 10 years before being destroyed.

8. I have been informed that the findings of the research will be written up in the researcher's doctoral thesis, articles in academic journals and in conference presentations.

Signed (participant) _____   Date _____

Appendix V

Interview for English language teachers

(Phase 1 and Phase 2)

Please take some time to answer the questions as carefully and completely as you can. No personal identification of your response is necessary.

1. What is (are) the aim(s) or purpose(s) of your teaching?

2. Can you describe what being an English language teacher means to you (or what are your beliefs about being an English language teacher)?

3. What is (are) your opinion(s) about the relationship between teacher and students?

4. What is (are) your opinion(s) about the role of textbook in English language teaching and learning practices?

5. Could you describe the teaching approaches that you often use in your teaching practices?

6. Can you describe a lesson which was very successful for you?

7. In what ways are you satisfied with your teaching (outcomes)?

8. Could you describe with which aspect(s), you are/aren't satisfied? And in your opinion, what promote(s)/inhabit(s) your professional development?

Thank you for your time to response to the questions. All responses will be kept confidential.

Suxia Gao / / /

Appendix VI

Questionnaire for English Language Students in China

(Phase 1)

Please take some time to answer the questions as carefully and completely as you can. No personal identification of your response is necessary.

Part One Background Information

1. Why are you learning English?

2. How long have you learnt English?

Part Two Views on English Language Teaching and Learning

1. Could you please describe how you learn English language in the classroom? What do you do when you are learning?

2. Please describe the ideal English language teacher you would like to learn English with? What would their teaching be like?

3. How can your current teacher better help you to learn the English language?

Appendix VII

Interviews for English Language Students in New Zealand

(Phase 2)

Please take some time to answer the questions as carefully and completely as you can. No personal identification of your response is necessary.

Part One Background Information

1. How long have you learnt English in China?

2. How long have you learnt English in New Zealand?

Part Two Views on English Language Teaching and Learning

1. Could you please describe how you learn English language in classroom in China? What do you usually do when you are learning?

2. Could you please describe how you learn English language in classroom in New Zealand? What do you usually do when you are learning?

3. Do you think there are some differences in English language teaching and learning between in China and in New Zealand? Could you explain in details?

4. Could you please describe the advantages/disadvantages of the Chinese English language teachers?

5. Could you please describe the advantages/disadvantages of the New Zealand English language teachers?

6. Which one do you prefer, the Chinese English language teacher or the New Zealand English language teacher?

7. Thinking about your English language learning experiences, what would you like the Chinese English language teachers to learn from New Zealand English language teachers?

8. Could you please describe the ideal English language teacher you would like to learn English with? What would their teaching be like?

9. In your opinion, how can your current English language teacher better help you to learn English language?

Classroom observation checklist

(Phase 3)

Teaching practice		Classroom Management		Teacher-student Relationship	
	Activity		Activity		Activity
teaching content		amount of student		personalities demonstrated	
resources used		furniture organization		knowledge of student	
structure of the activity		discipline		respect demonstrated for students	
role of teacher		rules facilitating teaching & learning		verbal communication styles	
role of students		speeches used to motivate learning		nonverbal communication	
student engagement		skills to maintain discipline		learning opportunities for each student	
how do students influence teaching		skills to make transition between activities		expectation and confidence for students	
feedback and evaluation		outcomes			
time duration					
outcomes					

Appendix IX

Interview for English language teachers Before Action

(Phase 3)

These following interview questions will be used before each action research cycle. Please take some time to answer the questions as carefully and completely as you can. No personal identification of your response is necessary.

1. How do you think about the teaching and learning theories introduced in the seminar?

2. Do you think that you need to make some changes in your teaching practices in terms of teaching pedagogy, classroom management and teacher-student relationship?

3. Why do you think it is necessary to change them?

4. Do you have some ideas about your new teaching?

5. Do you think that New Zealand English language teachers' practices are helpful for you in your new teaching? If yes, could you please discuss in details?

6. Are there any difficulties that you might meet during your new teaching? Could you discuss in details?

Thank you for your time to response to the questions. All responses will be kept confidential.

Suxia Gao   / / /

Appendix X

Interview for English language teachers After Action

(Phase 3)

These following interview questions will be used after each action research cycle. Please take some time to answer the questions as carefully and completely as you can. No personal identification of your response is necessary.

1. Could you please discuss what changes you have made to your teaching practices in terms of teaching pedagogies, classroom management, and teacher-student relationship?

2. Are there any difficulties for you in changing your teaching? What are the difficulties?

3. Are you satisfied with your new teaching? You may wish to discuss satisfaction with respect to teaching pedagogies, classroom management skills and teacher-student relationship?

4. In what ways do you think that the application of New Zealand English language teachers' beliefs and practices is of help to you?

5. Do you think that there are still some areas that you should improve further? If yes, where?

Thank you for your time to response to the questions. All responses will be kept confidential.

Suxia Gao   / / /

Appendix XI

Interview for student participants

(Phase 3)

These following interview questions will be used after each action research cycle. Please take some time to answer the questions as carefully and completely as you can. No personal identification of your response is necessary.

1. Do you notice some changes in your teacher's teaching practices compared with his/her previous teaching?
2. Do you like the changes in your teacher's teaching practices?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the new teaching compared with his/her previous teaching?
4. Do you think that the changes in your teacher's teaching can help your learning more effectively? Could you please explain in details, for example, in the areas of your learning interests, your learning outcomes, and so on?
5. Do you think that there are still some areas that your English teacher should improve further? If yes, where?

Thank you for your time to response to the questions. All responses will be kept confidential.

Suxia Gao   / / /

Appendix XII

Seminar 1- Sociocultural Learning Theory (I)

* EFL Teaching and learning is a social practice

---EFL teaching and learning is a collaborative process

---EFL teaching and learning is a socially mediated process

---EFL teaching and learning is a situated activity

---EFL teaching and learning is a distributed activity

* EFL Teaching and learning is a cultural practice

---EFL teaching and learning is an enculturation process

--- EFL teaching and learning is discursive practice

* Teaching and learning is a scaffolded practice within learners' ZPD (zone of

  proximal development)

---what is ZPD

---the relationship between ZPD and student learning

---how to scaffold students within their ZPD

Seminar 2--Teaching Beliefs and Practices of New Zealand English Language

Teachers

* Student being the center of teaching and learning activities

---students are active learners and responsible for their own learning

---teacher becomes the facilitator of students' learning

* Teaching and learning being relaxed and encouraging for students' participation

---there is no pressure on students and no distance between teacher and students

---students are encouraged to take part in learning activities by creating positive

  learning environment

* Teaching and learning being interactive

---interaction occurs between and among students

---interaction occurs between teacher and stduents

* Teaching being respecting

---teacher respects students and provides them with equal learning opportunities

no matter how poor their English language is

* Teaching being learning-evaluative and interest-fostering

* Teaching being humorous

Seminar 3---Sociocultural Learning Theory (II)

* Teaching and learning is teacher-student relationship construction

---teacher is the mediator assisting the performance of learners during social

  interactions

---mutually respectful and cooperating teacher-student relationship that promotes

  students' participation in social interactions in class should be encouraged

---a caring relationship between students and teacher should be encouraged

---teacher-student relationship empowers students and provides them with the

  opportunities to express their own voices in teaching and learning.

* Teaching and learning is an individual identity construction process

---learning as legitimate peripheral participation

---identity as socioculturally constructed

---the construction and reconstruction of identity in foreign language teaching and

  learning is an uncomfortable process.

*What is formative assessment

Formative assessment is the process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning during learning (Cowie & Bell, 1996, p.2)

* Key features of formative assessment

  ---is a purposeful and intentional activity

  ---is an integrated part of teaching and learning

  ---is a contextualized and situated activity

  ---the partnership between teacher and students entered into during the process of formative assessment

  ---language plays a central role in formative assessment

* A model of formative assessment

  --- planned formative assessment

  --- interactive formative assessment

* Formative assessment vs summative assessment